

Preface to the First Edition. 1832

There is a species of instruction to be derived from the perusal of the lives of eminent saints, which, in the present day, has become more than ever valuable and important: for although the age in which we live is characterized by an unusual zeal for the outward extension of the kingdom of God in the world, yet the living examples of the complete ascendancy of this kingdom in the heart, are nevertheless, rare and unfrequent. While every energy is exerted to propagate the first principles of Christianity, its great end and aim, namely, conformity to the image of God, by means of an increasing participation of the divine nature, and the mortification of the will of the flesh, is in a great measure, neglected and overlooked.

A consequence of this lamentable declension in godliness is, that when we read in the Bible of those who “through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, out of weakness were made strong,” we are ready to consider them as gifted of God for some particular purpose which now no longer exists; and that Christians in our day are not warranted to expect such extraordinary manifestations of the divine favor, notwithstanding the exhortation of the apostle, to be “followers of them, who through faith and patience, inherited the promise,” and the words of our Lord himself, “Who-soever believes on me, the works that I do, shall he do also and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father.”

It cannot therefore fail of being attended with beneficial consequences to those who are sincerely desirous of growing in grace, and in the knowledge of the truth, to see in the history of the pious dead, the manifestation of that divine faithfulness and favor, which is no respecter of persons, but in every age, is willing to bestow its inestimable blessings on everyone who diligently seeks them: to see that even in latter times, the same Spirit, which dwelt so richly in the members of the primitive church, is still given to those who submit to his teachings, and devote themselves wholly unto God: and these blessed results, the Translator considers to be exemplified in an eminent degree, in the life of the individual, a short account of which is subjoined.

The history of Tersteegen’s life, not only establishes the exhilarating truth that God, in the gift of his Spirit, is “the same yesterday, today, and forever;” but also shows the way to its attainment. As every true follower of Christ exemplifies, in his degree, the life of Christ, and as the prominent feature in that life was affliction, so we find that the earthly pilgrimage of this devoted servant of God, particularly at the commencement of his spiritual course, was marked by suffering and trial; for it is “through much tribulation that we must enter into the kingdom of God.” There are many who boast themselves of their adoption into the family of heaven; but none have a right to do so, who have not endured the fatherly chastisement of God: for it is impossible for the body of sin within us to be destroyed in any other manner, nor can the perverted will of man become conformed to the divine will, otherwise than by submission to it under circumstances the most trying and painful.

Entire resignation to the will of God, is therefore the primary lesson we have to learn. It is not, however, necessary that we follow the particular mode of life, which another may have found beneficial, in order to know a complete renunciation of self; but that we commit ourselves wholly to the divine guidance, in the firm conviction that the situation in which it places us, however much it may be at variance with our views and wishes, is the one best adapted to our advancement in holiness. With regard to our conduct therein, the Holy Spirit will sufficiently instruct us, if we only listen attentively to his dictates.

As the perusal of Tersteegen's history may be of advantage in throwing light on the outward dispensations of the providence of God towards his people, so the study of his writings will be found to show, in a very intelligible manner, the inward operations of the Spirit upon the heart, and the progress of the life of God in the soul. Next to the word of God, there are few authors whose works the writer has perused with greater satisfaction and benefit; and whose writings are so evidently pervaded by a divine unction, which eminently distinguishes them from the generality of religious works, which, especially in the present day, bear more the stamp of human ingenuity and ability, than of that wisdom which comes from above. It need scarcely be added, that his works continue to be read and appreciated in Germany, by those who have an appetite for spiritual food, and who are no longer content with the superficial and unsatisfying productions of those, who, though they may be sufficiently versed in the knowledge of the letter of Scripture, possess in reality, little of its spirit.

—SAMUEL JACKSON

Norwood, August 7th, 1832.

Preface to the Third Edition, 1837

It is a very general and prevailing sentiment among christians in the present day, that we are on the verge of mighty changes both in the outward and visible world, and in that which is inward and spiritual; for "the night is far spent, and the day is at hand."

Many, indeed, have been awakened out of their sleep, and, according to their ideas, are converted characters; but instead of "casting off the works of darkness, and putting on the armor of light," have been lulled to sleep again under the sound of human tradition and teaching. They turn, it is true, but it is only from one side to the other; and if they previously dreamt of the treasures and pleasures of the world; they now dream that they are spiritually "rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing;" while in the all-seeing eye of God, they are still "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." They dream of "fighting the good fight of faith," of "running the race set before them," and of receiving at death a crown of glory, while they are still reposing on the couch of their unregenerate nature, without

overcoming a single spiritual foe, or eradicating one solitary earthly propensity. They dream of being clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and of being presented before the Father's face without defilement or blemish; while at the same time, they virtually deny the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse them during the present life, from the corruption of their natures and their contracted impurities. And finally, they dream of holding fellowship with God and with Christ, and of communion with his saints, while they disbelieve the possibility of hearing the voice of God within them, and under the influence of bigoted and carnal principles, cleave exclusively to some particular sect or party, and reject all that are not of their way of thinking.

Some, indeed, begin to open their eyes, and to see the necessity of a more decided religious walk, and of greater earnestness in the attainment of holiness. They see, also, that union is strength, and that "a house divided against itself cannot stand"; or in other words, that as long as sects and divisions continue in the christian church, the kingdom of Christ can only partially prosper. Hence much is written and taught in order to accomplish these objects, but generally in a superficial manner. That they may be really effected, "the axe must be laid to the root of the tree," the wound must be probed to the bottom; "old things must pass away, and all things become new"; a complete and entire renovation of the whole man, and a restoration to the image of God, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, must ensue. The tree being made good, will then naturally bring forth good fruit; one spirit will then animate all such characters, and being the Spirit of God, will bring them into fellowship with God and with each other, which is the design and purpose of God with respect to fallen man. (John 17.)

The necessity of this entire regeneration, the means of attaining to it, and the bye-roads which lead astray from it, form the subject of the following work. Two editions of which, having met with a rapid sale, a third has been called for. The Translator would gladly hail this circumstance as a proof, that the number of those is increasing, who are desirous of treading the paths of the inward life, and also as a pledge of the rising of a better and brighter day.

—SAMUEL JACKSON, 1837

Life and Character of Gerhard Tersteegen

Gerhard Tersteegen was born the 25th of November 1697, in the chief town of the principality of Moers. Henry Tersteegen, his father, was a tradesman and citizen of the said town, and died shortly after the birth of his son Gerhard. He appears to have been religiously inclined, and from his papers, to have been in correspondence with pious people in other parts.

Gerhard was the youngest of eight children, six sons and two daughters. One of his brothers was a

preacher, the others were engaged in business. Of the latter, one of them called Johannes, was much attached to his youngest brother. Possessing considerable abilities, he was sent by his mother to the Latin school, through all the gradations of which he passed. He applied himself likewise with great assiduity to the Greek and Hebrew, as well as to the Latin; and made such progress in the latter, that on the occasion of a public solemnity, he delivered a Latin oration in verse, with universal applause, which induced one of the chief magistrates to advise his mother to allow her son to devote himself entirely to study. His mother declined it in consequence of the circumstances of the family, and destined him to a mercantile life. He was accordingly bound in his fifteenth year, for a term of four years, to his brother-in-law, a merchant in Mülheim on the Rhur.

It was here, when only sixteen years of age, that he received his first religious impressions, but through what medium is not with certainty known; except that he became acquainted in Mülheim, with a pious tradesman, from whom he received many excellent admonitions; he has also been heard to say, that he was once deeply affected by reading a thanksgiving prayer of a dying clergyman. By these and similar means, he was led, by the wisdom of God, to seek with earnestness a change of heart; for which reason he spent whole nights in reading, prayer, and other devotional exercises.

The following circumstance appears in particular to have had a very beneficial effect upon his mind. Being sent on one occasion to Duisburg, he was seized with such a violent cholic in Duisburg forest, that he expected nothing but death. He went a little way out of the road, and earnestly besought the Lord to deliver him from his pain and prolong his life, in order that he might have time to prepare himself in a better manner for the eternal world. Upon which the pain suddenly left him, and he felt himself most powerfully incited to devote himself unreservedly to that God, who had been so kind and gracious to him.

About this time, the vanity and mutability of everything of an earthly nature, and the infinite importance of heavenly and eternal things, were made very apparent to him; he perceived also that a mercantile life, and the continual association with all kinds of people, much distracted his thoughts, and obstructed his growth in grace; for which reason, at the expiration of the term of his apprenticeship, he made choice of a more retired occupation. The acquaintance he made at that time with a pious weaver, provoked him to learn his trade; but his weak habit of body, frequent headaches, and pains in the bowels compelled him to relinquish it. He subsequently made choice of the art of ribbon-making, and had no one with him except the person who twisted the silk. He still continued to reside at Mülheim on the Rhur, where he spent the remainder of his life.

In this new situation he lived in the practice of the greatest self-denial; his apparel was coarse, and his fare, which he often prepared himself, was of the most ordinary kind, consisting chiefly of flour, water, and milk. In the first years of his seclusion, he ate only once a day, and drank neither tea nor coffee. Though his income was ever so limited, he still showed himself extremely liberal to the poor. In the dusk, when he could not be recognized, he entered the dwellings of the sick and the needy, and divided

among them all he could spare from his earnings. On the division of his father's property, the legatees apportioned him a house, to prevent his giving all away; but he received at different times, the value of the building from his brother Johannes, in ready money, and gave the greatest part of it likewise to the poor. His relatives being by this more incensed against him than ever, and he being frequently ill for many weeks together, without being able to earn anything, he fell into the greatest poverty and want.

The following extract from a letter he wrote to a confidential friend, bearing date, 24th Oct. 1766, attests the truth of this statement. "It is easy," says he, "to talk of poverty as long as we are surrounded with wealthy friends, who are disposed to assist us. The writer of this has known the time when he knew not where he should find food for the next day, and was without a friend who was acquainted with his situation. He was at work from five in the morning till nine in the evening, and occasionally lay ten or twelve weeks in bed, or in the loft, without those with whom he lodged giving themselves the trouble to send one of their idle servants to give him a drink of water. But I always thought there was a necessity for it."

In another letter he writes, "I once lay ill in bed of a burning fever, and thought I should have died of thirst. I begged my brother's servant, at whose house I lay ill, to fetch me half a stiver's worth of table beer. But the girl being inattentive, and her mistress giving her something else to do, she entirely forgot me. I was in an upper room, and no one thought any more of me. I was therefore obliged to lie from morning till late in the afternoon, without a drop of anything to refresh me. At length I heard the servant on the stairs, and entreated God to preserve me in the spirit of meekness."

In these and similar trials, his filial confidence in his heavenly Father's care remained firm and unshaken, and to this he felt an inward and powerful incitement. Observing once, that a part of his dress was worn out, and not knowing where he should find money to replace it, it was forcibly impressed upon his mind, that he should "be careful for nothing." (Phil. 4:6) This strengthened him exceedingly in waiting for the divine goodness; and the tender mercy of God, as will be shown in what follows, cared richly for him, and allowed him to lack no good thing. Our departed friend, at that period, enjoyed true contentment. "I cannot express," said he on one occasion, "how happy I was during the time I lived alone. I often thought no monarch upon earth could live so contentedly as I did, at that time. When I ate, I knew not what it was I was eating, nor how it tasted, and often saw no one for a week together, except the girl who brought me my food."

This period of contentment, was succeeded by a state of inward affliction, into which the Lord gradually conducted him. He had to pass through many trials and temptations, and through much inward darkness, The Lord withdrew from him the sensible perception of his favor, in order to put his fidelity and long-suffering patience to the test, and also to prepare him for future usefulness. This state of spiritual darkness continued five years; until at length, while on a journey to a neighboring town, the day-spring from on high again visited him; and the atoning mercy of Jesus Christ was made so deeply and convincingly apparent to him, that his heart was set entirely at rest. On this occasion he composed that beautiful

hymn, “My great High Priest, how kind your love!”

This calls to mind the following remarkable circumstance which he often related: By reflecting on the various divisions in the christian church, he was attacked by such a powerful temptation, that he almost began to doubt the existence of a God; but the Lord soon delivered him out of this temptation, not only by fully enlightening his understanding, but also by a divine communication, which he found it impossible for language to express. He was by this means so confirmed in the essential knowledge of God our Savior, that he was able subsequently to speak and write upon it in a powerful and experimental manner, and with much divine unction. It was probably about this time, that he composed that noble dedication of himself to God, which appears in the preface to the first volume of his letters.

About a year after the date of this dedication, (1725), he consented, after repeated solicitations, to receive a young man of the name of Sommer, into his lodgings, who was desirous of being taught the art of ribbon making. He did this, not without considerable hesitation, being very unwilling to relinquish that solitude, which he had found so agreeable. In the society of this young friend, at the recommendation of the late pious Mr. Hoffmann, a candidate for the ministry, he became less rigid in his manner of living, and accustomed himself to take coffee with him. On these occasions, after a hymn had been sung, a portion of the New Testament was read. After coffee, our departed friend offered up a short prayer, and then both proceeded quietly to work.

They divided the day in the following manner: at six in the morning they met, and worked till eleven, when they separated for an hour, for the purpose of prayer. At one, they again resumed their labor, which continued till six in the evening, after which they were at liberty, and spent again an hour in private prayer; a mode of life which lasted about three years. Tersteegen employed his leisure time in the translation of edifying works; such as *The Compendium of True Godliness*, and *The Hidden Life with Christ in God, etc.*, by the eminently pious Bernières de Lauvigny. About this time also he wrote *The Pious Lottery*, and prepared materials for *The Spiritual Flower Garden*.¹

Not long afterwards, in the year 1727, he began to speak in private meetings. The person who gave occasion to this, was the late Mr. Hoffmann above mentioned. This pious individual not only spoke at the meeting which had been instituted at Mülheim by the late Rev. Theodore Undereick, but also on other occasions in the year 1725, and particularly in 1727, when a great awakening took place in that neighborhood, and especially in the Duchy of Berg. Hoffmann being well acquainted with Tersteegen’s profound knowledge and experience, pressed him to speak a word of edification at Mülheim, and other places. What followed showed with what blessed effects this was attended. Many, who were in an unawakened state, were so

¹ In 1724, when he instructed the children of his brother and sister, he wrote for their use, “*An impartial sketch of the principles of christianity*.” This little work he never published, but its value may be inferred from the following circumstance. A pious reformed minister saw this tract after the decease of its author. He desired permission to read it, and afterwards testified to a friend, who found him occupied with the perusal of it, that he had derived no small benefit from it.

affected by his powerful addresses, that they attained to a thorough and permanent conversion; while others, who were already awakened, were induced by his impressive discourses to resort to him with the utmost confidence, for advice in every species of temptation, trial, and suffering; and by his wise counsels, were confirmed in their trust and reliance upon God.

The great number of those who applied to him for advice, not only personally but by letter, together with his weakness of body, which had been considerably increased by his nightly studies, compelled him, about this time, to give up his employment. It may be asked, from where then did he derive his support? He had hitherto refused in an affectionate manner, many generous offers which had been made to him. A merchant once called upon him, and out of the high regard he bore for him, offered him an annuity for life; a pious lady, who had never seen him, appointed him in her will, executor to her property, which amounted to 40,000 florins, on condition that he would take from it whatever he needed; a Dutch gentleman offered him a bond for 10,000 florins, and begged his acceptance of it with tears. All these, and other offers of the same kind he declined; but on becoming more incapable of manual labor, he accepted the love offerings of a few friends, by whom he was cordially esteemed, and whom he loved in return with particular confidence; besides which, other friends left him legacies of certain sums in their wills. By these means, he was not only placed in a situation to supply his own needs, but also to show his liberality to the poor in a variety of ways; so that even at his death, some ready money remained, which he directed in his will, to be immediately divided among some poor followers of Jesus, and of which his relatives likewise received a part, together with his furniture.

Although he had laid aside his former employment, he still reserved a species of manual labor to the end of his life. Having a valuable knowledge of physic, he prepared certain medicines, which he gratuitously administered to a few friends and the poor, and which were at length so much sought after, that he was obliged to accept of the services of an assistant.

About the year 1740, when the Thursday meetings which had been commenced by the Rev. T. Undereick were discontinued, our departed friend became more generally known by the publication of various works, which occasioned him many visits. He also received a call to take a journey once a year into Holland. A certain individual in that country, who had become acquainted with him through the medium of his writings, grew much attached to him, and invited him to come and see him; but Tersteegen delaying his visit, the gentleman above alluded to, resolved to take a journey to Mülheim himself.² Tersteegen having received secret intimation of this, and fearing he might be inclined to spend more time with him than he could spare, determined not to wait for his visit, but to go himself to him, and after a short visit, return home. He subsequently went annually to Holland to enjoy, in the society of this friend, a few weeks of tranquillity and repose; but this was not of long continuance; his arrival was generally soon

² This Dutch gentleman was of high rank, and held a prominent situation under government; he notwithstanding laid his rank, station, equipage, etc. at the feet of our dear Redeemer, and led a retired and hidden life with Christ in God, in a small and humble habitation in Amsterdam, until his decease.

made known, and friends came from various places to visit him, and converse with him on the state of their souls. There were also many, whom he cordially loved and with whom he maintained a regular correspondence and an intimate friendship until his death.

Till the year 1746, Tersteegen lodged in a house, where he had two upper rooms, and where his dinner was brought him. In that year, he rented a whole house, but continued to reside upstairs with his friend; a female acquaintance, with her brother and sister-in-law, occupied the lower part of the house, provided his dinner, and also cooked at his expense, for a number of poor and sick people.

In the same year, his dear brother Hoffmann fell ill of a disorder in the lungs, which after a confinement of some weeks, terminated his earthly course, and conducted him into a happy eternity. On this occasion, our departed friend gave him many proofs of his love and affection. He assisted in binding up his wounds, and refreshed him by his frequent visits, comforting discourse, and ardent prayers, until his death.³ Upon his decease Tersteegen rented from his relatives, the cottage in which he had resided, where he lodged and entertained his friends, who came to see him from a distance, from which circumstance it obtained the name of the pilgrim's cottage, which it bears to this day.

Besides the many acquaintances which Tersteegen had in the duchy of Berg, at Mettmann, Homberg, Heiligenhaus, and other places, he was also well known at Barmen, which place he visited for the first time, in the year 1747, after a pressing invitation. With the divine blessing, many souls were awakened there, through his instrumentality, whom he visited in the following years, and was likewise repeatedly visited by them. They could not sufficiently admire his distinguished spiritual gifts. His love, his long-suffering and patience with the weak and the wavering, the peculiar wisdom he displayed, in leading everyone to a frank discovery of his state, his aiding hand in all kinds of trials and troubles, as well as his powerful manner of interceding in prayer, remained indelibly impressed upon their hearts. He gave the following account of the above-mentioned journey to an intimate friend.

I have allowed myself to be induced to accept the unremitting invitations of an aged couple, who reside about twenty miles distant from this place, and who believe they have attained to conviction by means of my writings;

3 Hoffmann had requested our late friend to return thanks to God for his happy exit, with a few of his most intimate friends, in his house after his decease. The following account, which Tersteegen gave to a friend in the country, dated 30th August, will show the manner in which this took place.

My late friend Hoffmann having earnestly desired me to invite his most intimate friends, a few days after his decease, to meet together in the house where he had lived and died, to thank the Lord, for the favors he had shown him, and for his final deliverance, I complied with his request. I was taken however by surprise. One told it to another, by which means, in two hours, the matter became known, and I found there, at least according to my idea, more than one hundred and fifty people assembled, which at first confused me; but I was obliged to comply, and instead of a thanksgiving prayer, I spoke for two hours together on Jude, 20, 21. All present were deeply affected, but the emotion of the senses is at best, only flower without fruit. Still you may infer from this, that the people here are hungering after the bread of life. Had I made it known two days, instead of two hours before, there would not have been room enough to contain all the people. But I feel myself neither called nor sent to engage in exercises of this nature, because I am myself only a poor ignorant infant, and neither know nor possess anything, except in the Lord, and have no control over what belongs to another.

and because they were unable to come here themselves, they have pressed me, for a year and a half, to pay them a visit. Their two sons are likewise decidedly pious characters, and occasionally come over to see me. It was my intention to have made this journey incognito, but I found it impossible; for there were not only many whom I had not seen before, in the place where I was, who were awakened and so deeply affected, that I found it difficult to remain firm in the midst of the many tears which were shed by the new converts, or to part from them; but I was also constrained to travel about in the duchy of Berg for eleven days together, and was surrounded with people from morning till night. I thought myself once a few miles distant from a certain place; but I was waited for on the way, and conducted into a barn, where I found about twenty persons, most of whom were unknown to me, and were desirous of hearing a good word from me. You may think, dear sister, that I must often forget myself, both as it respects body and soul; but I should be very ungrateful, if I did not acknowledge, that the Lord supported me in both, and to appearance at least, vouchsafes me his blessing. Towards the close, I experienced attacks of fever, and took such a cold, that my voice could scarcely be heard. The Lord then showed me that I ought to return home. But in the morning about eight o'clock, when I was on the point of mounting my horse, I found at least about twenty-five persons assembled, to whom I could only give a very short address. Some of them had come from a distance of several miles, for it was in the country. You see by this, how extraordinary my present manner of life is, and how much it is opposed to my inclinations. My ardent love of retirement and repose appears to have been given me to make the reverse more burdensome, and perhaps also to serve as a counterpoise to keep me from entering too deeply and living too much in outward exercises. I everywhere find a hunger among the people, and there is no one to break unto them; the customary food no longer suffices them. He that has grace to pray, may well entreat the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into his harvest.

Oct. 3, 1747.

After public speaking had been for some time discontinued, about the year 1750, a young student at Duisburg was awakened, who held meetings at Spelldorf, Styrum, and likewise at Mülheim, in which he earnestly called the people to repentance. Many individuals were brought by this means, to a salutary concern for their souls, and numbers came to Tersteegen to unfold their sinful state to him, and to be instructed by him in the way of holiness. His conversation had such a blessed effect upon many, that they obtained, through sincere repentance, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and by his grace, have continued steadfast to the present hour. The accounts which he gave about this time, in confidence to a female friend on different occasions, deserve to be noticed here.

I have been [says he] for some days again rather unwell; and think it proceeds from the cold I caught, or perhaps also from the little rest I have had during the last three or four weeks; for the awakening which seems to have taken place in several individuals, occasions me many visits. On the second Christmas holyday, finding myself pretty well, I felt at liberty to go to a meeting, and give an address, which I have not done for above a year. I have never seen so many present here on a similar occasion. By this discourse, I appear to have occasioned

myself still more visits. I feel I must spend and be spent. It were a small thing to put health and even life itself into the scale, in order to fulfill the good pleasure of God, and be of service to others; but I confess I have no certainty in this matter. I do what I can at the time, and ask forgiveness of God, lest I should have been thereby detrimental to others. One thing I know, that were I to follow my own inclination, I would rather withdraw from it entirely, if I found myself at liberty to do so. The Lord direct us in all things!

Jan. 14th, 1746.

In another letter, he says,

There is, God be thanked, a great awakening and stir among the people here: for some weeks together, from morning to night, they were compelled to wait one for another to have an opportunity of speaking with me. Many were obliged to return five or six times, before a quarter of an hour could be found to converse with me alone; and I have occasionally had ten, twenty, and even thirty anxious souls with me at the same time. N_____’s discourses, though plain, are of advantage to many, who are by this means awakened. At his request, and that of many who were hungering for the bread of life, I allowed myself to be induced, at the beginning of the present month, to hold a meeting with him. It was a long time since I had spoken in public. Three or four hundred people were assembled; and the house being filled to the very door, they placed ladders against the windows in order to hear. It occasioned a great sensation, and I trust that it has not been without a blessing. Upon this our clergymen took the alarm, the three Reformed, as well as the Lutheran.⁴ Two of the former went to the magistrates to present their complaints, and begged that a stop might be put to such meetings. Of this I knew nothing, but suspected something of the kind, and felt myself constrained to write to our Justice of the peace, in order to give him an account of our meeting, and to beg him to have nothing to do in the matter. And sure enough, the secretary had already received the order, to be engrossed and published the day following. The Justice, who is much attached to me, and who knew not that I was involved in the matter, caused the order to be returned from the secretary’s, and sent it privately to me, with a very friendly letter, written by his own hand. Upon which I wrote to three of our ministers, and represented to them in a serious yet amicable manner, their unhandsome behavior; offering likewise, with N—, to speak in their presence, with the assurance, that if they gave their hearty concurrence to it, the church would again be filled, because the people would then see that they were attached to the good cause; while on the contrary, at present, the church stood empty. They then seemed to rely upon the Mayor, who was an enemy to the meetings. I wrote, therefore, a pretty sharp letter to him, and represented to him how inconsistently he would act, if he prohibited assemblies of this nature, and at the same time permitted quack doctors, mountebanks, gaming-houses, and taverns; asking him how he expected to reflect upon these things on his deathbed. In short, the Mayor, as well as the other magistrates gave way, and acknowledged that I was in the right.

⁴ The Protestant church in Germany is divided under two heads, the Lutheran and Reformed.

On another occasion he writes,

The awakening here, and at other places still continues. More are added from time to time, and I am obliged to devote myself, almost from morning till evening, to converse with pious persons, either individually or collectively. Since my last, I have only spoken once from home at a public meeting. I conceive there were fully four hundred hearers. With individuals, or with several at a time, I am constantly employed. Last Thursday, at eight o'clock, when I had scarcely risen from my bed, and that with difficulty, in order to answer a letter which I had received by express, I was told that a whole troop of country people were entering the house, who wished to speak with me; and before half an hour had elapsed, nearly fifty assembled, who requested me to give them an address, which I consequently did, and spoke from Isaiah 55:10. While speaking, a powerful emotion manifested itself among the auditory; and had I not imperceptibly and circuitously prevented it, confusion would have ensued—two persons being seized with a violent trembling and sinking to the ground; but these kind of things, I seek if possible, silently to prevent. During the discourse, one of our preachers came to visit me; he was told below, that I was addressing a number of friends, who had arrived unexpectedly, and was requested to go upstairs and hear me speak, as it would seem he had a prejudice against such meetings. Upon this, he was offended, and asked who it was that said he had anything against my speaking, and so went away. But the same afternoon, he came again. I told him I had spoken in the morning, and from what text. On which, he assured me he had nothing against my speaking; they would willingly grant me permission, but not N_____, etc.

I had previously refused to admit the people in such numbers on a Sunday during service, thus it would appear they had concerted together to take me by surprise. After speaking, I allowed some who were in a state of great anxiety about their souls, to converse with me in private. Among these there was a widow, who seemed dreadfully agitated. She threw herself at my feet upon the floor, but I immediately told her to stand up. Upon this, she confessed her sins to me unsolicitedly which I acknowledged were great. As she seemed to me to be in such despair, I encouraged her to tell me all that lay upon her mind, assuring her that I would keep it secret. “What,” said she, “keep it secret? Tell it to the whole world! I am not afraid of being disgraced in the opinion of mankind. I would gladly bear the severest torments, and am willing to be consumed even to a skeleton, if I may only find favor in the sight of God.” You may yourself form some idea of what is to be done and suffered among so many poor souls from this and the neighboring places.

Children of ten, twelve, and fourteen years old are awakened. I will adduce only one instance. A woman who had been some time before awakened and concerned for her soul, came to me lately with about fourteen others, and brought her little boy with her, who was about eleven years of age. After shaking hands at parting with the others, I gave this child likewise my hand, and asked him if he also wished to become a pious youth, adding a few words according to the child's capacity; but he seemed to wish not to hear me. However, on reaching home, he said to his mother, “the devil wanted to hinder me from attending to what Tersteegen said; but yet I heard every word very well, and resisted the devil, etc.” and since that time, the boy is become very silent,

and goes often alone into the fields or elsewhere, where he can conceal himself, to pray; and weeps in secret over his sins, in such a manner, that even his father, who was before opposed to the truth, appears to be much affected and struck by it.

On these occasions, I must exert myself violently, to keep myself from sinking. I cannot deny that the Lord has been good and gracious to me in various ways, and grants me more inward peace and singleness of heart, in the midst of every disturbance and distraction from without, than I could even have expected; but of any sensible emotion, I can say nothing; I sometimes live as if I were dead.

February 23, 1751.

He writes further as follows.

Since my last, the people scarcely ever let me rest. I try occasionally to withdraw myself by force, but it is of no avail. Last Sunday, I had scarcely risen from bed, when I was obliged to address more than sixty persons, who had thronged into the house, which I accordingly did from Matt. 25:5. After I had finished speaking, I had to converse with various individuals until evening. And yesterday morning, after I had passed the whole night in a fever, at least two hundred and fifty people assembled in the corn loft, and the room adjoining, to whom I spoke with the Lord's gracious assistance, from Gal. 1:3-5. I have been also obliged to speak this morning early, without knowing of it a quarter of an hour before; but now I feel myself quite exhausted. I spoke today on the last words of the Lord Jesus, "It is finished!" and comforted myself with the hope, that my toils and trouble would also soon be finished. But I expect now so to arrange matters, as to be freed from the necessity of giving a formal address. Were the meetings to take place regularly, we should not be able to find sufficient room. Between both, I am either engaged in receiving visits, or in writing to friends at a distance.

April 9th, 1751.

In another he says,

Such strange events have occurred since my last, that I have been unable, before today, to reply to your agreeable letter of the 9th of July. You have been already in part informed by our friend S_____, of what happened during my journey in the duchy of Berg, where I was detained a week longer than I had intended, in consequence of the number of people who flocked together. I was obliged, contrary to my wish, to speak there several times in public. After my return, I reflected upon a plan to lighten the burden in some measure; to accomplish which, I determined on holding the meeting once a fortnight, if the Lord permitted; for otherwise I was under the necessity of speaking as often as the people came to me. But as they know in their own minds, when I purpose speaking, the attendance is so numerous, that I am at a loss for accommodation for them. The day after Mr. S_____’s departure from hence, the numbers increased, so that I have not yet room enough, although I can accommodate nearly six hundred people; for they came from a distance of fifteen or twenty

miles, with an earnest desire to hear. The magistrates had already taken the alarm, but it is now over.

I said to them, if you find yourselves at liberty, in conscience, to prohibit my speaking, I shall find myself at liberty that instant to obey you, which I would not do, were I certain that I was divinely called to it. They answered that they did not wish to prevent me, but the people assembled too numerously; I replied, I ask no one to come, nor will I tell anyone to go away. Finally, they were willing to let me speak, but not N_____ and others. I keep myself quiet, nor indeed did I go to the magistrates on my own account, or because they sent for me; but voluntarily, and to prevent the evil, that was preparing for others.

August 20th, 1751.

In a subsequent letter to the same individual, he says:—

I have still something singular to relate. The day after I forwarded my last, the friends at C_____, very unexpectedly sent a coach to the banks of the Rhine, to fetch me. Being very weak and confined to bed, I sent our friend S_____ there with a note, and entirely declined going. The friends then came here with the coach, and the next day I was obliged to resolve upon accompanying them. As soon as it was reported that I was in the town, the Mennonite Consistory assembled, without my being aware of it, and sent their two preachers to me, to request I would fix a day when I would preach in their church, as they knew I would not stay till Sunday. This request, as you may easily suppose, appeared strange to me; I nevertheless resolved to accept it in God's name, as an intimation of the divine will. On Wednesday morning, 25th August, the two ministers came and conducted me to the pulpit. On entering the church, I found it crowded with people of all persuasions, but principally of the Reformed and Mennonite persuasions; and the Lord enabled me to speak on 2 Peter 3:2. If I have pleased God by this piece of temerity, as much as the hearers, all will be well. The people were deeply affected, and some so much so, that it is to be hoped the impressions will be lasting.

From the time that the number of those who were awakened, and such as hungered after the bread of life so much increased, our departed friend was again induced to speak in public. With what impression, divine power, and unction this was accompanied, many who are still living can testify. In 1751, he wrote out one of his discourses on those words in 2 Cor. 5:14. "For the love of Christ constrains me," and published it.⁵ Upon which, the inquiry for them was so great, that eight writers stationed themselves upstairs, where they could hear distinctly, and wrote down the words from his lips. By this means, thirty of his discourses have been collected, which were subsequently published under the title of *Spiritual Fragments (Geistliche Brosamen.)* The following letters give some account of the many discourses he delivered, and the visits he had to receive at that period.

Up to the present moment [says he] I can scarcely use my head or my eyes, and my hand trembles very much;

⁵ A translation of this discourse will be found in the body of this work.

the little rest I have had, owing to the concourse of people, may have been the principal occasion of it, to which must also be added the many letters I have to write. I cannot think what the people seek from such a poor creature. A short time ago, a person totally unknown to me, but a true Nathaniel, came nearly two hundred miles on foot, in bad weather, to visit me, to whom I could only spare a couple of hours; but who, on such occasions, can withdraw himself entirely? On the 25th of February I had again a visit of about twelve persons from the country. No sooner were our friends here aware of it, than I had the house full, so that I had to address some hundreds from the song of Simeon, ("Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation." Luke 2:20) Some say, but for what reason I am ignorant, that I have preached my own funeral sermon.

It is at least my wish to separate myself from every creature consolation, and committing myself entirely to the guidance of the Spirit of God, be found waiting solely for the salvation of Israel. And had I even Simeon's righteousness, piety, revelations, and every gift he possessed, I would, with him, willingly forget and forsake them, living or dying, in order to exchange them for the child Jesus, Israel's only consolation. It is matter of astonishment, adoration, and delight, to see how the Lord can induce us to let everything go; everything appears so frivolous, unsatisfying, trifling, and superficial—even good and spiritual things, which formerly afforded such gratification, and of which we were so tenacious, but which, for that very reason, served only to interpose between us and God, and were injurious, because they were held so fast. Jesus alone is sufficient, but yet insufficient, when he is not wholly and solely embraced. O that it might please the Lord to confirm and establish the hearts of many, who are concerned for their immortal souls, and enable them to commit themselves entirely to the guidance and influences of his Holy Spirit, who in due time would lead them to the true temple of God, where they might substantially clasp the Savior in the arms of their spirits!

March 20th, 1753.

I contemplated the approach of Christmas with anxious feelings, being fearful of receiving many visits, and therefore occasionally made it known that I was too indisposed to see company. However, a few days before Christmas, I felt somewhat better; upon which many came from a distance whom I did not expect; and among them were several whom I had not seen before. The Lord enabled me to speak with much composure at two different times, on Isaiah 9:6, "Unto us a child is born, etc." although during the night I was very feverish. The place was quite filled with people, and among them was the present chief magistrate. He sent to inquire if I intended to speak: I replied, I thought of doing so; on which he sent his servant to desire a seat might be reserved for him. After sermon, he said to me among other things, "not a single word has escaped me, and I shall attend you tomorrow." He referred to the divisions of the discourse, and assured me that he was very well pleased. I hear also that he has said to others, "Those who now revile, must only do as I do, and come and hear for themselves."

I cannot say that I have any foreboding or particular impression on my mind from God, regarding my departure out of this world. I speak and think as I feel at the time, or with the eye of reason contemplate the consequences

of this or that complaint, although on such occasions, I very often fall short of the truth, and cannot comprehend the wonderful manner in which the Lord deals with me; to him alone be the glory! The great number of friends here and at other places, occasions me continual employment, and I find it difficult to withhold myself from them, particularly from sick and afflicted persons, and therefore hazard it. As we are a spectacle both to angels and to men, and as you may easily suppose all sorts of cases occur, I cannot always spare or take care of myself. It occurs to me here, that at our last meeting, which was the first in the present year, I expressed myself in the new year's salutation to the following effect: "If it be, therefore, my lot to continue somewhat longer, like some small and glimmering star, in the firmament of this our church, I will not entirely withdraw myself. I know what I am, and how completely I depend upon the Lord; but neither the fear of man, nor the suggestions of the flesh shall stop my mouth. I hope that the consciences of you all will testify now, and in the presence of God, that I have directed you to Christ, and not to myself. Give me, then, as in the Lord's presence, the hand of fellowship afresh, and support me by your intercessions, and your faithful walk with God. But still I must say, my dear friends, that some among you, during the past year, have often grieved me to the heart, and discouraged me: that was not right; may the Lord atone for it!"

These last words touched some of them to the quick, who afterwards came to ask forgiveness.

About the year 1756, when the attendance was so numerous, that he was obliged to fill five or six rooms in the house with his voice, our departed friend sustained an external injury from his exertions in speaking; on which account he was obliged to discontinue his public addresses, and also his journeys into the country, excepting an occasional ride in the neighborhood, to Spelldorf, Duisburg, and Essen, to give his debilitated frame a little exercise, and at the same time to visit his friends there. In fine weather, in the spring and summer, he also took a little exercise on foot, in company with a few other invalids, particularly when visited by friends from the country. He generally proceeded with them to a wood at a little distance, where they drank tea, while listening to his edifying conversation, and occasionally sang a hymn, after which he concluded with prayer.

Here we might close the history of Tersteegen's life, and immediately proceed to the relation of his last moments; but it will doubtless be of material service to the reader, if we place him, in some degree, in a situation to become better acquainted with his peculiar gifts, the distinguished grace which was imparted to him, and the spirituality of his views and sentiments. His writings, and particularly his discourses, printed under the title of *Spiritual Fragments*, in which the reader is not long detained with the shell of human wisdom, but is immediately presented with the kernel, sufficiently show how greatly his understanding was enlightened, and the deep insight into the word of God, which had been vouchsafed to him.

His writings also evidence, in an equally luminous manner, his intimate acquaintance with God and his ways. Among others that might be mentioned, the reader is directed to that noble hymn, which begins, "O God, you are not known aright," and to another he wrote some years after, "Rejoice, the Lord is God

supreme.” In both of these, when the writer’s divine and elevated views of God, his being, properties, and perfections are contemplated with silent devotion, the most pleasing evidences will be found of his experimental knowledge. He could say, and on several occasions did make use of the much-implying expression, “I thank God, that he has permitted me to live so long, as to enable me to become acquainted with him;” words, which among others, he repeated with great emphasis, when lying ill in the year 1738, without the smallest hope of recovery, to a friend who took a last farewell of him, adding, “with respect to myself I am perfectly at ease in God, and also with regard to my writings, which I leave with you. I feel, respecting them, no manner of anxiety or inward reproof, as though they contained anything doubtful or erroneous. All that I have written, I have myself experienced as important truths; and can therefore enter eternity with comfort.”

In another place he writes, “When I leave this world, I shall enter the next, as a poor and unworthy creature, who desires and wholly trusts for acceptance through grace alone, and that in a more than ordinary manner. In the mean time, I thank God, that he has allowed me to live so long as to enable me to know him internally; this notwithstanding my wretchedness, I cannot deny, and for this I desire to praise the free grace of God. I long for an eternity, that I may suitably glorify him for it. O what a treasure it is, to set aside all spiritual light, and the gifts of grace, in order solely to know that God is what he is; it is indeed eternal life to know him! The desire of men to know much, even in spiritual things, is a powerful proof that they know not God in reality. God is in every way *all-sufficient*; he alone can satisfy and rejoice the capacious powers of the soul, and that entirely and eternally.”

It cannot be otherwise than agreeable to the reader, when the following extracts from certain letters of our departed friend are laid before him, as obvious testimonials of his superior experimental knowledge.

I have at present to inform you, that it has pleased the Lord to visit me with sickness. In the beginning of my disorder, I lay and sat as if stupified, without feeling, and even almost without any recollection of God, or of my own soul. At present my mind is led with silent pleasure, to contemplate the existence of God, his goodness, wisdom, power, holiness, etc. all which infinite perfections are in the highest degree lovely and adorable; so that it is therefore true, that God, and what is in him, and all his works and ways, is the proper food and happiness of a created spirit. In him is all my treasure.

February 1st, 1746.

We know that God is alone supremely good; that he bears with his creatures and his children in Christ, prepares them for the enjoyment of himself with incomprehensible condescension, and loves them with peculiar tenderness. We are nevertheless, so much inclined to rest in ourselves, and to return to ourselves, that I have often been astonished at my own weakness. I have gone to school so long to the best of teachers, and am already employed to give others their lessons, and yet I continue myself such a helpless infant. At present, to

all appearance, I can, with singleness of heart, commit myself and all I have to the Lord. I can let everything go, and still feel composed. I am poor, yet in a wealthy place. I am weak, but contented. Those labors, fatigues, afflictions, trials, and dangers, which would at other times appear to me as insurmountable, did not the Lord keep me from contemplating the future, I can now easily forget, nor do they any longer cause me that anxiety of mind, which is otherwise so peculiar to me. But I must not make the picture too glowing; perhaps it appears different in the eyes of the Lord. I leave it to him, be it as it may. It is of little importance how it is, if it only be as God pleases. I neither can nor will depend on anything except on him alone.”

February 9th, 1748.

If I were to explain to you how I feel in my weak state, I would say, I do not know; and was perhaps never less conscious of it. Methinks, I believe pretty deeply, the total insufficiency of self and of created good, both internally and externally; but at the bottom, I am neither disquieted, apprehensive, nor afraid, although I do not know the reason of it. On account of the weakness of my head, I am often unable either to think of God, or of my own soul; but I know that God is, that he is the great, the good, and the ever-blessed God. The mere recollection of this, when the Lord affords it me, refreshes me much, and causes every difficulty to disappear immediately. How ought we to rejoice that he is such a God, that he is all goodness, perfect, infinitely glorious and happy, and sufficient to make everything in us good and happy.

March 8th, 1748.

How wonderful, how incomprehensible are the ways of God! How contrary to our expectations! No sooner do we think of fetching breath a little, than we are again chased out. We never cease losing, till we become so poor, that we have nothing more to lose, and so ashamed, that we dare no longer look about us. Let us only persevere in God’s name! May he alone be exalted, glorified, and well-pleased, that by thoroughly forsaking ourselves, we may enter into his felicity, his rest, and his joy! We must at length be brought to look on, as innocently as an infant in the cradle. It becomes us cheerfully to consent, deeply to adore, and cordially to say, “the Lord is good and gracious; all his ways are mercy and truth,” without examining on what the expression is founded. Even in the full consciousness of our utter poverty and wretchedness, we cannot help wishing that every soul were equally poor. O how seldom do we meet with those who are entirely God’s, and yet how happy are such characters! The Lord willingly becomes their portion, their treasure, their all. That this may be the case with us, is my sincerest wish. Pray also for me, my dear sister, and beg the rest of your family to do so likewise, for I have need of it.

October 22nd, 1751.

I am lost in adoration, when I reflect that God has selected such a way to eternal felicity, as takes away

everything from the creature, and gives it all to God, and consequently, sweetly compels us to cleave most closely to him, to abide and live in him and upon him, and to continue always poor, that we may in reality possess all things; a way for children, but only for naked children—a way which the wise overlook. So long as we desire to possess and retain, the road is narrow; and he who seeks it at a distance runs past it; while he who follows the thread of love which is thrown to him, finds it near. May the Lord Jesus himself, proclaim this acceptable year to the poor!”

We seldom see each other face to face, yet still our hearts tell us that we belong to each other, and to one family. Our hearts rejoice that we are still together on the way, and that we possess that in each other, which we do; at least I find it thus in me; and, next to God, I ascribe it to the prayers of his children, that I am still what I am. God must be a very all-sufficient good; for I know that all, who have become a little acquainted with him by experience, cannot do otherwise than cordially love and praise him, even should they afterwards walk for years together in barrenness and darkness. I know, likewise, how to say a little on the subject. I must also occasionally sigh beneath my burden on the way, it is sometimes so heavy to bear; the heaviest part of it is but little seen externally. At present, I have much to bear, both inwardly and outwardly; although those that hear me, may be led to suppose that I enjoy continual sunshine. Still, what can I say of God, but good, who in faith’s severest trials, can yet support the soul, and does so in reality, lest we faint by the way (1 Kings 19:8). He that can commit himself wholly to God, and venture all upon him, will never come short; and by so doing, we honor him. In us there is nothing but weakness and wretchedness; but in Jesus there is abundance of everything we need. How true this is! and yet it is only known in the degree in which the former is in reality felt.

8th March, 1754.

Hitherto has the Lord helped me! and his help hitherto encourages me to hope that he will help me to the end. O what a good and faithful God! Ought we not to love him entirely, venture all in his name, and, with closed eyes, blindly commit ourselves to his guidance? The Lord is well aware that our hearts can best be overcome by love; for which reason he does so much for us; and each of us may, for himself, look over the large account of the lovingkindness and faithfulness of God. God commends his love towards us in so many particulars, and this is his last and greatest attempt to recover man. If the love of God, and the blessings which flow from it, do not constrain us to a reciprocal and cordial love to him, and to a courageous progress in the path of holiness, certainly no other means will accomplish it. My heart still overflows with gratitude for all that goodness, refreshment, and divine support, which I have enjoyed in my late journey, and in your society—it is this which induces me to write in this manner; and from your kind letters I observe, my dear sister, that you and others feel the same. The Lord himself tune our hearts to praise him, and to glorify him in all our actions! I feel that more of my heart remains with you than before; and that bodily absence does not, and cannot part us.

July 5th, 1754.

I cannot express to you, my dear sister, how more than ever worthless and contemptible this life, and the things of time appear to me, and I can often grieve like a child, that mankind, and even pious people, trifle so much, and do not employ their time better. It often gives me pain, to see that God, who is such an ever-present good, should be so little sought, known, loved, and glorified as he deserves. Compassion, at one time, causes me to speak of it; at another, I feel inclined to give up everything, in order not to lose my own time, and to live more for God and eternity. But the will of God must be my food and drink. I can often lose myself in it, and forget all my childish sorrow. There are still not a few persons hereabouts, on whom I can reflect with joy and gratitude to God. “Truly the Lord is good and gracious to his people. He is lovely in himself, and lovely in his children.” (Ps. 16:2)

November 1st, 1754.

His views of the evangelical truths which belong to the economy of human redemption, were as pure as his insight and experience were great. To be convinced of this, it is only necessary to peruse in connection, his writings, particularly *The way of Truth*, with an impartial mind. Even on the outset of his conversion, he contemplated the fundamental truths of religion, in a pure and scriptural light. Of this, the following are proofs. A credible person, still living, relates, that on visiting him in 1727, for the first time, he accompanied him part of the way back, and on taking leave of him, expressly recommended the four following things—the atonement of Jesus, the words of Jesus, the spirit of Jesus, and the example of Jesus: an obvious proof, that he directed those with whom he associated, solely to Jesus Christ, and declared him to them at all times, as the sole procuring cause of our salvation and complete redemption. Another instance—A certain individual once accusing him, that his views and motives were not sufficiently pure, he answered, “how heartily I rejoice, how happy do I esteem myself, when I am counted worthy to give testimony to the sure, and essential, and precious truths of that internal religion, which is regarded with so much suspicion by many pious, as well as impious people! Methinks it would be an inexpressible consolation to me, if in my dying hour, and when I shall have to appear in the presence of God, I could once more proclaim to all the world, that God alone is the fountain of life, and that there is no other way to find and enjoy him, than the narrow way of inward prayer, self-denial, and a life hid with Christ in God, opened out to us, and consecrated by the death of the Savior.” Many of his hymns in *The Spiritual Flower Garden* show that the sentiments and views of the author, and the ground of his faith were pure and unadulterated.

He was well grounded and settled in the doctrines of salvation, of which he had such a clear perception. The experimental insight which was granted him, after his five years of inward darkness, remained subsequently uninterrupted, except that he obtained, from time to time, a more practical acquaintance with them. If his letters are perused, an intimate harmony will be found to prevail from first to last, except that those of the latest dates appear milder, and possess more of the divine unction. Our departed friend was sought after by all parties, but would unite himself with none, except with such as sincerely

endeavored to live according to the written word of God, and the teachings of his grace. He never allowed the light and knowledge of the truth which he possessed, to be obscured, even when it was ill received. He wrote as follows to a Reformed minister, whom he had cautioned against the Moravians, but which caution the latter had taken amiss:

Ought I to speak otherwise than I feel, as is now so much the custom? I have re-perused and examined the letter (namely, that which he had written to the minister) in the presence of God, but I neither can, nor ought, nor will I, say that I acknowledge it contains erroneous sentiments; even when all the world, as in your letter you appear to do, should look upon this holding fast of fundamental truths, as sectarianism, and lack of poverty of spirit. No, O Lord! never allow me to increase the sinfulness you already see in me, by such shameful infidelity, as the giving up, or departing a hair's breadth from the dear deposit of that truth, which you have committed to me, out of weakness or hypocrisy, because this or the other good man, or set of people were opposed to it.

He could be thus confident in the expression of his sentiments on subjects of this nature, because a peculiar gift of trying the spirits was granted him. A few instances of this may not be disagreeable to the reader. In his earlier years, he was frequently attacked by strange spirits, and supernatural influences, which he ascribed to his having associated with some, who stood in connection with them. At this period, when he left his work for the purpose of private prayer, he was seized with such a shaking, that every limb trembled. Being conscious, however, from his knowledge of the divine character, that this was contrary to it, he never gave way to this strange, disorderly, and terrifying influence, but returned to his work. After repeating this a few times, the trembling ceased, and the temptation was at an end.

Another instance: A female in an ill state of health, imagined that she heard a supernatural voice calling upon her to arise and pray; but it being in the winter season, her weak frame could scarcely support the exertion; she therefore consulted our departed friend on the subject, who advised her not to rise in the cold, but when she thought herself again called, instead of getting up, to resume her devotions in bed; upon doing which she heard the supernatural voice no more; and other singular things, which had previously occurred, also ceased. To these, the following relation may be added.

A friend of his once visited him, who was very intimate with a person, who possessed a great degree of filial devotedness to God, but who had seen many extraordinary visions, and to whom many strange things had occurred; she likewise said many edifying things, and foretold events, some of which were to take place after her decease. These, the friend above-mentioned communicated to Tersteegen, who gave him the following reply: "Pay no attention to all these extraordinary things, which are only dangerous, and tend to hinder a growth in grace. I cordially admire the substantial change which divine grace has wrought in her, but you and I will live long enough to see that nothing will follow of all these things, however desirable they may be." The result confirmed this opinion. After her decease, the friend above alluded to, visited him again, and expressed his sorrow at not having paid more attention to his advice; on which he said, "this event will be useful, and serve as a preservative to you in future, to keep you

from being carried away by such singular and extraordinary things, and to pass them by.” The good man, however, despised no extraordinary gifts, light, or visions; but his advice was, that they should be carefully and thoroughly examined; because, persons who gave themselves up to them, might be easily deceived by the influence of strange spirits.

Tersteegen’s gift of trying the spirits, manifested itself particularly in reference to the Moravians. That sect of christians had given themselves all possible trouble to bring him over to their principles, in the hope that many others would follow him; but God did not leave him without the assistance of his light, and afforded him the grace necessary to prove that people.

Count Zinzendorff did all he could to gain him over to him. At first he attempted it by letters, written to him in the tenderest manner, which were sent open to him, by some of the brethren. At length, in the year 1737, one of their principal teachers, a very able man, came to him, threw himself at his feet and implored his blessing, in order, in this manner to win his affections. But notwithstanding all this, he remained firm to his principles, and so little did he allow himself to be deluded by caresses of this nature, that on the contrary, he brought many, who had already joined themselves to that sect, to a better understanding, by laying before them the dangerous consequences that might easily arise from it, so clearly, that they made no scruple to leave it again.⁶

The views which Tersteegen entertained of the Moravians, brought on an unpleasant correspondence with a friend of his, a Reformed minister, in the North of Germany, who stood in connection with that sect; he wrote to him under date, 6th of March, 1750, among other things, as follows:

I believe that the sect of the Moravians is not agreeable in the sight of God; I believe that of them which I mentioned to you personally, and what I have written to you regarding them. And in order to be brief, and not to vex or perplex you by entering into details, I believe that it is true and no fable, what Abbot Steinmetz says of them in his last publication, with which you are also acquainted; and that for this and many other things, they are justly blamable; of which kind of errors and thoughtlessnesses I can never approve or assent to. It is not because I am ashamed of their suspected name, that I correspond no longer with the Moravians, much less in order by so doing, to exclude every well-meaning person from their society, as you erroneously suppose; but partly on account of a repugnance to their chief mistakes which are sufficiently known, and partly from the fear of walking in a broader road, than my Redeemer and all his saints have trodden and taught.

The reason why I correspond no longer with those who associate much with them, or stand in connection with them is, that because I write in a brotherly and familiar style, the Moravians everywhere assert, that I have joined myself entirely to them, and that my letters serve to allure to them, such as are attached to me, etc. Such has often been the case with myself and others. I hope, indeed, they will gradually perceive their error,

⁶ At the commencement, the Moravians were guilty of many inconsistencies, which were afterwards amended.

and amend themselves, to which the mystery of the inward and outward cross, which is so entirely unknown to them, may perhaps serve as a wholesome medicine for their humiliation. It is true I have received direct information from the Hague, of the state of things there, and what new rules and regulations have been made with respect to improvement; nevertheless, as their evident mistakes are not only made known to the world, through the medium of the press, by their opponents, but are boldly maintained by their principal teachers, in language not to be mistaken; and as the coarse levity of their ministers and members is, alas! manifest and undeniable, to the reproach of the precious blood and wounds of Jesus Christ, it will be difficult for them to extricate themselves in the usual manner.

Flat denial, tortured replies, pleasantly skipping over, nay, even mere improvement will not help them out of the labyrinth in the least; but if they really wish to restore to God his glory, to attain peace of conscience, and find favor with men of understanding, they must humbly and openly confess and retract their errors and mistakes, and entreat forgiveness for the offense they have caused.

He notwithstanding let the Moravians see his impartiality towards those who were converted to the truth, to whatever denomination they might belong. On an important occasion, in the year 1741, he felt himself induced by the community above-mentioned, who much courted his attention, briefly to express this impartiality in a letter, of which the following is an extract:

My sentiments and my religion are these, that as one who is reconciled to God, through the blood of Christ, I allow the spirit of Jesus, by means of mortification, affliction, and prayer, to lead me away from self, and all created good, in order that I may live safely to God in Christ Jesus; and cleaving by faith and love to him, I hope to become one spirit with him, and to obtain eternal felicity through his mercy in Christ alone. I have one and the same religion with all those who are like-minded, and love them as the children of God, equally as cordially as those who belong to the same persuasion, and are of the same sentiments with myself.

In other respects, I am perfectly satisfied, when with respect to non-essentials, each one chooses that particular path for himself, which he deems the most suitable for the attainment of the end he has in view; and can love all such, who do not go to work in hypocrisy and sectarianism. I therefore heartily esteem all those among the Moravians, who are of the sentiments described above, and am united with them as children of God. But I have nothing to do with that which distinguishes the Moravians from the rest of the children of God; nor do I by any means, accord with them in it. It grieves me much, that there are already so many divisions in the religious world; but I am much more grieved when new divisions are created.

This impartiality Tersteegen invariably manifested. Being once interrogated by one of the three pious Reformed ministers, with whom he was intimate, and with whom he associated and corresponded in a fraternal manner until his death, of what religion the people were who came to him, he replied, "I ask not from where they come, but where they are going."

The intimate acquaintance with God and divine truth, which Tersteegen possessed, influenced his sentiments towards him. The presence of God appeared to be deeply impressed upon his heart. He knew that God saw all that passed within him; he therefore laid open his inmost soul to this sun of righteousness, in order to be enlightened, warmed, and renovated by its beams. Hence his actions proceeded not from a constrained obedience, nor from the impulse of his own spirit, but were the result of the influence of the love of God. Besides this, he exercised himself constantly in looking unto God alone; in order that by the contemplation of him, he might become more and more enlightened, and imbibe fresh vigor from the immediate presence of his God and Savior. He also recommended to others the divine presence in the soul, as an especial favor, and at the same time reminded them, that light from above is not the result of our own efforts, but must be produced in us by the sweet, powerful, and vivifying presence of God; and this he endeavored as much as possible, in all his writings, to impress upon the minds of his readers. On these occasions he also called to their remembrance, that besides the special presence of God within us, we must likewise believe in his universal presence that God fills heaven and earth—that he is about and in us, and has his hand in all the events and circumstances which occur to us. “It is true, there are seasons,” said he, “in which God withdraws his lovely presence from us for a while, or in which it is concealed from us by outward extremity, deep affliction, fear, and dread; it is then necessary to believe, in the absence of feeling, that God is present, even under such circumstances—that his paternal love overrules all things for our good, defends us from a variety of evils, and graciously supports us under all our trials.”

He lived at the same time, in habitual dependance on God and his guidance, as is evident from the following letter:

May the divine promise, “I will hedge up your way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths,” (Hosea 2:6) be fulfilled in our experience! Let us rather suffer a thousand afflictions with God, than walk in our own way, even were it in the smallest degree. I have experienced the fulfillment of the promise of God above-mentioned, at various times, in various situations, and in various ways. In the beginning, I often felt much anxiety, trouble, and dismay, after having gone astray, until I stood still, and was aware that I had done something displeasing to God. I afterwards experienced an inward feeling, which by its unction, completely soothed and contented me; and the dissatisfaction I found in everything else, was the barrier, which caused me to turn again. At present, I can in fact say nothing on the subject; I pass my life in the best manner I am able, and have, on the whole, little certainty whether I be going right, and what it is that thus preserves me, and hedges up my way; but still, methinks, I am really preserved. When I can be contented with my poverty and insufficiency, and with the situation in which I find myself at the moment, I then seem to be at home and at rest. At such times I am well contented, although I may not be clearly aware of the operation of divine influence within me. But if I do not remain in my state of nothingness, or if I seek and wish to be something else than what I am, I become confused, as it were, in all I do, and everything appears gloomy and difficult to me, without knowing why, until I return. This confusion, difficulty, etc. are therefore the thorns, from which I am most preserved, when most unable to do anything of myself. I will then be gladly weak, in order not to run

without God, that his power and glory may be perfected in my nothingness. Thanks, and praise, and adoration unto our God, who is our faithful guide, and who causes us to become more and more attached to the salutary truths of our nothingness, and his all sufficiency!

January 15th, 1745.

May Jesus, himself, by his Spirit guide us into the way of all truth! (John 16:13) For we are like foolish children, who when left to themselves, continually err from the way, and cannot depend upon yesterday's light. Methinks I become daily more foolish and ignorant, and am therefore astonished that I am still good for anything, or do anything in a proper manner. But experience will teach us, that an unceasing dependance on our internal guide, will lead us entirely right, although it may not appear to us to be so; and that we soil and spoil everything when we do not rely wholly upon him, and are desirous of guiding ourselves by our own light and wisdom.

January 14th, 1746.

I wish to be found faithful and not slothful in that which the Lord gives me to see he requires of me. I desire also to be in continual readiness, again to sacrifice, forsake, and lose, as it were in God, all my so-called good intentions, good will, and good inclinations. O what profound peace results from thus willingly letting everything go, which we possess short of God! We then enjoy all things, while desiring nothing, or while longing solely after God! I think, and sometimes say, "May I be deprived of everything I wish for, beyond the time and place at the moment! Those who are naturally indolent and unfaithful, often imagine themselves in such a state, and endeavor to imitate it; but you know as well as I, that the Spirit of Jesus can alone impart true resignation, and every other fundamental virtue. The pure influence of this vivifying power, which is so exceedingly near us is alone able to destroy self, and soften and allay the ardent fire of nature, so that we can run with patience (Heb. 12:1), and sit still without being idle (John 11:28-29); because in this manner, Christ himself becomes our will, our life, and our delight. How happy therefore are those souls, who walk in the way of the heart, and silently retire within themselves, waiting, praying, and giving place to the operation of him, who alone gives life! Perhaps a little while only, and we shall meet each other in that blissful eternity, which is our native country, with unspeakable joy, to the infinite praise and glory of our God, who has called us, and permitted us to meet in this land of exile. Amen, Jesus!

August 3rd, 1753.

How quietly I can sit down, when my work is done! What then will that rest be, which we shall eventually enjoy! Therefore let us not be weary in the service of so good and faithful a master, whose service is itself our happiness already. It is true that all our performances are poor, unimportant, and imperfect—let us, therefore, not take them into account, but regard them, not so much as a duty, but as our happiness and salvation. If we

were to delay doing good, till we could do it perfectly, we should wait too long. It is a maxim with me, that a man should go forward, even though imperfectly; let such a one only persevere in praying, suffering, denying himself, being faithful, etc., although much may still be mingled with it, which requires to be separated. These ought ever to be our sentiments. A childlike heart willingly and daily strives to improve, and rejoices when anyone shows it its failings. “The Lord guides the meek, (namely, those who are glad to be told of their faults,) and teaches them his way. He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.” (Prov. 2:7) The firm and sincere resolution and determination to serve the Lord, is itself sufficient to rejoice the heart; what then, will the progress and termination do? It is a dangerous temptation of the adversary when upright minds allow themselves to be completely cast down by the unbelieving (I had almost said proud) view of their infirmities, in the performance of good works; such characters ought only to plead guilty, humble themselves, and go forwards. He who loves and exercises prayer will, in due time, be gradually translated from self into God—from the impure and imperfect working in his own strength, into a working through God and for God. I only wish that all, from the very commencement of their way, would consider godliness, or the service of God, in a proper light, that is, as happiness and salvation, to which we are called, and which God deigns to grant unto us; and that the sooner and the more they forsake themselves and the creature by prayer and self-denial, they the sooner approach unto God, even though they neither see nor feel it, and consequently become more happy; for God himself is essentially our salvation and our end. The more cordially and completely we live to God, the more happy we become from that moment. O this is so exceedingly true!—yet he who does not seek after communion with God through prayer, cannot properly understand it.

March 11th, 1755.

He also resigned himself entirely to God. On this subject he writes as follows:

I cannot say much of myself, for it is a subject too dark for me; I leave it all to God. I am constantly obliged to write, speak, and do much, which does not appear to accord with my state of mind. I seek nothing, but do not wish to escape anything. In all cases, I only wish to follow the Lord, but cannot say that I do so, and am far from thinking that I labor solely in the Lord, although I desire to do so; I am perhaps hindered by associating and corresponding too much with others; but of this I dare not think. I must make a complete surrender of myself. If I have any merit, it consists in my weakness and wretchedness, for these appear to have assisted me much, and help me still to commit myself wholly unto God, after having sought in vain for support from my own faithfulness. I see nothing else within me, but am not disturbed on this account; on the contrary I possess a very tender, but at the same time general impression of the infinite goodness and loveliness of God, yet still the relish of it is not afforded me.

February 27th, 1742.

Jesus, close our eyes in life and death, that we may no longer contemplate ourselves and what regards us,

but commit ourselves nakedly, blindly, and entirely unto you, assenting willingly and sincerely to our own nothingness, and thus, in the artless carelessness of faith, live and die with you and in you! Amen.

August 29th, 1741.

The more that soul and spirit are divided asunder by the quick and powerful word of God (Heb. 4:12), and by his purifying dispensations, the more undisturbed will be our peace, in the midst of changes and vicissitudes, when God leads us into them. However, as it regards myself, I find I am deficient in every point. I do, or strive to do, as well as I can. I wish to live to, and to follow, not myself, but the Lord. I experience that he is unspeakably kind to me in all things. I occasionally perceive that my mind is at peace, but at other times I am not aware of it, and must make myself content.

January 25th, 1748.

As long as union with God is sensible, the communication is only made through the senses. I find myself so weak and destitute, that with regard to myself, I would rather write nothing respecting the state of my soul. But it is nevertheless true, that I occasionally seem to experience something of a divine communication, which is exceedingly precious, but which lasts only a few moments. We must seek to do nothing and to retain nothing, but resign ourselves and all we have and are into the Lord's hands. Every good thing comes from him, and he can give or take it away of his good pleasure. I sometimes think that which is really good, would not appear to me to be so, were it in my own possession; but I am infinitely well pleased, that the Lord alone is good. In this, I say perhaps too much of myself, but it is not my intention to do so, nor dare I trouble myself on that account; the Lord however enables me to cast myself, and all I am and have, quietly into his hands. May he be loved and glorified to all eternity! Amen.

November 4th, 1742.

I wish you much grace, to enable you, with a childlike spirit, to forget and forsake yourself, in order that you may be received in and by the Lord, and be kept until the end. Yes, my dear sister, in the Lord alone is our salvation and our glory. Do you not feel it to be so? What does he require more of his handmaid, than that she resign herself, just as she is, into his hands, and in future regard herself as little, as a thing which has once been given away. Will He not take sufficient care of us? Will He not redeem and sanctify us, better than we are able to do? Shall we lack anything, in His hands? May all such as are in circumstances of trial and affliction, feel persuaded of this! O Lord! grant this to them, and grant it to us all until the end! Amen.

May 8th, 1753.

See, my dear sister, does not the Lord do all things well? Does he not deal with me gently, and like a father? O yes, I should certainly be in a measure comfortable and at rest, were I left more at peace externally. But yet I ought not to say so, unless I had more of the mind and temper of a child, that considers little what is good or hurtful, or what it is able or unable to do; I ought to commit myself to God in simplicity of heart, continuing to live at the expense of his grace, and believing myself able in him, and with him, to do and to suffer all that his providence from time to time may give me to endure and perform. In my present weak condition, I have no sensible, inward communication, and occasionally do not often think of myself, yet God be praised, I am pretty well and tranquil in him.

May 20th, 1755.

I am singularly circumstanced, even more so than I am conscious of myself, or am able to express, and perhaps it were better, if I knew and said nothing at all on the subject. I am sometimes so astonished at my poverty and weakness, no one would believe; at another time, I am amazed at my strength, and that I am so much at ease. At one time, and indeed generally, I am so ignorant of everything, that if I began to reflect upon it, I should be quite at a loss with myself on the smallest occasion; and before I am aware, I again begin to talk and act, as one who goes to work with a great degree of light and certainty. I am entirely without any knowledge of my way, and know not that I ever read of anything similar. I do not feel so much on committing an evident mistake, as I do on a single consideration of my own state, when caring for myself, or when attempting to help myself. On such occasions nothing but reproof and uneasiness ensue; but when I forget myself, and continue to live simply on the grace of God, I am instantaneously as quiet and contented, as one who is at his post. It even seems as if something great and excellent were at hand—a strength in weakness, a knowledge in ignorance, a unity in variety. I am well aware that some of the saints have passed through states, in which they would perhaps have expressed themselves in a similar manner; but this is not the case with me. I am not only wretched, but exceedingly so, and this the Lord well knows. I should be terrified, were I to compare my state with that of these holy men; and while I write this, I really fear, dear sister, that you may conceive too exalted ideas of my state. Is it not wonderful to see things, so different in themselves, and apparently at variance, in one and the same person? What will you make of it, or how will you explain it? I must therefore only close the account with saying, “God is a perfect all; the creature a poor nothing,” and return to that which I recognize as the best, and productive of the greatest peace of mind, that is, forgetting myself as much as I can and continuing to live simply on the grace of God. O Lord, confirm us in this resignation of ourselves, that we may never return to ourselves, and that all that is within us, may sing with your handmaid Hannah, “There is none holy but the Lord, for beside him there is none else.” (1 Samuel 2:2) Amen.

July, 1747.

He tranquillized his mind on all occasions in the all-wise and good pleasure of God:—

This is my endeavor without fatiguing myself, that I may rest in my own nothingness and poverty, as I feel them at the moment, desiring to live solely in and by love. I appear to myself different at different times. At one time, I seem to be in some respects, a warrior, and again at another, I am weakness and poverty itself, so that I should pity myself, did I continue to entertain such thoughts; but the Lord be praised, that he does not allow me to do so long, and often awakens in me a secret satisfaction, at the thought of what he is, and that he alone is good.

October 11th, 1746.

All that is within me inclines to retirement, tranquillity, dormancy of imagination, and unity in and with God. To be able so to live, is life indeed. This, methinks, is my station, my food, the object of my calling—to live retired, be emptied of everything, to be alone with God in the Spirit, and separated from the world, at rest and in silence, giving place to God and things divine; from which alone result truth, and strength, and life, and salvation. How dear to me are the moments which I can spare for that purpose! But it appears as if they will not allow me to enjoy my food in peace and quietness. While I give, or rather seem to give to others, I imagine I occasionally receive a few crumbs myself. I am well aware that the will of God can and ought to be my food; but when do I possess the will of God?

I mean to say, I do not always know what is the will of God; on the contrary, the thought often occurs to me, whether a creature does right, in giving so much of his time to others. But I am already tired of complaining, and hope to induce you by this means, to offer me up, so much the more, in your prayers to God, that I may but please him in all things, for I desire nothing else; yea, I repeat it, I desire nothing else than to please him, to be his, and to live to him, in time and in eternity. And this I prefer, with every attendant burden, pain, and inconvenience, to living to myself, in the possession of every pleasure and gratification, if such a thing were possible. In this matter, I do not inquire whether this determination be entirely pure and sincere, or whether something very different does not lie at the bottom of it. I leave it all to God, from whom alone is my salvation; and my spirit rejoices that my soul's salvation and glory is alone from him and in him. O then, let us go forward, relying solely on his grace, with the simplicity of little children, and doing to the Lord what our hand finds to do, without having much regard to ourselves or our own doings!

October 5th, 1748.

I wish to live and to suffer, according to the will of God. I can remember the time, when I could suffer, so to speak, with the courage of a hero; but now I must act like a child, that cries now and then, when it is in pain, and has no idea of patience. And when my head is so very weak, I often do not know where my mind is, but must live a mere natural life. I am occasionally conscious that I am in good hands, but I generally know nothing of it, and I ought at such times to wish for nothing else. I know not that I have any desire on earth, or wish to entertain any other, than that of Paul—the desire to please God, whether at home, or in the body. From which circumstance, I perceive there is a holy ambition; for the original, literally translated runs thus: “We are

ambitious to depart, etc.” Self-love thinks, what can I do better than to be in heaven, and will not buy it too dear; but divine love does not regard such a heaven; the good pleasure of God is its heaven, its honor, its glory. It is this, strictly speaking, to which divine love, in its nature and properties, has respect; and the holy ambition of this love, softly yet powerfully impels it continually to seek more and more to please God; nor is it conscious of a greater honor or happiness, in time or eternity, than to please him, whether at home, or in the body. O Lord, give us this love of yours, and grant it us more abundantly, that we may serve you in a worthy manner, and not by cleaving to ourselves, be deprived of you and of your heavenly peace! Amen!

August 14th, 1750.

Our departed friend had, at the same time, a firm confidence in God; to this the following letters bear testimony:

I continue to live internally on divine grace. I feel I must do nothing, and desire nothing, and letting God do as seems him good, be as a child, contented. The view of myself makes me confused, unless the Lord lead me to it. It is strange that we can be so miserable and good for nothing, and yet be able to trust in such a manner upon God. O what a benevolent being! O what substantial goodness! While loving us, he regards not what we are in ourselves; and in loving him, it is his will that we should forget ourselves. He is all that can make us peaceful and happy. At one time, he lets us see and experience what he is to us, and what he works in us; and at another, he lets us see and feel ourselves; and then he again conceals his way with us and his purposes towards us from our view, in order to simplify and cleanse us, and excite us to regard nothing but him, and to resign ourselves more entirely into his hands.

December 3rd, 1745.

All truth we shall experience to be truth, according to our measure of faith, and the gracious purposes of God in Christ towards us. Miserable as I may be, I must still confess, that in the dealings of our great Redeemer with us, in gradually causing everything to be taken from the creature, and restored to God, whereby every ground of confidence and expectation from ourselves is destroyed, and God alone becomes our sole support, expectation, and eternal salvation, I see more and more, and at times, I might also say, I taste something extremely sweet, desirable and heavenly. How excellent this is, how ought it to delight our hearts! Were it possible to find in ourselves any ground of trust, how reasonable to wish for its overthrow, to have the happiness of trusting in God alone! Receiving salvation as a mere free gift, is methinks, alone salvation. But, O Lord, which of us understands this as it ought to be understood! As it respects ourselves, who know in our degree, that the way of the Lord which leads us to it, is not always according to our ideas and our taste, O how ought this to induce us to resign ourselves blindly, nakedly, and unconditionally to God, and without regarding ourselves, to let our dear Redeemer deal with us as seems him good! Well, it is he who must grant it to us, and he will work in us

that to which we are called. Blessed be his name to all eternity! Amen.

November 17th, 1750.

Methinks the child Jesus kindly invites us to come to him, showing us his fulness, and asking, if we cannot find enough in him. O! if we could better close our roving eyes, forsake ourselves, and give up all, we should soon find, in the naked innocence of faith, another mode of existence, and beholding and finding nothing in ourselves, but poverty and want, delight ourselves in the Lord, in whom we should find all that our hearts desire, and to whom we could commit our way without hesitation. (Ps. 37). But still, my dear sister, you must not form too favorable an opinion of me from this letter, as though I continually lived in superfluity and enjoyment. O no! you certainly know better. But still, God be praised! I have enough, even when possessing nothing: nor can I say, that I particularly desire much enjoyment here on earth. My daily bread is sufficient. I know that God is, thanks to his name! I know that he is the God of our hearts, and that all things are in him. I can, therefore, often in simplicity, rejoice, as though all those riches, which I know my Lord possesses, were my own, while wishing him their exclusive possession; and I occasionally commend these riches to others in such a manner, that they doubtless regard me as rich, while at the same time, I am poor and destitute, and sometimes even make myself still poorer, when I cannot, with sufficient simplicity, forget myself; for this is also not in my own power. You understand me well, and will not forget, with the other dear children of God, to remember me before the Lord, of which I stand so much in need.

December 31st, 1753.

I am weak, but the Lord is mighty, and can manifest himself within us, as such, at his pleasure. Methinks it suits us best, and is our proper station to be poor, and helpless, and nothing; and that all that is within us should bow at his name, who alone can say, I am! O that we might look alone unto him, and forever seek in him our delight, and our true and only rest!

August 10th, 1753.

The magnitude of the riches which Tersteegen found in God, was equalled by the poverty he found in himself. This is evident from many of the preceding letters, and likewise from the following:

I do not know how it stands with me. God allows me to retain nothing on which I can place dependance; I mean to say, I can no longer attach myself to anything with any degree of warmth or pleasure. I hover, as it were, in the air. I have, it would seem, no settled state, nor any stated occupation. I am not permitted either to look or reflect further than the ground on which my foot stands. I am, as it were, hurried forwards. I am full of misery and disease, but no time is allowed me, so to speak, to look around me. I would gladly serve the Lord, and

please him; but I am ignorant whether the wish be wholly pure or not. You see, my dear sister, how wonderful my way is, and how necessary it is, that you and others pray for me. I am looked upon as quite another person, to what I am in reality—God knows it. May he overrule all things to his glory!

August 15th, 1749.

I cannot say otherwise than that the Lord has been good to me, and that he is so still, in continually granting me grace to overlook and forget myself, as a thing of no use; and by means of a cheerful assent to my own nothingness, escape, as it were, from myself, resting and rejoicing with simplicity in this, that God is such a one as he is. O this is a truth so great and important, and a subject so adorable, that it is alone able wholly and perfectly to satisfy and content us! My dear sister, how poor and worthless, and sinful we are in ourselves! Who would believe it, and who could bear the sight of it, if God did not give us a view of himself by faith, which covers, as it were, our sinfulness, and makes ample reparation for our unworthiness? We may look at the subject from whatever point we choose, the firm foundation on which we must build and rely, is God alone, and him eternally. When by cheerfully assenting to our own poverty, we really give him the glory, then his bowels yearn, even towards the most miserable. Glory be ascribed unto our God forever and ever. Amen!

December, 3rd, 1751.

Ah, my dear sister! I am not in possession of that which you suppose me to be; and when I have it, which may perhaps be sometimes the case, it is merely for a time. Previously and subsequently, I am like a poor man, who has nothing in reserve; but not always like a poor child, for then I should neither desire to know nor possess anything. I am not, however, always thus minded, and would willingly look a little before me. The Lord grant that this also may tend to my humiliation!

I have often ardently wished, that I had never been unfaithful, or guilty of a single sin; but after a retrospective view of the matter, and after having found an atonement in Christ, my sins of omission and commission, which I abhor, must only serve the more to exalt the glory of God and his grace. I have palpable reason to humble myself, and to confess, that in truth, there is none good but God. I have obvious motives for forsaking myself, and letting myself drop, that I may be found alone in Jesus. I have evident cause to approach unto God, in the greatest nakedness and poverty of spirit and consequently so much the more purely, more than if I could call to mind a whole register of faithfulness and virtue. Alas! The power and the riches of the merits of the blood of Jesus are seldom recognized in the manner in which they ought to be!

November 1st, 1754.

It is incredible how soon we begin to rely, in some degree upon ourselves, in seasons of light and strength,

and sensible communication; and it is this, of which you, as well as myself, stand as much in fear, as of the greatest evil; for we see our salvation alone in glorifying God. The first title which is applied to our Lord and Savior, (Isaiah 9:6) is “Wonderful,” and so is his manner of dealing with us likewise. In order to bring us to the salvation just mentioned, he often strips us, after having obtained firm hold of us, of our light and strength, and of the glorious blessings for which we had longed so ardently, in order that we may seek them the more purely in him, while rejoicing in our own nothingness and his all-sufficiency. We ought therefore, without delay, to forsake ourselves, in order that by thus forgetting ourselves, we may obtain true rest and peace.

January 10th, 1755.

Our mutual union and fellowship in spirit makes amends for that interruption, which has for awhile taken place in our correspondence. Yet for me it was sufficient, and often proved refreshing to my heart. I found, and find you still very near me; and sometimes say to you much more than pen or tongue can express. I cannot but think, that the Lord sometimes conveys something of it to your spirit, and causes you to approach unto God with me, to adore him, glorify him, love him, and lose ourselves in the abyss of his goodness, which has no regard to our utter unworthiness; an unworthiness, which appears like an abyss to me, and which, if I did not view it in the light of divine grace, would make me backward in holding social fellowship with God and his children, but which, in this point of view, seems desirable to me, because I find it so serviceable to my humiliation; a frame of mind, which is indispensably requisite, in order truly to be able to approach unto God as we ought. The poorer, the more humble and destitute we are, the more unreservedly, freely, and purely can we unite ourselves with God and his children, and the more capable are we of the participation of the divine favor. It was once whispered in my heart, “Come like a naked infant, and then shall my bosom receive you.” Self-love makes us afraid of mortification and privation, and represents them to us in a melancholy light; but the reverse is the truth, for as soon as they are cheerfully submitted to, they are found to be pleasing and salutary; but as long as we refuse them admittance, they produce sorrow of heart and countenance, and are often the occasion of many tedious sufferings.

“Christ humbled himself.” (Phil. 2). We cannot humble ourselves, but must let ourselves be humbled. Christ humbles us by his guidance of us, and by his Spirit; and thus he makes us acceptable to God, in and through him. This ought to be a great consolation, even for the most miserable; because they need only to approach as such, in order to receive from God every needful grace and virtue. And even by those, who are already more or less in the possession of these divine favors, the humiliation which Jesus works in them, ought to be highly prized and valued; for they are thereby made truly great: (2 Sam. 22:36) their communion with God becomes thereby more pure and more firmly grounded, and they learn from experience, to bow the knee at the name of Jesus, which is the beginning of salvation. We ought sincerely to abhor all past and present unfaithfulness and sin, and every species of evil; to long ardently to be thoroughly freed from them; and earnestly to follow after holiness, without which we shall never behold the face of God. But how I rejoice, on examining both the good and the evil, to find the conclusion of the matter to be thus, that after fully acquiescing in our own nothingness,

we must give the honor and glory alone to our God, through Jesus Christ! Yea, amen, O Lord, for yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever, Amen!

September 12th, 1755.

His poverty of spirit enabled him to walk in unfeigned humility. By means of his discourses and writings, he was undoubtedly a blessing to many; he nevertheless made so little account of this, that once in the earlier part of his life, he candidly avowed, that it had never entered into his mind to believe that God would make use of him for the benefit of others; and he only once expressed himself to the following effect, where speaking of a certain individual, who had never seen him, and who resided upward of a hundred miles distance from him, that if God had ever made use of him to any purpose, it had been to that person. To another, who regarded him as very pious, and said something highly in his praise, he replied, "I have need to retire into a hovel, to weep over my sins."

He evidenced on all occasions, a similar unfeigned humility, accompanied with a sincerity, which was peculiar to him. When he was in company with awakened persons, he used to say on taking leave, "My dear children, when I sit down among you, I feel as if I were unworthy of it, and the same ought to be the case with you also." Being once in Holland, in the company of several friends, one of them, who bore a high character for piety, related many things to him, respecting the persecutions he had endured, his severe trials, and personal experience. Tersteegen, with much modesty replied, "If we have already tasted and experienced much, and have passed through many trials, the result ought to be a lowly, artless, and childlike spirit."

The following meek reply, which he gave to a certain friend, who accused him of partiality, self-love, and self-conceit, will likewise sufficiently convince the impartial reader how mean he was in his own eyes, notwithstanding all the gifts and graces that he possessed. The answer was, "I confess before God, with all simplicity, that I have never considered nor avowed myself entirely free from self-love and self-conceit, but I should be sorry to cherish anything of the kind, however latent. I know I still need many things, nor do I pretend, as you suppose, to be so deeply grounded in poverty of spirit, although through grace, I have attained the desire to be so; and therefore believe me, that your present wish, that I may grow up to the stature of a perfect man, is much more agreeable to me, than your appearing to suppose me almost a man and a father in Christ, which, thank God, it has never entered into my mind to assert; but if what I now write should perhaps appear to you an affectation of humility, I must be silent, and content myself with this, that my heart absolves me in the presence of God, and that in reality, and therefore according to truth, I think thus of myself. O God! you see that I know myself to be but a poor, weak, and helpless infant. Enable me ever to rejoice, when others know me to be so, and make no account of me. But although I be such a one, as your eye sees me to be, you have nevertheless given me to love you, although much less than I ought, and infinitely less than you deserve, but I have this confidence, that in your light I have become

acquainted with you and your truth, and behold and place in you alone, all my felicity. O you that search the inmost recesses of the heart, I appeal to you, if this be not in reality and sincerity the truth!"

Another instance of his humility, may be adduced in a confidential reply he gave, upon being asked if it were proper to call aged and experienced christians "father and mother:" he writes, "It has always heartily displeased me, and humbled me before God, when I have been occasionally and very undeservedly called father."

On another occasion he says, "I hold myself wholly unworthy, and feel humbled when a child of God calls me brother, let alone desiring the appellation of father."

He gave to God alone all the glory. It was his delight, and his food and drink to praise him, and to magnify his greatness, excellence, and all-sufficiency. He never omitted testifying of him, when he could do so, either by writing, or by conversation. In this respect he would gladly have done still more; but his weak state of body, and other circumstances, did not admit of it. What he says upon this subject, in a preface to one of his hymns, is very remarkable.

During my short career, I have, through grace, experienced many favors at the hands of God, while under the cross, and have been taught many great things concerning him. Observe, I say *through grace*. I therefore, twenty years ago, had the intention of composing before my decease, a hundred thanksgiving hymns, as a sacrifice of praise to God for the mercies he has shown me, and given me to experience. But many other labors, and the infirmities of my advancing years, deprive me of the hope of undertaking it on this side of eternity. I wish to close my lips on earth, while praising this gracious God, and expect through his mercy, an endless and happy eternity, in which I may fulfill my vows unto God, and offer up unto him, with all the glorified saints, more than a hundred-fold tribute of praise. Amen. Hallelujah!

He once said to a friend, that he had invariably received the greatest blessings and manifestations of divine favor, in sickness, and in other external and internal privations; and when the same individual once mentioned to him, that the time set apart for prayer was as burdensome to her, as if she were in a field of battle, he put this serious question to her: "Is it anything wonderful that the angels praise God?" She answered, "No, for if we were in their place, we should do so likewise." "That is also my opinion," replied he, "but when Job praised God, while sitting on his dunghill, that was something noble: and this praise pleased him better than that of angels."

To his humility, above alluded to, may, with reason, be added his surprising patience in sufferings, his meekness and lenient disposition towards his adversaries, and his compassion and forbearance towards those that had fallen. Continual opportunity was afforded him for the exercise of patience. From what has already been said, and from his letters, it is sufficiently obvious that from his youth up, he labored under many diseases and complaints; and he was particularly subject to them, during the last thirty years of his

life, which rendered his many occupations, such as ministering to the sick, receiving visits, his extensive correspondence, and a variety of vexatious circumstances which attended them, perhaps so much the more oppressive. In short, his whole life was nothing else but a continual and very painful illness; a few instances of which are here subjoined. “A week ago,” says he in a letter to a friend, “I was attacked by a sinus infection in the head, which settled itself on the left side, in, behind, and about the ear, with such an acute pain which continued night and day, that my head throbbed convulsively every moment. To this, a fever joined itself. I was obliged to lie down, but was scarcely able to do so. A day or two after, I seized with a severe problem in my bowels; the cold sank into my neck and chest, and made me cough much, which was very painful both to my head and body. The end of our lamentations is—going home.”

On another occasion, he wrote to a friend as follows: “On Friday morning before Whitsuntide, I had to write an urgent letter, in doing which, I was seized with a trembling from head to foot. In the evening I was attacked by fever, and a severe pain in the limbs, which, during the night, became a confirmed rheumatism in the thick part of the leg, so that I knew not where to put myself, on account of the acuteness of the pain; and this was accompanied with the greatest repugnance to every sort of food. Yet in this situation, I was obliged to receive, while confined to bed, four friends from C_____, and three from E_____. Thanks be to God, who has helped me hitherto. I have not suffered like a hero, but like an infirm person. But I must break off here; a cold sweat which comes over me, will not allow me to write more.”

To a friend who visited him, he once said, “I have an eruption over my whole body, and my back is so sore, that my shirt adheres to it; besides which, I have a corporal injury, from which I suffer much pain.” The person to whom he related this, evidenced much compassion for him, but he said, “The old man has sinned, and therefore he must suffer.” In the latter years of his life, he could so ill bear food, on account of the weakness of his stomach, that he said, “I am always sorry when my dinner is brought up; for the lightest food causes me much pain and difficulty.”

Besides his bodily afflictions, he had much to suffer in his later years, not only from a scorning and blaspheming world, but also from friends, whose imperfections the Lord made use of to perfect him the more. To some, he seemed to do too much, to others, too little: and others again, envied him on account of his gifts, and because he was so much beloved and esteemed by many. But he bore all this with exemplary patience. When seized with the most acute pains, he endured them with so much resignation, that it was scarcely to be observed that he was suffering under them. In the exercise of patience, he manifested such fortitude, that during a violent toothache, he once said he had need of patience, and yet sang the hymn, *Venture Boldly*, etc.

A friend relates the following instance of his patience, forbearance, and compassion with the fallen. “In Tersteegen’s society, I had for several years enjoyed many blessings, from his edifying walk and conversation; but after some time had elapsed, I became disobedient to the grace of God, so that my

corruptions, and the devices of the adversary, occasioned me a grievous fall. Having by this afflicted the good man so much, and being ashamed of myself, and fearful of receiving a rebuke from him, I ceased visiting him. After he had observed this for some time, he sent for me. I went to him in the full expectation of being sharply reproved by him, which I was fully conscious I had merited; instead of which, he met me with the affection of a father, and tenderly embraced me; by which my heart was deeply affected, and my love and confidence in God and his dear servant were awakened afresh. He gave me, at the same time, the necessary instructions respecting my conduct; and exhorted me to obedience to the grace of God. After this he kept a more watchful eye upon me till his death. Another time he said to me and three other friends, "Children, be upon your guard, and avoid every occasion of sinning. The men of the world can often more easily keep themselves from falling, by means of their rational powers, than those who are become pious through grace, unless they carefully avoid the opportunity of offending, for the enemy tries to ensnare them, more than the former."

When Tersteegen heard that one or other of his friends had returned to the world, or had been in any degree unfaithful in their outward conduct, it often occasioned him sleepless nights, and extorted from him the most mournful sighs. On one occasion he expressed himself as follows: "O what a load of anxiety and care do those who are divinely called, occasion me, who walk unfaithfully before the Lord! It gives me so much pain, that I am often obliged to throw myself on my face before God. O if they only knew the affliction, which those occasion me, who live in a state of such false security!"

His meekness and peaceable disposition towards his opponents were equally remarkable. He had to endure much contradiction, bitterness, and enmity from them, although he well knew how, when they came to find fault with him, to receive them so affectionately, that it was impossible for them to show any degree of warmth in his presence.

Yet still he never swerved a hair's breadth, when the honor of God, and the testimony of the truth was concerned, but God granted him so much wisdom and meekness, that the majority were convinced of the truth, became ashamed of themselves, and were positively overcome by his affectionate and pacific behavior. It has never been heard said of him, that he treated his adversaries with anger, either personally, or in writing; this fact will be substantiated by the following instances. He wrote the subjoined letter to a friend at a distance, who had attacked him with much bitterness:

Cease in future, to attack a brother in the manner you have done, or to desire that he should be ashamed in the presence of Christ, on account of things which never entered into his mind. God knows! it is something really harsh and inconsiderate. I will forget it. In the name of Jesus, and in humble reliance on his mercy, I will predict to you and to myself, something far better; namely, that although we may not be unanimous and understand each other in this matter, yet, if we love one another, and strive to attain the object of our calling, we shall soon embrace each other in the presence of Jesus Christ, with the most tender and unfeigned affection, without being ashamed; and have neither anything to forgive, nor with which to reproach one another. Blessed Jesus! this

dear brother wishes me to be ashamed of myself in your sight! My God, my Savior! you alone know how much reason I have to be truly ashamed and deeply humbled in your glorious presence, on account of my nakedness, and multiplied wretchedness by nature. But did not my sin and shame fall upon you? Will you not therefore permit me to behold you, and that with such calmness and freedom, that my face shall not be ashamed. (Ps. 34:6). You dearest friend, who are the nearest to my soul, my joy, and all my glory, let it please you that my brother may see for his consolation, that your countenance does not convict me of that, which his pen lays to my charge. Fill his heart with grace and peace, and bless him eternally! Amen.

The year before, being in Holland, a person of high rank invited him to be his guest. This individual imagined himself to have attained to a state of peculiar inward peace, and therefore took occasion, during dinner, to criticize Tersteegen for being too active, and for not sufficiently knowing the ground on which he wrought. Tersteegen attended meekly and silently to all that was said; but when dinner was over, he offered up a fervent prayer, in which he commended his host to the Lord, in terms of such affection and compassion, that this great and warm-tempered man was so much struck and affected by it, that his feelings overpowered him, and he fell upon Tersteegen's neck, and begged forgiveness.

Being in Amsterdam on another occasion, he was present at a numerous assembly of various friends, some of whom were his most intimate ones, but others of a different description. Among these was a pious elderly man, to whom much attention was paid, and who was also a man of much talent and respectability. Tersteegen's simplicity, frankness, and unaffected manner, appeared strange and suspicious in the eyes of this individual; he therefore began to put a variety of questions to him, and to raise all sorts of objections. Tersteegen answered them briefly, plainly, and prudently; and led the inquirer, unobserved, from the circumference to the center of the circle. He finally concluded all with an affectionate parting prayer and benediction, so that they all saluted him and took a very kind leave of him.

This affords the most suitable opportunity of saying something respecting the manner in which he treated those who were seeking salvation. It would be doing him great injustice to suppose that he sought their society, or endeavored to procure himself followers; it may be inferred, even from his own words, how far removed he was from this. A certain individual once desired he would send for a pious lady, who lived at a distance, and who wished to become acquainted with him, upon which he sent the following reply, dated September 19th, 1766.

Sister N_____ is one of those whom I most love and esteem in H_____; she has a noble and inquiring mind, but I cannot invite her here; for the case was very different at the time when I sung,

*You know how I rejoice to see
The souls that give themselves to you.*

I lived at that time incognito, even when I was accidentally in company, and loved, as it were at a distance,

without giving way to it; nothing being expected from me. But I can never remember the time that I found my chief delight in the society or labors of any, however much I might love them. The vital knowledge of such an all-sufficient, omnipresent God, produced in me a deep and habitual inclination to live retired and be alone with God. What I have done, deficient as its performance may be, has been done only in accordance with the leadings of Providence and supposed duty. Ah, our fellow creatures are often a hindrance to us, and we to them! My maxim still is, “to be glad to enjoy the society of the children, but much more so that of the Father.”

He wrote to the same individual, under date April the 3rd, 1767, as follows:

This week I have already had four visitors from the duchy of Berg; and a friend from S_____, who has the right aim in view, has been here some days. The Latin proverb, *Qui bene latuit, bene vivit*, (who lives retired, lives well,) becomes daily of more importance to me. Of how much time and strength do even our good fellow creatures deprive us! How easily we do ourselves harm, even when we think we are useful to others! The trials and afflictions that accompany it, may well serve as a suitable remedy and preservative. The Lord overrule all things for the best, and draw us powerfully to himself, and grant us true fidelity in the exercise of earnest prayer and inward retirement, in order that we may give place to the divine operation and influences, from where we must derive our strength, and life, and being, wholly and solely, both in adversity, and prosperity.

And on another occasion, “O God, what advantages do those possess, who have nothing else to think of but themselves and you; and how filthy the pearl frequently becomes, which passes through so many hands! May your good pleasure be our constant food, and your lovely presence our strength!”

That which Tersteegen expressed in these letters in word, he evidenced in deed. In order to escape the attachment and society of men, he often retired, during the summer, to a wood where he could hold communion with his God in solitude. In this manner he used to pass whole days, which he often called his sweetest time, and supported himself only with a little refreshment, which he took with him.

Going once with a friend to a meeting, where he was expected to give an address, he said to him, “I would rather hide myself from all the world, than let myself be seen and heard.” At another time he said, “I myself sincerely wish that the name of Tersteegen might be forgotten by everyone, and on the contrary, that the name of Jesus might be impressed on every heart.”

We subjoin another remarkable passage in a letter he wrote to a Moravian friend, who accused him of sectarianism:

I hope I have never shown, during all the years of my calling, that I sought to form a party, or to obtain followers. To this moment, I continually hear complaints from far and near, that I withdraw myself so much. O God, light that never flatters, you know me! I am suspicious of my own heart on all occasions, and in your sight I cannot and will not justify myself—but behold how a brother judges of me! You know how painful the

sacrifice has been to me, to give up my time, and strength, and ease, and my beloved solitude, for the sake of others. Have I not done it purely for your sake, imperfect as it may be, and from a fear of displeasing others by acting otherwise? Do I seek anything else than to lead souls to you, and not to myself? O if the latter be the case, banish it far from me! O then, turn away the hearts of all men from me in this respect, and let me live despised and forgotten, alone with you! For I know, and can appeal to you for the truth of the assertion, I know that you, O my God! are alone sufficient for me.

March 6th, 1750

But notwithstanding his attempts to escape the attachment of his fellow creatures, the widely diffused radiance of his godliness and his superior gifts, procured him many visits from far and near. He had visitors from Switzerland, from all parts of Germany, Holland, England, Sweden, and other countries. His correspondence with awakened individuals was equally extensive and considerable. He was visited by persons of all ranks, from the highest to the lowest, and also by learned and pious divines, some of whom availed themselves of his advice in cases and affairs of importance. A friend of his calling upon him on one occasion, he said to him, “the day before yesterday, Count W_____, with his steward and friend, visited me incognito.”

But of all those that came to him, none gave him greater pleasure, than such as had entirely devoted themselves to God, and bore in their amiable tempers and dispositions, the distinguishing characteristics of his children—these were his sole delight on earth. Such of them as lived in the country, when weak or ill, he visited occasionally himself, and to his last moments, felt peculiar gratification and refreshment in their company.

He had received of the Lord a remarkable gift, in the wisdom he manifested in his conduct towards awakened and pious souls. A wounded heart seldom left him, without feeling comforted and invigorated. He was at the same time so humble, so insignificant in his own eyes, and so affectionate, that those who came to him, confessed to him, without reserve, the sins with which they were burdened; on which he impressively directed them to the Savior of sinners, and well knew how to convince them thoroughly, that mercy and forgiveness are alone to be found in him. But he also added, that if they wished to attain to an entire peace with God, they must also be obedient to the invitations and admonitions of divine grace. All his endeavors were directed to the end that the Spirit of Jesus should live and reign in the heart.

He was entirely opposed to mere human attempts to form and restrict the mind, and he often said, that he who has to do with the souls of others, must act like a nursery-maid, that holds the child in leading strings, and merely prevents it from falling and from taking harm, but otherwise lets it go where it likes. Were any too backward and remiss in their walk and conduct, he was able, with much meekness and wisdom, to show them their fault, and to make God and eternity more than ever important to them.

When he was in the company of those who were really devoted to God, he seemed to be in his element: he was then very affectionate and communicative; and when a question was put, that gave him opportunity, his lips overflowed with heavenly wisdom; everything he said was full of grace and power, and so deep and comprehensive, that his hearers were obliged to say, yea and amen, to all he advanced. He always entertained those who were present, with edifying discourse, to which external objects frequently gave rise. These he spiritualized, and often said very wonderful things on such occasions. By this means, all useless conversation was avoided in his presence, and some tender consciences were hence induced to decline going into company, unless he were present.

The following statement by a friend, will serve to give some idea of his behavior in company. “When I came to him with my mind afloat—which was frequently the case—his presence, which was very striking, or a short time spent in his company, was sufficient to collect my scattered thoughts. And when I had anything on my mind, after communicating it to him, it generally happened, that before I left him, my difficulties vanished, or else I was freed from them in the course of a few hours after, through the divine mercy, and the intercessions of our worthy friend. His prayers, when in company, were extraordinarily powerful. How often do I feel refreshed, when thinking of them! How heartfelt, soothing, and dispassionate were they, and how one felt one’s self inwardly collected, and mightily invigorated by them! I have never heard anyone else pray in a similar manner. In short, all that is said of him is insufficient. His life was hid with Christ in God. O how the image of the Lord Jesus shone through him—so that I often thought, if one small beam emits such radiance, what must the Lord himself be, who is the fountain of divine light!”

He was not only of great benefit to those in health, but likewise to the sick. His paternal care, his consoling conversation, and efficacious prayers, proved so edifying and strengthening to many, that they were thereby enabled to trust the more firmly and filially in their God and Savior. When there was a necessity for it, he remained half the night, and sometimes the whole of it with them. We adduce only one instance, of which he gave an account with his own hand to a friend, respecting a dear sister in Christ, whom he visited in her last illness:

While at dinner on Thursday, I was suddenly called away to _____. The attack passed off in a few hours. I stayed the whole night with her, and reflected on her dissolution; was also enabled to say and pray many things with her. She continued collected, calm, and in possession of a childlike confidence until her end. She not only understood my words and cries, but sealed them also with a yea and amen.

The last words to which she thus assented, were the two last verses of the hymn, “Forward from step to step, etc.” I afterwards added, “Receive then graciously, dear Savior, the spirit of this your child, whom you have redeemed! Now let your handmaid depart in peace, that her eyes may behold you, her Savior!” And as her eyes closed on Wednesday morning at ten o’clock, I heartily thanked God for the gracious deliverance, support, and mercy, which he had afforded her. This I bore with tolerable fortitude, but on speaking a word afterwards, to her brother and the household, and while recommending her example, weakness overcame me, and I was obliged to

break off abruptly.⁷ She suffered long and greatly, by which my feelings were also affected, although I did not let her see it, but was even enabled to be the means of strengthening her. During all this, her calm and cheerful patience has been such, that one cannot think of it without admiration and thanksgiving, and the serenity of her mind, and unshaken confidence in God to the end, continues to be a great and continual consolation to me. Glory be to God, that gave it all!

In this manner Tersteegen revived and comforted many sick and dying persons, and was made instrumental to their consolation, support and edification, until their decease. And he not only ministered to his friends in their illness, but also to others, although they were depraved characters. Even the Jews, when ill, sent for medicine from him, and during his illness, it was reported that they had appointed a meeting to be held, to pray for his recovery.

Our departed friend conducted himself with kindness towards all men. He labored with all his might, to do the work of him who had appointed him his place in the world and to promote his own salvation, and that of others. It may with truth be said of him, that he was a servant of servants, and all things to all men, in order to win them for Christ; that to this end, he spared neither labor nor pains, and even sacrificed his own health to it; and that particularly in the latter years of his life, he exerted himself greatly. Scarcely had he risen in the morning, and collected his weak powers a little, than he saw himself surrounded by those who sought advice and assistance from him, the one for his sick soul, the other for his diseased body; and with respect to the latter, he might with propriety be called, “the physician of the poor and needy.” No sooner was he freed from these visitors, than he had to answer a multitude of letters; when these were dispatched, he either wrote or translated some edifying book, and thus spent both his mental and bodily powers, in the service of God and his neighbor. A female friend once calling upon him, who observed his face covered with a cold sweat, he said to her, “I am very weak, have so many visitors, have already written much, and six letters lie there still unopened.” As she was therefore on the point of going away, in order to spare him, and leave him in peace, he said to her, “O no, stay here; Tersteegen must not be spared, he must have no rest;” and seeing that she felt grieved, he rose, and walking about the room, sung a couple of verses, with a cheerful voice, thus endeavoring to cheer both himself and his visitor, which he continued to do after entering into conversation with her. An obvious proof that to serve his neighbor, and to make himself useful, was his proper element.

Tersteegen did not associate with the men of the world, except when there was a necessity for it; but when he was obliged to be in their company, he knew how to conduct himself in such a manner, that they were edified by it, and compelled to feel a great veneration for him. An innkeeper, who resided in the place where he dwelt, once observed to a friend in reference to this, “Every time I pass by that man’s

⁷ Being subsequently asked, how he could be so childish as to weep, he answered, “I confess that it was childish; but believe me, that I feel more and more depressed in the world, when those, who are so wholly devoted to God, take their departure from it.” On another occasion, he also said, “I do not desire the indifference of the Stoic, and willingly participate in the joys and the sorrows of my brethren.”

house, a feeling of reverence comes over me, and the mere recollection of him often makes as deep an impression on me, as many a sermon." To this, his obliging and amiable deportment, joined to the noble and brilliant qualities of his mind, may have much contributed.

Tersteegen, in other respects, generally observed silence in the company of worldly-minded people; but when he found an opportunity of speaking a word of edification, he never failed to avail himself of it. The following is an instance of this:

Being once on a journey to Holland, and finding in the passage-boat a number of merchants and people of respectable appearance, he leaned his head backwards, and closed his eyes, as if he were asleep. After all kinds of tales had been told, and a game of cards had been proposed, he opened his eyes, and said that he had an excellent pack of cards in his bag. Upon being requested to produce them, he drew forth a New Testament; on seeing which, they said, that was a book to make people mad; he replied, "Is it not you who are mad?" and rehearsed all their foolish and unprofitable conversation, and sought, from their own words, to convince them how foolishly they acted, in squandering away their valuable time, with such useless things. Some approved of what he said; and the rest were at least restrained from carrying their intention into effect.

Tersteegen's sentiments regarding the use of the outward means of grace, may be sufficiently ascertained from his letters which have been published. He had a high esteem for that which served to direct men to God and Jesus Christ, and recommended a wise and faithful use of it. If some have accused him of keeping people away from church and sacrament, the accusation is unfounded—no one who associated with him can affirm the contrary. He left each at perfect liberty, to do as he found best in the sight of God.

If anyone had scruples, and asked his advice, he gave it according to the nature of the case: for instance, he said to a friend who thought himself not at liberty to partake of the sacrament, yet was urged to do so by the minister, after examining his state, "Go to your minister, and say, "Sir, I request you in a friendly manner, to leave me at liberty regarding the communion, I am unable at present to partake of it in a proper manner; but if you cannot do this, I will approach the Lord's table at your command." The minister was induced by this submission, to leave him to act as he thought proper. He let others alone, who entertained stronger scruples, and said, "A man ought to do nothing contrary to conscience; that which is not of faith, is sin."

Some have also believed, that he was hostile to the marriage state; but this is likewise without foundation; for he advised many, according to the circumstances of the case, to enter into it; not to mention the endearing and intimate friendship, in which he lived with many married people. With respect to himself, he passed his life in the single state, because he believed, that thus he could love God more, and be better able to serve his neighbor, than if he had to provide for a wife and children. What his sentiments are in other respects, relative to the marriage state, may be distinctly seen from many of his letters.

We now come to the period of Tersteegen's happy departure from this vale of tears. During his whole life, he was outwardly sickly, weak, and afflicted. This had such an effect on his body, that he often looked like a corpse; his labors and his faithfulness, which only ceased with his life, are therefore the more to be admired; and from hence it is evident, that the Lord supported him in a most extraordinary manner, and preserved him contrary to all expectation, many years, as a chosen instrument to be employed in his service, and that of his fellow creatures. But the life which he lived in the spirit, hid with Christ in God, what wrestling, watching, and prayer, what distress, anxiety of soul, affliction, agony, and suffering he endured, with respect to many with whom he associated and corresponded, cannot be told, because the smallest part of it is known.

His last illness appears to have been a kind of dropsy, which showed itself towards the end of March, 1769, and occasioned him much pain and shortness of breath. On the 30th of March, he was outwardly very weak, but inwardly overflowing with love, and resigned to the will and good pleasure of God. On the 31st, at 1 p.m. he had a severe attack, which brought on convulsions in the limbs. From this time, he appeared to die gradually. He passed the following night in an easy chair, in great pain, particularly on account of his shortness of breath; yet, when some of his dear friends, who, perceiving the indications of his approaching end, took leave of him for eternity, he spoke to each of them, according to their peculiar circumstances, in a manner so edifying, affecting, and consoling, that all were deeply moved, even to tears. He himself remained inwardly firm, and entirely resigned to God, and his most holy will.

Among these friends and acquaintances, was also the Rev. Mr. E_____, who requested of the dying saint a blessing, upon which, he smilingly lifted up his hands and said, "Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, who sits at the right hand of his heavenly Father, lift up his hands from his sanctuary, and bless you with love and peace in your heart, and give you grace and wisdom in your ministry!" This preacher shortly afterwards followed Tersteegen into the eternal world. To another individual, who took leave of him, he said, "O Sister! The way is a good way; follow the Lamb with cheerfulness, whithersoever he leads you." And to a third, he spoke as follows: "I commend you through grace, to the love of Jesus! Let the present moment likewise serve to induce you to surrender yourself entirely to our dearest Savior, and to entreat grace from him, like the woman of Cana. This grace must be solicited, without regard to temporal things, which are of less value, than is generally supposed; and what a happiness will it be for us, when obliged to part with them, to have a gracious God in Christ!" He spoke in this manner, to all who were present, with much energy, affection, and divine unction.

From the 1st to the 3rd of April, he was obliged, on account of his asthma, to sit forty-seven hours together, in his arm-chair, sometimes leaning backwards for a few minutes on the chair, and then again forwards, on a cushion, which lay on the table. He passed these forty-seven hours in great agony, yet was never heard to complain, except after having slept a few minutes, and waking again, he generally said, "O God! O Jesus! O sweet Jesus!"

In all his extremely painful sufferings, there was not even the smallest expression of impatience visible on his countenance. This extraordinary patience and entire resignation to the divine will and pleasure, was most consoling to the bystanders, as also his filial confidence in God, whose will it was thus to perfect him through sufferings, and assimilate him with the Captain of his salvation. Without this consolation, it would have been impossible for them, as they themselves affirm, to have borne the sight of such acute sufferings, in one they so much loved. Towards noon, on the 2nd of April, it was evident his dissolution was approaching; the fits of sleep became more powerful, and his wakings shorter. It was necessary to remind him constantly of what he had to take. At six and seven, he slept almost continually, and at nine, it was nearly impossible to awake him, to take what had been prescribed for him. His sleep became more and more profound, and at midnight he could be awakened no more. Thus he continued to sleep till two in the morning, when he breathed out his soul into the arms of his God and Savior, and died happy on the 3rd of April, 1769. Those who were present, imagined themselves surrounded with a multitude of angels, who received with joy, the departing spirit, and triumphantly conducted it into the eternal kingdom of rapture and delight, where he now, with all the holy angels and ransomed hosts, ascribes an eternal hallelujah to God and the Lamb, and in the fulness of heavenly bliss, joins in their more exalted songs. Amen! Praise, and honor, and thanksgiving, and wisdom, and glory, be unto our God and to the Lamb, forever and ever! Amen!

Select Letters of Gerhard Tersteegen

It is an established truth amongst Christians, that there is no standing still in the divine life, as little as there is in the natural world, in which everything tends towards its end, either of perfection, or dissolution: and it is the conviction of this, which renders a growth in grace so important to the mind of everyone, who sincerely desires to be a follower of the Lord Jesus.

It is therefore incumbent upon us to inquire, in what this advancement consists, lest we mistake something else for it, and finally lose our aim: and I think no one will deny, that it consists in becoming gradually more assimilated to the Divine image; or in other words, in partaking more and more of the Spirit of Jesus; for according to the measure of his gracious indwelling, will be our approximation to the humility, meekness, resignation, self-denial, patience, benevolence, and holiness of God, manifest in the flesh.

But how is this to be obtained? Can it be secured by a deportment outwardly circumspect, by a regular attendance on outward ordinances, by much study, or making long prayers, or by strenuous exertions for the spread of the gospel? No! We have seen how those who were foremost in all these outward exercises, and who exemplified great heat and fervor on the outset, in process of time, again grew cool, and lost the

power of godliness, while they retained merely the form; while others of them have even wholly forsaken the way of righteousness, and turned again to the beggarly elements of the world.

What was the reason? Are not these things good in themselves, and inseparably connected with a growth in grace? Undoubtedly they are so in a great measure: but the mistake lay chiefly here; in attaching too much importance to them, and regarding them more as the end, than the way to arrive at it. It is sufficiently evident, that in order to become like unto God, and to be filled with all his fullness, nothing less than a continual and increasing measure of divine influence, light, and life, must be communicated to us; and it only remains to show, in what manner we may best become partakers of it.

I observe then, that this communication is naturally and properly an inward one. As the body receives its nourishment from corporeal objects, and is subject to their influence: so the spirit must derive its strength, and is under the influence of spiritual objects, of things which are unseen, but felt and experienced internally; so that were it possible to hear the voice of God with our outward ears, the communication would not be so immediate and perfect, as when he speaks to the spirit inwardly, because it would then be indirect, and through a medium. How much more imperfect, therefore, must this communication be, when it passes through a variety of hands, which add to, or take from it, according as they are deficient in divine illumination!

The more spiritual therefore a person becomes, the less does he seek after God and the impartation of his life-giving influences, through the medium of outward objects. The heart, or in other words, the inmost center of the soul is the recipient of them, and when thoroughly purified, the place where God erects his throne, and fixes his residence. 'Tis there, where we must patiently wait for the promised influences of the Holy Spirit, by withdrawing our minds and affections as much as possible from outward objects, and inwardly directing them unto Him, who is ever present: looking unto him for the fulfillment of his gracious promises, and hoping, and quietly waiting for his salvation. This state of mind is aptly described by the Psalmist, in the first and second verses of the 123rd Psalm; it is that waiting for, or upon God, which is so often inculcated in scripture, and that worshipping of God in the spirit, which is the only true worship.

This highly important subject, will be found more fully discussed in the annexed letters, which have been selected for the use and benefit of those, who are sincerely desirous of growing in grace, and in the knowledge of God, and who are willing to submit themselves to the teachings of the Holy Spirit, in order that they may be led by him, into all truth.

In conclusion, let me add a word of serious and friendly admonition to those, who have entered upon the way of life, and warn them against a most dangerous, and I fear, very general error, that of imagining themselves to be far advanced in the Christian course, while in reality, they have only taken a few preliminary steps towards it. To ascertain their state, therefore, they have only to pay attention to what passes in their hearts, and to compare themselves with that delineation of the true Christian, given by

our Lord, in his sermon on the mount. They will then, by divine grace, be brought to see, that they have been hitherto building their house upon the sand, and seek, in future, to lay its foundation on that rock, which shall cause it to stand secure in every storm, and bid defiance to every tempest.

May He, whose blessing has attended these letters in their original language, grant it also to this translation of them, that his holy name may be honored and glorified, in a greater degree, by those who call themselves by that name, and profess to be his followers: for the sake of his well-beloved Son, our Savior!

—SAMUEL JACKSON

Letter 1

May the grace of God in Jesus Christ, reign in our souls, through the influences of the Holy Spirit! Amen.

Dearly beloved brother in the triune God, and my fellow pilgrim:

The love with which the Lord has graciously united us together in him, and which can therefore neither be strengthened nor weakened by bodily presence or absence, constrains me to salute you externally by the present letter. The providence of God be sincerely thanked, which caused us to meet in this foreign land, so that we have found reason to rejoice together in the grace of God, as it has been experienced in our souls, and to praise his lovingkindness for it. Yes, let our inmost souls exalt his name, that he has, in some degree, given us to know the lamentable bondage of our immortal spirit, under the dominion of darkness, while driven about by the enemy of souls, by means of every vain affection, thought, and desire; having awakened our consciences, which were slumbering in sin, so that by his grace, we have sought to escape from the depth of our perdition, and to satisfy the demands of conscience.

But alas! we have to complain, as our consciences will doubtless testify, how often we have failed in this respect. And even when we had done that, which the conviction of our consciences demanded, with what slothfulness, unwillingness, and constraint was it performed! And when at length it was accomplished, with how many failings, and with what a mixture of selfishness was it blemished; so that after all, our consciences could not be satisfied with it! And with what ease and subtlety did we ascribe it to ourselves, as if we were anything! And how often, on the other hand, was the freedom of access to a throne of grace impeded by occasional faults!

And because we possessed so little of that faith, which is of the operation of the Spirit of God, how imperfectly did we impress upon our minds the grace and merits of Jesus Christ as an atonement with the Father! It is true, our inmost souls would gladly have withdrawn themselves from the service of vanity and the passions, in order to give themselves up again to their rightful Lord, with a voluntary heart, to serve

him and please him perfectly—but to this, the requisite power and strength was lacking. For methinks the case is the same with the conscience, as I believe I have somewhere read of the law, that it gives us to know our wretchedness, and tells us its requirements, the accomplishment of which it causes us to long for and to strive after by every means in our power—but gives no sufficient strength to fulfill them, so that we often exclaim in this condition, with Paul (Romans 7), “O wretched man, who will deliver me!”

Now, it appears to me, my dear brother, that the faithful Captain of our salvation brings us into these straits, in order that we may despair of our own most imperfect righteousness, and lose all courage to attempt, by our own ability and efforts, to escape from our sins and our misery, and that no flesh may glory in the presence of God, but that unto him alone may be all the glory; and that after having previously sufficiently exerted all our strength, and wearied ourselves, and become quite faint, as it were, by our own attempts after holiness and righteousness, we may come, as weary and heavy laden, to Jesus in the center of our souls, where, according to his promise (John 14:21), he will appear; and that we may approach to him in the exercise of unremitting faith and love towards him, urgently seeking, and in persevering patience expecting him, like the Old Testament saints, who looked for his coming, and exclaimed, “O that you would rend the heavens and come down! etc.”

“O that salvation were come out of Zion!” until he reveal himself in us, erect his habitation within us, and renovate us; and until we are inwardly clothed upon with him. He then himself fulfills in us all the righteousness of the law (Romans 8); and he in us, and we in him, obey his commandments with pleasure and delight, which then appear no longer difficult, no longer imperfect, but perfect and blameless. We then no longer begin to exercise first one virtue and then another; for every virtue will then naturally, essentially, incessantly, and freely proceed from the new man, Christ Jesus, who is born in us by regeneration, and the divine love, which is by this means imparted to us. We shall then see ourselves delivered at once from the slavery of the affections, thoughts, and lusts, and from the tormenting accusations of conscience, and hear in our souls, in their stead, the charming voice of the grace of the gospel.

Now, as God himself, by the sending of his Son, works in us that, which it was impossible for the law to perform, and would be to all eternity impossible for us to accomplish by our own endeavors, we may from hence draw the inference ourselves, that Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it; and that faith does not make void the law but establishes it (Romans 3); and we shall then from vital experience, learn to ascribe our justification to the free grace and mercy of the God of love, and to faith in Jesus Christ, by virtue of which, we can overcome the world, and derive from the strength of Jesus support and refreshment, who is then made of God unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

Let us, therefore, my beloved brother, not grow weary in chastely keeping our hearts, minds, and thoughts as much as possible from every other object, in order that by longing for him, in sincere faith and filial love, we may induce him to manifest himself within us, and habitually and patiently expect his coming,

that he may himself undertake the work, and enable us to serve him, willingly, joyfully, and perfectly, to all well-pleasing in his more immediate presence, and in the light of his countenance; when he himself leads us forth from the darkness of the terrors of the law, and when, as little children, we are nourished by him, in delightful serenity, with the milk of his grace and love, and find rest for our souls (Matt. 11); and thus the triune God possess his kingdom within us, in which he is without ceasing, worshipped, honored, and glorified in spirit and in truth. Therefore do not let us allow our courage to fail. It is a small thing with him, to cause us to find that in our souls in one moment, without trouble, which we may have sought for years externally, with much labor. May the God of love, whose delights are with the children of men, assist us to attain this blissful state! Amen.

I have written thus, dear brother, in simplicity, in the presence of God, as it came into my mind, not as though you did not know these things, but that we might rejoice together in hope of all the good things, which are given us in Christ. The Lord give us the vital and essential experience of them in our souls, even should the knowledge of them be forgotten!

I cordially salute all the dear brethren, with whom, through the providence of God, I was at that time acquainted, particularly N_____, and all others who seek the Lord, whose names have escaped me. I commend myself to your prayers, and remain,

Your loving brother in Jesus.

Letter 2

Dearly beloved brother in the grace of Jesus Christ:

“We are the Lord’s.” From that very moment, when in sincerity of heart, we surrendered ourselves to him, we belong to him, with all that we are, and no longer to ourselves; in this view we ought always to regard ourselves, and by this we must abide, or else make as solemn a revocation, as our previous surrender—from which, may the Lord preserve us!

We are his, I repeat, and God regards us as such. Yet this is not all the mind must more entirely depart from every other object, the heart be purified from self-love, and every purpose and affection directed more purely to God alone, in order that we may become intimately united to him. For this purpose it is, that we have committed ourselves to Jesus and the guidance of his Spirit; for he is our Savior. On our part, we have nothing more to do, than to abide with him according to the degree of our light and state, and follow him both *actively and passively*.

Let your heart, and the thoughts and affections of your heart be turned towards the ever-present God in an unconstrained, childlike manner, but at the same time in sincerity and truth. Follow with an immediate, but considerate consent, the impressions and inclinations he may give you, to withdraw your love,

delight, and life, from every other object, and fix them solely upon him. Let him be in reality, the Lord and Master in your heart, and let your will, and all your powers be unhesitatingly obedient to him according to the instructions which he may from time to time impart to you. This instruction is something very different from that uncertain, anxious, and uneasy feeling, which arises from reflection and scrupulosity. The instruction or guidance of the Spirit of Jesus is an inward peaceful impression, inclination, or inward light, which leads the soul to God, and requires no consideration, but only a simple serenity and collectedness of heart, not taught by it any great or particular mysteries, but only that one mystery—how we may die to ourselves and live unto God. In this way we follow the Lord in an *active* manner.

You follow him *passively*, when you receive everything that happens to you, on all occasions, mediately or immediately, with reference to body or soul, with reverence and willingness, from God himself, as something which is good and serviceable for you. To these belong the circumstances of your bodily indisposition. God knows best, my dear brother, what is good for you, and whether you can serve him better in sickness or in health. And to these appertain also, that darkness, those distressing ideas, that melancholy experience of your failings, and your incapability of forsaking yourself, wandering thoughts, and sensual desires. In all these, and things of a similar nature, you follow the Lord passively, when you suffer them in submission, and in as peaceful a manner as possible, consenting to your own nothingness and misery, and at the same time, resting solely upon God, or resigning yourself to him, in the confidence that your salvation will come from him, in his own due time and way. The will must, however, separate itself sincerely from every suggestion and idea, which is in itself wicked and sinful. These must also be endured, but in such a manner, that the eye of God may see that you do not consent to them. We ought also to divest ourselves, as much as possible, of gloomy and constitutional melancholy, or at least not cherish it, but rather endeavor, with an artless and resigned mind, to dispel it by some means or other. The vagaries of the imagination must be borne without being followed. If we cannot avoid sensual thoughts in prayer, we must despise them, and peacefully continue in nearness to God, with our hearts inclined towards him, and for his sake, wear the crown of thorns.

God cares for you, my dear brother. Bow to his will all the day long, and what you are unable to do, suffer. The Lord will accomplish it. Let us not seek ourselves and our own advantage, in this short life, not even when serving God, but let us seek God alone. O, if God be well-pleased, we ought gladly to suffer the deprivation of bodily and spiritual enjoyments! Everything passes away like an empty dream. God is our salvation, and in him we shall be eternally blessed.

May Jesus live and glorify himself in you!

Letter 3

My dear friend:

The passage of scripture, which you have laid before me, “This is life eternal, to know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3). has reference both to the life that now is, and to that which is to come. The children of God inwardly commence their happiness here, and consummate it hereafter. It begins here—but there are two things, which we ought not to forget.

I. That this happiness is not felt or sensibly experienced by all, nor at all times. God does not always let the soul perceive its blessedness, because of its self-love. His people must often walk in the darkness of faith, (Hebrews 10:36-38) and pass through afflictions, that being well purified, they may attain the sanctification of God, which at such times does not always appear to them to be joyous and blissful, (Heb. 12:10-11) although it is so in reality. When the soul desires nothing but God, and seeks to cleave unto him by faith, prayer and resignation, the individual may be content, although he experience nothing in the present life. Yet I have no doubt, that if we ventured all upon God, and rejected all creature help and consolation, the heavenly manna would not entirely fail us in this wilderness.

II. We must ever remember, that the blessedness of the Christian is experienced, in this life, by degrees. He that at his first repentance comes to Christ, as weary and heavy laden, will be refreshed by him: he then receives the forgiveness of sins that are past, through grace alone, for the sake of the merits of Christ. If this be perceptibly felt, we then know the Father, and feel a degree of blessedness, as it is likewise expressed in Scripture, (Ps. 32:1-2; Eph. 2:8). But we must not stand still here. Paul admonishes those believers, who were already blessed in the first degree, to work out their own salvation; not indeed, by their own works or doings, but by being attentive and obedient to the grace of God, which should work in them, and likewise in us, both to will and to do according to his good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13). These divine operations aim chiefly at the destruction of all the works of the devil within us, such as sin, the creature, and self-love, tend to make God and invisible things of ever greater importance to us, and draw us more and more into his saving presence.

The soul is then capable of experiencing what is written in John 14:21-23, and 2 Cor. 6, that is, that the Lord Jesus inwardly manifests himself to her, and even fixes his residence in her. And he that truly experiences this, finds a much greater measure of blessedness, than in the first degree, which consisted merely in the forgiveness of sins, or in some views of the divine favor. John, speaking upon this subject, says, “He that has the Son, has eternal life,” and this has also its different degrees. Paul had experienced all this, and yet he expected to experience still more in this life (Phil. 3).

On the whole, both the knowledge of God and of his Son, Jesus Christ, as well as the blessedness which arises from it, may always continue to increase in the present life, and will be completed in eternity; yet still there is so much to be experienced in this life, as is incredible to an unbeliever. In this life we can become “partakers of the divine nature,” and he that cleaves to the Lord, becomes one spirit with him (1 Cor. 6:17). It is true, these things are wonderful and divine, yet God has promised them in Christ Jesus, and willingly grants them to each of us. Having therefore these promises, we ought to purify ourselves

from all corruption of the flesh and spirit, and never stand still, but seek to perfect our holiness in the power of divine grace.

I hope my dear friend will now, in some measure comprehend my meaning, and find his second inquiry answered by what has been said above: it was, “When, and in what manner, does this manifestation of God take place?” for it takes place no where else, than in the inmost heart. Sin, hell, and perdition have their seat within; redemption, and salvation must likewise be experienced within. As long as God and his salvation remain external, we have no proper acquaintance with them. The Lord, our Savior, is unspeakably near our inmost soul. He allures us within, in order that we may there become partakers of him, and of his salvation. If we follow the drawing of his love, in forsaking the creature by self-denial, and in affectionately approaching unto him by inward prayer, he will then fulfill his promise in our experience.

This therefore is the unerring path to the attainment of the end we have in view; and walking in this way, we may always rest satisfied, whatever the Lord does with us, whether he lets us feel and clearly experience much or little in this life. Eternity is long enough for enjoyment. Let us only begin below, and follow the Lamb, whithersoever he leads us. All will be well in the end. I commend my dear friend to the gracious providence of God, and remain most cordially, etc.

Your affectionate friend and brother.

Letter 4

Dearly beloved and valued friend in the grace of God:

Your letter of the 27th January, afforded me pleasure; for as I have known in my degree, through divine grace, both the unhappy condition of an unconverted sinner, and the blessedness of a true convert, I heartily rejoice, whenever I see a prodigal son coming to himself, and arising to go to his father. I also was a swineherd once, and when, after a thousand threatenings and invitations, I came at length, as I was, to become what I was not, I needed only to beg and wait a little while, before I was infinitely more graciously received, than I could have hoped or expected.

Being now acquainted with the paternal heart of God, I cannot do otherwise than encourage the returning and repenting sinner, by assuring him that the end will be glorious. This impels me also to answer my dear friend’s letter, although otherwise I gladly remain unknown. Extraordinary mysteries must not be expected from me. Mine is a simple gospel path, and all my theology can be expressed in a few words: “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.” (2 Cor. 5:19)

This reconciled and merciful God in Christ is inexpressibly near unto us; he knocks at the door of our hearts, and entreats us to turn from sin, and be reconciled unto him. All anxiety regarding our dangerous

state; every view of our own corruptions, darkness, and insufficiency; all our grief and sorrow on account of our sins, are the effects of this near and intimate love of God in Christ. We have only to confess ourselves such as we are, before the all-penetrating eye of the omnipresent God, and without desiring to acquit or help ourselves, only hunger with humble confidence, after that grace and love, which is revealed in Christ. While thus engaged, it is this very eternal love of God, which awakens in the center of the soul, such an unextinguishable longing to depart from the creature, self, and sin, and to return to our Father and our origin. This fervent longing is very often obstructed by unbelief, particularly when directed to anything else than the pure grace of God, and when the soul expects much from itself; but it is as often re-excited, and induced to cleave simply unto him, who is so near and so faithful.

In the exercise of this faith, the Lord does not allow a single soul to be ashamed. When his hour is come, he opens his paternal heart, heals, and renews us, frequently in a single happy moment, by the impartation of his love, and the brightness of his appearing. Although we may not perceptibly see and experience that the Lord is good, yet we ought to believe it, according to the Scriptures, and the testimony of those who have experienced it, and therefore yield ourselves entirely up to God. He is the source of all good, and alone sufficient to satisfy us, both in time and eternity. But this being the case, he likewise desires of us, that we should resign all other delights, and venture that which is most dear and precious to us, from cordial love to him, who is such a faithful friend, and who is invariably so near to us; who, from grace alone, has forgiven us our sins, and called us with a holy calling, in order that he alone may become our treasure. All for all; that is the whole matter; yet still is it not a purchase, but a voluntary love-offering on both sides.

Be not uneasy because you have no one to guide you, and have no acquaintance with pious people; for this the providence of God will grant, when it is necessary. Too many instructors are often a hindrance. We occasionally meet with many good people, who deserve our love: but friends, who are really of advantage to us in God, are not to be met with in such numbers. God brings such characters into connection with us, whenever he sees fit; but he himself is nearer us than any friend can be. He sees, he knows us thoroughly. It is he who directs us how to walk, more properly than any friend can do; and what he says, he gives. Accustom yourself to the presence of God, and he will lead you aright.

It is good and needful for you, to have renounced all open sin, but still you feel that the source itself is impure. Retire within yourself, with humble confidence, and learn wait for the Lord. Do not engage in too many external pursuits; that which can afford you comfort now, and delight you eternally, is to be found within in the heart.

I am not surprised, that the very same light which discovered to you your misery, gives you, at the same time, to see the corruptions of the world, and the declensions of the external church. This is generally the case; but prudence is necessary, in order that we may not turn our eyes too much outwardly, and be found protesting against an external Babel, while we are inwardly still in bondage and confusion ourselves. Let

us first extinguish the fire in our own house, and then we may help our neighbor—but with water. I cannot deny the corruptions of the external church; but I think, my dear friend has now more necessary things to attend to than to occupy himself with these. *Within! Within! With God alone!* Neither do I recommend you to separate yourself from church and sacrament. There is no material benefit to be derived by such a separation, and it has often been injurious to many. You must not, however, act contrary to your conscience; but if you find your conscience oppressed by partaking of the sacrament, you will do better to stay away, and wait awhile, to see whether the Lord will give you more light on the subject. I should not like to attend the discourse of a blasphemer, or one who is evidently still carnal. If circumstances call for it, one may refrain a while, without resolving upon anything for the future, much less judging others, who act otherwise. The kingdom of God does not consist in meats and drinks (Rom. 14:17), or the keeping or omitting of any outward ordinances, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Here I must break off, cordially commending my dear friend to the comforting love of Jesus, and remain, his sincere friend, and fellow-pilgrim.

Letter 5

Dearly beloved brother in the grace of Jesus Christ:

Your last letter of the 5th of this month, as well as the former ones, have been duly received. My delay in replying has arisen neither from idleness nor selfishness but chiefly from bodily indisposition. I am seldom able to write, chiefly on account of a weakness in my head and eyes. My leisure time is quite taken up with receiving visits and writing, so that I am unable to reply to many letters. Nor am I a spiritual guide; I am much too deficient for that purpose. Yet still, I am not backward in giving testimony to eternal truth, according as God has graciously given me to know it, nor in extending the hand of fellowship to my brethren, according to my ability, even as one child does to another.

In other respects, my dear friend, you have no need to have recourse, with so much anxiety, to such a poor creature as I am, in order to ask advice. You have the best guide and teacher unspeakably near you. His pitying eye beholds all your grief, and it is he himself that awakens in your inmost soul, that secret hunger, and anxious inquiry for help and deliverance. The Lord, your teacher and your helper, is present in the secret recesses of your soul, from which this hunger arises. Believe this, although you may have no sense or feeling of it, and with a meek and artless resignation, retire to him within, as well as his grace will enable you to do. Show him, with humility and composure, your disease, and with long-suffering confidence, await from him the cure. This waiting is of grace, and it is of benefit to us also; for it quenches the ardent fire of nature. God is a pure and gentle being; nothing harsh can approach him. Self does not win the prize. He voluntarily imparts himself to the secluded spirit, after it has been made meek, little, and pure, by means of such afflictions as these, under which you at present labor.

Persevere in God's name, and do not grow weary or impatient. Continue to lie low before the Lord, and thank him for permitting you to do so. He knows how and when to help you. Do not reflect so much on yourself, and your own wretchedness, when you are obliged to feel and see it; only turn away from it, with a calm disgust, and seek to forget and escape from it; no further effort or struggle is necessary (Ex. 14:13-14). If you cannot forget and escape from it, bear it, in the sight of God, as quietly as you can; it will not be imputed to us for Jesus' sake. Suffering evil is the way to holiness. Above all things, do not lose courage, although wounded; but commit yourself confidently to the Lord, even in that state, in spite of self-love, which is unwilling to appear so defiled.

God certainly loves you; love him, therefore, also; and venture yourself upon him for his love's sake. I recommend the way of love to you in particular; it is this alone, which can sufficiently heal all your wretchedness and infirmities, both of spirit and of constitution. I do not altogether mean a sensible or susceptible love, which is often a flower without fruit, and tends to nourish self-love, but a solid love. Believe the inward nearness of love; perform, deny, and suffer everything from a loving intention; in all your devotions, do not seek to satisfy yourself, but the friend of your heart, whom you love. If you cannot do or find anything that pleases him, endure your wretchedness and incapacity, from love to him. He accepts the intentions of love, even in the midst of barrenness and darkness; this we learn to know in due time. Prescribe nothing to the Lord, but secretly submit the will of your mind, to the perfect will of his love and his dealings towards you, even though your natural will should be opposed to it.

To desire to love him supremely, and to cleave unto him and eternal things, is the basis and object of that desire, which his free love has imparted to you. This is sufficient. Do not dictate to the Lord, what he shall give you, or by what means he shall accomplish his purposes in you. Surrender yourself unconditionally to him, let him do with you as seems him good, and then all will be well.

In one of your letters, you state that "it is very seldom you can realize the presence of God in any palpable manner, at any particular time or period." God is unchangeably present with us, in the precious name of Jesus, as our God, and our supreme good. Faith lays hold on this, superior to all conception or perception, cleaves with cordiality to a being so lovely, commits herself to him, honors and loves this adorable friend, and expects everything from his infinite goodness. But with regard to the feeling, or special gracious manifestation of the Divine presence, it cannot be realized by any external effort, nor ought we to attempt it, for that would be improper, and prove a hindrance to us; both the one and the other depend solely on the good pleasure of our God. If we only filially follow the guidance of his grace, and exercise ourselves by it in prayer and self-denial, we are then in that state of mind, in which the Lord can work in us and impart himself to us at pleasure; so that as children, we may confidently commit ourselves to our Father's wisdom. Retiring at certain seasons, (everyone according to his circumstances,) for prayer and recollection, I regard by all means as good and necessary; we ought not, however, on these occasions, to long for any perceptible communication, but continue as contented as we are able, even in the midst of darkness, barrenness, wandering thoughts, and temptations, if we be not knowingly ourselves the cause

of them. Worshipping, adoring, and offering ourselves up to God, is of itself happiness sufficient.

Your undertaking some external employment, is needful for you, and well-pleasing to God. The idea which occurs to us, that all is temporal and transient, and therefore useless, merely arises from the disrelish and gloom of the constitution. We were driven out of paradise by sin, and have thereby become corruptible, worthless, and miserable ourselves; and according to God's wise arrangement, we must now till the thistly ground, as a penance, and for our amendment; and be exercised in the performance of things so worthless. It would be folly to doubt upon the subject. We ought not however, to enter into them with ardor, or burden ourselves too heavily, but do all that we do to the Lord (Col. 3: 23; Eph. 6:7), they will then, not only not be prejudicial to the spirit, but advantageous to it; so that by this simple intention of doing all things, whether little or great, to the Lord, and from love to him, even the smallest things become important, and earth is turned into gold. To such persons, outward things are no longer temporal and perishable, but their outward form and intent makes them eternal and abiding, and a service done to God.

My age, after which you inquire, is near upon forty-seven years. The number of my years is not great, but I have learnt in them to know much of the vanity of the world, of the corruptions of the human heart, and of the patience and incomprehensible goodness of God in Christ, and learn daily still more. Blessed be the Lord, who has hitherto helped me! About twenty-seven years ago, God graciously called me out of the world, and granted me the desire to belong entirely to him, and be willing to follow him. May his grace preserve this mind in us steadfast unto the end! In the same grace, I remain,

Your affectionate friend and brother.

Letter 6

Dearly beloved brother, in the grace of Jesus Christ:

Your kind letter, of the 2nd December, as well as the former one, of the 23rd of November, have both duly reached me, and I will now reply to them, as far as weakness will permit.

According to the light I possess, to speak upon the subject, I find your state pretty accurately described in Romans 7, and the happy deliverance from it, consists in nothing else, than in resignedly and entirely casting yourself upon the grace of God in Christ Jesus, which causes death to self-love, but to the spirit, life and peace. To be saved and sanctified through grace, is not so easy as many suppose. It is found to be otherwise, when the light and chastening of God are applied to our souls; we then perceive, that without the inmost purity, no union with God can be hoped for. Efforts are made to satisfy the just demands of grace, but the deep and radical wound, cannot be healed by our own endeavors. If we find ourselves unable to make progress, we lose our courage and temper. If we succeed, self-righteousness

springs up, and secretly insinuates itself into the soul, so that even her best works continue to be polluted by self-love. If it advance for a time, she finds herself all on a sudden, again in the midst of the mire. What then is to be done? To believe that we must continue miserable sinners, all our lives, is a desperate consolation. To rely upon the merit and death of Christ is highly proper, and the sole ground of our salvation; but he gave himself for us, that he might sanctify us (Eph. 5:26-27). He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17). What help is there then? The soul must go forwards, and cannot. She must give something, and yet has nothing. Hypocrisy and pretense no more avail. There is only one means remaining, that is, that we creep to the cross, and humbly acknowledging and consenting to our helpless condition, cease from our own efforts, in order that God may carry on his work in us; and thus, by a resigned and believing application to, and immersion in, the opened fountain of the grace and love of Jesus, wait for the happy hour, when this mighty Redeemer shall reveal himself, and fulfill in us that righteousness, which the law demands (Rom. 8). And this is just what enlightened writers say, when they direct us to the exercise of inward prayer and retirement, in order that we may seek and find help alone in tranquillity and confidence.

My dear friend may apply to himself, without hesitation, what these enlightened authors say concerning this state, with this single exception, that when they speak of more exalted ways of purification, in which those souls, to which they refer, cannot actively turn unto God, and collect and deny themselves, because, by a repetition of their efforts, they have already unconsciously obtained their object; that this, I say, does not regard you, unless I am mistaken in my knowledge of your state. You must turn unto God, not by any mental exertion, or by any other violent method, but by an inward, and at the same time, resigned longing after him, by a real, cordial, and confidential cleaving to God, and by a sweet and respectful waiting for him, in his inward presence. We have this freedom of access, by the blood of Jesus. Being reconciled unto God, through Christ, he is therefore favorably disposed towards us, so that we may inwardly retire unto him in childlike simplicity, supplicate his perfect aid, and wait for its reception. He that searches the inward part, sees that the soul, in filially turning towards him, turns away in the sincerity of its will, and without thinking of it, from the world, sin, and all that belongs to self; on which account nothing of all this is laid to our charge, for Christ's sake; and by this very act of retiring within, laying ourselves open, we are purified in the best and easiest manner, from all the corruptions of flesh and spirit.

My dear friend must not go in search of his own wretchedness; enough of it will be apparent, when God sees fit. Let not your depravity be the chief object of your thoughts. God, as your friend and Savior, God, as present in your heart, ought to be that object. And when you are obliged to see and feel your corruptions, endure them in the presence of God, just as a sick child upon its mother's lap, causes the pain it feels to be understood, only by the moving expression of its eyes. The view of ourselves disorders us; our cure is in looking unto God. Let us therefore receive the discovery of our wretchedness, as a real favor from the hands of God, and endure it courageously, before the eyes of him, whose name is Savior, without seeking consolation elsewhere. The Lord knows the proper time. Even waiting is an imperceptible

advancing. Faint-heartedness is a consequence of self-love. Our weakness and misery, should cause us to distrust ourselves, but never to distrust God, whose pure love can sooner consume our miseries, when we confidently commit ourselves to him, than the fire can consume a straw.

Now, my friend, it is nothing strange that happens to you; the same afflictions are accomplished in others of your brethren in the world, though not to the same extent or duration in all of them. Expect nothing from yourself, but everything from the goodness of God, which is inwardly so near you.

It is a common temptation in such states, for the soul to imagine this thing or that is unsuitable for it, that one person does not know its precise situation, while another judges too favorably of it, and the like. Do not occupy yourself with such reflections. I do not point you to yourself. I know, that like me, you are a child of Adam. You have not yet reached the end of this path, but your course is correct; and the eternal love of God only waits, that you and I let ourselves fall into its lap, just as we are. Amen. Let it be so!

Letter 7

To a Noble Lady

I can easily imagine, that notwithstanding your ladyship's high rank, sufferings and vexations of various kinds will not be lacking; and I am also in part aware that this is the case; nor must we be surprised that they are painful to flesh and blood, as your ladyship mentions. But we know at the same time, that flesh and blood shall in no wise inherit the kingdom of God, and must be crucified. Your ladyship's mind is certainly too noble to allow itself, on this account, to be prevented from taking the oath of eternal allegiance to the dear Captain of our salvation, and from persevering, with steadfast sincerity in prayer, in the good fight of faith, and under the banner of the cross of Christ, expecting from him the victory over all the opposing powers of nature. The weaning of a child from its mother's breast is not so useful to it, as when God our heavenly Father detaches us, by means of the bitterness of this life, from a soul-destroying attachment to things that are seen. O it is infinite grace, when he breaks our wills and hedges up our way, not in order that we may be constrained to depart from him, but that we may run unto him! Did we but recognize the high intentions of God towards us when he gives us pain, we would kiss the rod of his paternal love, and love him and cleave to him only the more cordially.

I am under great apprehensions, when I behold those who are still in a state of nature, having everything their own way; who are either unacquainted with disappointments, or always seek to escape from them by pernicious diversions. The more we know Jesus, and the bliss of communion with him by happy experience, the more our eyes are opened to behold everything else, with new, that is, with supernatural vision. His cross becomes dear and lovely in our esteem and his reproach honorable; while the world, on the contrary, and its noblest things, please us no more; for Christ and the world are too much opposed to

each other, to dwell together in one and the same heart.

He, therefore, is wise and happy both here and hereafter, who esteems all that the world can offer as loss and dung, in order that he may win Christ, the pearl of great price. Amen.

Letter 8

Dearly beloved brother in the grace of Jesus Christ:

Although I am so slow in replying to your ever welcome letters, so that it would appear to proceed from indifference or the lack of esteem, yet I assure you, nothing is further from my thoughts. I love you; your advancement is a subject of importance with me; and I often feel myself induced, in simplicity, to offer you up to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, being in some measure acquainted with your state.

I can easily believe that you have been exercised, this summer, with a variety of temptations and perplexities. Without trial and exercise, we cannot attain the desired end. It is nevertheless true, that for much of this we have ourselves to blame; but the infinite goodness of God in Christ supports, assists, and again receives us with wonderful and adorable long-suffering. Blessed be our gracious God in Christ, who has helped us hitherto! Let us love him! We might often fare better, if we only continued more in simplicity of heart, without desiring, although from a good intention, to be great and wise too early; because it is more difficult to begin again at A, B, C, after we have in vain exerted much time and precious strength. The intention is very laudable; we wish to increase in piety, and with this view, we read, examine, hear and see a variety of things which at the time, we do not fully comprehend, and which we cannot harmonize and digest; they must therefore, necessarily occasion much confusion and anxiety to a mind that hungers after God. I know what I have had to pass through in this respect; and to this hour, my soul is thankful to God, for having preserved me in my earliest years, from a multiplicity of acquaintances and opportunities of hearing and seeing a variety of things.

I am therefore not surprised, that the society and conversation of friends has occasionally yielded you no satisfaction. I very well remember what I felt, when I first heard of you, and why I gave you no opportunity of associating with this or that particular person, although I observed that you had an inclination to do so. It was my belief that you would walk more quietly and safely without such society, and that in due time, the providence of God would send you acquaintance according to your need; and therefore I was not glad to see you procure a multitude of theological works of various descriptions; not that I have anything against such books or acquaintances, except that not everything which is good in itself, is good for us. Many truths, and very important ones, might confuse or impede us, if we were anxious to know them before the time (John 16:12). It is therefore my plan, to commit the soul, in a great degree, to the free guidance of divine grace, and lead it to nothing, except that to which God intends to lead it, according to

the best of my judgment. I pay attention solely to the dealings of God, and admonish the individual, when I see him in danger of receiving injury. I associate with some, who seek to walk in cordiality and sincerity before God, to whom I have never said a word about books which I myself have published, because I did not think it would be of service to them. God must be the master in all things; and we must continue to be his scholars, and apply strictly to the lesson given us to learn.

We know how his eternal love has sought us, and inwardly met us in Christ. We now find, in our inmost heart, a profound and secret longing and inclination to be freed from sin, the world, and self, and to be again united with the source from which we emanated. In order to the attainment of this, we have no need to occupy ourselves with external things, nor to make great preparations, or think to carry the point by our own efforts. Sincerity, it is true, is necessary—but a sincerity in mortification, inward retirement, and patient waiting. The power to accomplish this is very near at hand. Let us only cherish this secret and inward desire, and give way to it. For it is by this inclination of the heart, that the power of God and our dear Redeemer is present; from whom we must alone expect help and salvation. Let us cleave unto him in the spirit of children, with humility and confidence, believing in his gracious presence, worshipping him who is thus present with us, loving him, committing ourselves entirely to him, in a word, holding fellowship with him, as our God and our best friend, who is all sufficient for us. If we act thus, and when he perceives that our only aim is to please him, in the best manner possible, he comes to our aid, and works in us substantial virtues and a thousand blessings, according to our need. He then teaches us, from love to him, to love the cross, to mortify all self-seeking, and to renounce all other life and inclination, in order that everything within us may be solely and simply turned towards him, and he alone be our life and our treasure. In short, he that only exercises himself, with childlike simplicity, in this important point, without paying much regard to anything else, may rely upon it, that the Lord will provide for him wonderfully. If he requires it, he sends him a book or a faithful friend to strengthen and encourage him; and as he is willing to remain in childlike ignorance, he is in the very state of mind, that fits him to be led by the Spirit of Jesus, at his pleasure, into all truth, and to be made of him what he pleases.

You will therefore understand, my dear brother, that I do not altogether advise you against associating with friends, or against reading; much less that I regard as suspicious, or of small importance, that by which a soul may obtain nourishment in the main point—this would be spiritual pride. I only warn you against a superabundance, and against living in things external, and against judging of everything without due distinction and examination, and against entering too deeply into society and mental reflection. This examination, however, is very simple: that which strengthens us in the main point, that which enters into the mind without constraint, and composes it at the time of retirement and prayer, is of service to us; but nothing else. We ought, however, not to reject other things but leave them. “What is that to you?” says Jesus still; “follow me!” With reference to associating with others, my advice continues to be, “friendship with all good people, but fellowship with few.” And if the providence of God gives us those few, whom we have found faithful, let us love and esteem them the more, the rarer such characters are to be found in

the present day; taking care, however, not to idolize them.

Walk with simplicity; go forwards with confidence, my dear brother, attending always to the main thing, prayer, self-denial, loving, and suffering. Be not afraid of the wandering thoughts that infest you against your will: bearing these and other things with disgust, yet at the same time with confidence, is the way to be delivered from them. There is much depravity in us, and both the discovery of it and our redemption from it are of grace.

It is God, who must work in us inward collectedness and every other blessing, instead of these being the result of our own desires or efforts. Yet still you must not be too scrupulous in your devotional exercises; good children do what is given them to perform, as well they are able, and are desirous of improving every day. May filial love govern you in all things! The picking up a straw, with an intention to please God, is of greater value in his sight, than the removing of mountains without such intention. May our dear Redeemer himself work in us everything that is well-pleasing in his sight! He is faithful and will do it. Pray for me, even as I do also for you, though in weakness, and remain through grace,

Your obliged fellow-brother.

Letter 9

Dearly beloved friend in the grace of God:

Your short letter by a friend, I have duly received, and was gratified by it; and although my time is limited, I will write something in reply, as you request, and as God shall enable me.

I repeat, therefore, my last admonition: love, and exercise yourself more than ever in solitude, prayer, and self-denial. Solitude is the school of godliness. You are called—think what grace!—to social converse with God; you must therefore, by all means, avoid all unnecessary converse with men.

This is particularly needful, while we are still so weak; we must escape from the enemy, and not come too near the view of the world and the creature, in order that we may not lose sight of the nearness of the Creator, and that the world may not dazzle, overcome, and again take us captive. We ought not to look too much at the creature, that thus we may gradually lose the remembrance of it and fondness for it, and become truly strangers, whose walk is solely with God in heaven.

Love prayer! Let prayer be your constant occupation from morning till night. Let your heart and desires continually hold converse with God, in heartfelt simplicity: for his delights are with the children of men.

Reflect often, and if possible, incessantly, with feelings of love and reverence, on him, on his presence, and his perfections, and often offer up your heart, with all that you have and are, and all your ability, to

him, in spirit and in truth, as cordially and sincerely as possible. If through weakness or unfaithfulness you forsake this exercise, which is so incredibly useful and beautiful, all you have to do is, meekly and heartily to begin again; and do not be weary of it, although in the beginning you may not find any great advantage from it, or make any rapid progress in it. It is not true, that such a mode of life is difficult; it is easy and pleasant to the spirit, and becomes in due time, like a heaven upon earth. A little patience and courage alone are requisite. With reference to express and particular seasons of prayer and recollection, you are already acquainted with my sentiments. Be faithful likewise in this respect, not allow yourself to be kept from it, by any objections which reason may urge, or by the slothfulness of nature.

Self-denial makes prayer easy, and prayer again lightens self-denial. Be glad when an opportunity offers of denying your own will or pleasure, or any other matter, be it what it may, for the Lord's sake. Act in holy opposition to your depraved nature in all things; and even in the smallest matters, declare determined war against it. The more the flesh is under restraint, the more liberty and delight is experienced by the spirit in living with God and in God, its true element. Examine often to what it is, to which you are the most attached: mortify this first, and sacrifice it courageously, in order that you may devote your whole heart, love, and desire to God, in virgin chastity. Be faithful to the smallest convictions of your spirit, and if a thousand impediments arise in your corrupt, natural, and carnal will, turn from them with the renewed will of the mind which God has given you, and which no power in hell is able to constrain. In this manner you hold converse with God, and God with you; and he will deliver you in his own due time, from every fetter. Flee, in particular, youthful lusts, which so much obscure the mind, and remove us from God. Our bodies ought to be a pure temple for the Lord.

Break through, my dear friend, in every particular, especially in the matter, of which we lately conversed together. Do not hesitate a moment. God, in this instance, requires a willing sacrifice from you, and will not let you rest, till you give him your complete and sincere consent. I repeat it: do not let yourself be persuaded that the service of God is disagreeable, difficult, and impracticable; rather represent it to yourself as a beautiful, pleasant, and through divine grace, easy life, which it is in reality to the spirit, when rightly commenced in God's name. May He, our gracious Lord, who of his great mercy has called me and you to it, give us all that is necessary, most faithfully to follow his calling! Concluding with which, I remain,

Your affectionate friend.

Letter 10

Beloved brother in the grace of Jesus:

Both your letters of the 25th of January and the 22nd of May, have come to hand. My ardent attachment to a hidden life with Christ in God, produces in me a continual disinclination to enlarge my circle of

acquaintances and correspondence; but the Lord often orders it contrary to my inclination, and I cannot and will not resist his hand in anything.

I now feel myself at liberty, dear brother, with simplicity to assure you of my cordial affection, and that I often greet you in the spirit of the love of Jesus, and that I have been gratified and refreshed by your letters. I rejoice that God has granted you a relish for retirement and the life within, to which he is drawing you. It is a great, and at the same time, an unmerited favor, to be called to this precious life, which must be met, on our parts, by great faithfulness. God invites us to his lovely fellowship; he purposes preparing our spirits for his habitation and temple, and in this inward sanctuary, we shall behold the beauty of the Lord. O what a mercy! If then the overflowings of the love of God towards our unworthy souls are so exceedingly abundant, we ought also, beloved brother, to be very liberal, and not withhold ourselves, in any respect, from this eternal Good, which seeks to have us solely and wholly for itself. To be entirely God's, is the true secret of the inward or mystic life, of which people form such strange and frightful ideas. There is nothing more simple, safe, pleasant, and influential, than this life of the heart, which is not the result of reading, or mental exertion, but is thoroughly known and experienced by dying to the creature, and love to the Creator; it is consequently more the work of the Spirit of Jesus in us, than our own work. Being attentive to the operation and attractive influence of his Spirit, and satisfying and following it, makes us inwardly secluded and spiritually minded. This spirit of love, when duly attended to, imparts to the soul the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, and forms it according to his image, almost as imperceptibly as an infant is formed in the womb. He leads it more and more profoundly into an abandonment of all created things, and of itself also, and into an unreserved resignation to God. He does not require this with legal severity, but leads the obedient soul into it, and gives the individual a supernatural central inclination, which makes him willing in spite of self, and causes him to follow the Lamb, whithersoever he goes.

The more sincere and serene our inward devotion is, and the more we feel at ease in it, the better and purer is our walk. The particular exercise of inward prayer, or retiring within, serves principally to make us, in childlike simplicity, attentive to the delicate guidance of the Holy Spirit, and to give him the complete ascendancy over us. Forms and the efforts of self are here of no use, they are only a hindrance; we must lie as poor shapeless clay in the potter's hand. The hand of divine love then forms us after its own fashion; it leads us into an artless simplicity and lovely lowliness, it makes us meek and resigned, teaches us to desist from all our own intentions, and make God our only aim; it places us in a thorough abstraction from self-seeking; God alone becoming the sole and complete treasure of the soul, and glorifying himself in it at his pleasure.

Let this then be in future our whole concern, my dear brother, blindly and nakedly to follow him, who has called us with a holy calling. I am confident that this is the way in which God wishes us to seek him, and learn to serve him in spirit and in truth, although I myself am wretched enough. The true inward life is nothing new or peculiar; it is the ancient and true worship, the christian life, in its beauty and

proper form. Those who truly live retired within, form no particular sect; if everyone followed the life and doctrine of Jesus, under the guidance of his Spirit, all would be doubtless thus inward, and the world would be full of mystic christians.¹

I know not why I write thus, seeing that you, my dear brother, have already obtained from the Lord, sufficient certainty on this subject. Let us therefore only abide with the Lord, and commit ourselves to him more sincerely; for he is very gracious, even in the trials of those that love him he is eternally all-sufficient for our spirits. If the Lord has deigned, in any measure, to bless my imperfect letters to your soul, to God alone be all the praise, who gives food to the hungry, even though he were to make stones into bread.

If it be the Lord's will that we should see each other again, it will afford me pleasure; if not, we will part in the heart of Jesus, and salute, embrace, and bless each other there, in the name of him that has loved us. Present me as an offering to his lovely Majesty, according to the grace which he shall bestow. This I do likewise, with all my heart. May Jesus bless you, my dear brother, and form you after his own heart, in which we continue united, though absent in body! I remain, through the grace of God,

Your very affectionate brother.

Letter 11

Beloved brother in the grace of God:

I have lately been favored with your welcome letter by our dear friends, with whom I intend to forward the present, and feel in my mind an entire accordance with the remarks you make.

It is true, that frequently, one cannot contemplate the conduct and practices of awakened individuals, and the commotion they create, without a holy apprehension and concern. Yet we ought not hastily to reject and disapprove of it altogether; because there are many, who seem to stand in need of guidance and support, by reason of the miserable incapacity of the wandering and disturbed mind, to perceive and distinguish the inward attraction and operation of divine grace. It would be well if such characters would not always continue in the same round of observances, but hasten with diligence to their aim, and wisely order and moderate everything else to the mark of substantial holiness, in inward communion with Christ, in order that they might not always remain at a distance, and expend their weak, yet noble powers of grace, in things which are unprofitable.

That which guides the seeking mind directly to the mortification of the creature, sensuality, and self; that

¹ Whatever is wrought by the Spirit of God, is a mystery to the carnal mind, and hence the men of the world, and those who are only partially enlightened, call those mystics, who have attained to a greater degree of divine light and knowledge than themselves.

which nourishes, invigorates, and collects the heart, and fills it with love and reverence to the omnipresent majesty of the God of love, and in the degree in which it may contribute towards these ends, is worthy of all acceptance, however worthless and external the thing may be in itself. Were we really desirous of knowing a tree by its fruits, we should soon be able to distinguish whether, and how far, many of the practices and commotions of the religious world serve to promote or obstruct the kingdom of Christ.

An unenlightened, inexperienced eye can scarcely believe how great the incapacity of a child of Adam is for substantial interaction and fellowship with its God and origin, and how low, and with what long-suffering, this eternal Good must condescend to us, and lead us like children, in order that we may be gradually divested of all alloy, and be brought near to and made fit for him. He overlooks a thousand follies, leads the sincere intention through everything, and knows how to separate everything in due time. If we have in part experienced this in ourselves, we shall conduct ourselves modestly with respect to others, regard the good intention and motive, and gladly direct them to the desired aim.

It is not without the divine permission, direction, and cooperation, that an awakening rumor arises, first in one country, period, and people, and then in another is felt for awhile, and excites many to that which is good. This does not, however, take place, without the intermixture of much of what is human, sectarian, and imperfect amongst the greater part, both of the instruments and those that are awakened; yet still, long-suffering love descends, and blesses the well-meant, imperfect work. In short, the net is cast into the sea, and a multitude are taken. After some time, it gradually subsides, and appears to diminish. Many, who, devoid of a thorough change, were only pressed in, as it were, turn back again to the world. Those who are sincere, perceive, more and more clearly, the imperfection of their former works. The net is torn asunder, and each one goes his way.

Is it not the intention of Wisdom by this, to afford more liberty to the upright, to excite them to a more profound attention, and to allure them deeper into themselves, that thus they may hear, in the center of their souls, its soothing voice, which could not be so well listened to, during the previous commotion?

It is thus that divine Wisdom orders and separates everything with precision, both generally and particularly in due time. That which previously served to awaken and edify, and was relished, afterwards, frequently will not produce its former effect; so that even ability and inclination are often wonderfully withdrawn; for the principles of grace sinking deeper, no longer manifest themselves in the region of the senses, but in the silent center and sanctuary of the soul, where they seek room. The time of true separation is then certainly arrived, in which we no longer live to ourselves, nor engage in any outward and self-chosen undertakings, but in the exercise of the most heartfelt and sincere humility and abstraction, let the Lord work in us, and expect from grace alone, that which we cannot give ourselves; because there is really nothing that justifies or satisfies, but what God himself imparts and works, unmingled in the center of the soul, where the everlasting love of God, in the gracious name of Jesus Immanuel, is so close at hand and open to us, poor sinners; into this we plunge ourselves, and live to his free grace. To him be

glory, forever and ever!

Letter 12

Beloved friend and brother:

I have for some time delayed replying to your agreeable letter of the 21st of March, because it is not without reason that I am afraid of entering upon a more extended correspondence; being besides this, already much engaged, and experiencing at the same time, more and more, that the true and inward Christian life, to which I find myself called by divine mercy, demands a strict attention to what passes within, if we wish, in this mortal state, to get near the end of our calling, which is, a real fellowship and union with God in the spirit.

Our Lord Jesus was silent and kept himself concealed for thirty years, in order that by his example, he might inspire us with a fondness for a truly retired life, and scarcely did he spend four years in a public manner. I often think, if we that are awakened, would endure only four years of probation, in silent mortification and prayer, before we showed ourselves publicly, our subsequent activity would be a little purer, and less injurious to the kingdom of God, both externally and internally. This is a secret, but common temptation of the enemy, and a subtle device of the flesh, by which the tempter seeks to allure us from the only thing needful, and to weaken our strength, by the multiplicity of the objects in which we engage; but the flesh and its progeny, which finds a life of mortification too difficult for it and too disagreeable, may breathe very easily, and even maintain itself, in every outward spiritual and apparently profitable exercise, while in the meantime, the mystery of iniquity at the bottom, remains unperceived and unmortified.

Let us therefore, my dear friend, for the love and honor of God, close the eyes of our minds against minor ways and minor works, in order that we may attend solely, in a meek and quiet spirit, to our holy vocation, which has been so graciously made known to us, and will be still further revealed in our hearts. It is *in the heart*, and not in the head, that the attracting and collecting love will cause itself to be felt more and more efficaciously: whose salutary doctrines of the profoundest renunciation of all things, of self-denial and self-contempt, of attachment to his cross, and of abiding in him with the spirit of children, ought never to seem old to us, and be of greater value to us, than all the ancient and modern sophistry of both orthodox and separatists, put together.

O my God! how much there is to be done, suffered, and experienced inwardly in following you, and in communion with you! How is it possible, that we can let anything external decoy us out of ourselves, and that our attention can be occupied with trifles, while within, we might see and experience that which is truth and reality! Enable us thoroughly to forsake ourselves and all created things, and fix our affections

again upon you, who are the supreme Good, and the fulness of love! Amen.

My dear friend will not take amiss the little that has thus flowed without reflection from my pen. Your own experience will teach you all these things in a superior manner; but Christian affection would not permit me to let your letter remain entirely unanswered, and I hope likewise, that our acquaintance in the Lord will not be without a blessing. God be praised for all the mercy he has shown to you, my dear brother! Let us love him; for he has first loved us!

Letter 13
To a Noble Lady.

Beloved sister, according to the high vocation of grace:

Although I am weak and faint as it respects the body, yet the love of Christ constrains me to testify with a few lines, that your ladyship's letter of the 8th of November, last year, proved very refreshing to me, and has been often answered by me in spirit.

Blessed be God, who in Christ Jesus, has granted us fellowship with him, and with one another, irrespective of, and contrary to all our deserts! At present (and as often as the Lord reminds me of it) I cordially wish my esteemed sister all advancement in the life of God, and all delight in the God of love. I am persuaded also, at all times, of a similar spiritual fellowship on the part of your ladyship.

The longer I live, the more I see and experience, that no one is good but God alone—that which he is and does in us, alone makes us holy and happy. Mankind perceive and regard what is external and material, and respect appearances; but their judgment is seldom according to truth, because there are very few works that are done in God. It is true, God has infinite patience with us in our mixed state; yet still it is a great mistake to regard anything as good besides God, and he that does so, is not yet in the truth. We must make room for God, or more properly speaking, God must himself make room in us; for our wretchedness is so great, that when we escape from ourselves in one place, we find ourselves again in another place, in the very same thing. We are altogether miserable and besotted; ornamenting and beautifying is of no avail; the whole mass is corrupt, and we must be led out of ourselves by God, into God. No one is good but God alone; and he that truly sinks and loses himself in him, becomes good through him, were he otherwise ever so bad.

O that every poor sinner beheld, with us, this open sea of infinite goodness, which is so near us in Jesus Christ! How would they plunge themselves into it, and find a cure for all their ills! There are, however, many, who still feeling themselves, must bitterly complain, saying, "How weary I am of myself, and yet I am still obliged to bear with myself! People say, forsake yourself! but I cannot find the gate." But here is the point: he that has not properly felt himself, has not properly forsaken himself. We must experience,

that of ourselves we are unable to do it, in order that in this respect, likewise, the glory may be given to God. God himself must heal and sanctify us, and will do so, but not without affliction. This, in my opinion, is the origin of that real but rare resignation and endurance, to which no one perhaps attains, without suffering and mortification, although it be a source of life and heavenly peace.

O Lord! when shall we no longer be a hindrance to you and to ourselves? And when will you become all things in us, yes all in all? Be so eternally! Amen.

I will not offer any apology; I write with simplicity as it flows from the pen. I desire again to salute your ladyship and all your noble family in the name of Jesus, and remain through grace,

Your ladyship's weak fellow servant in the Lord.

Letter 14

Dearly beloved brother, in the grace of Jesus:

I will see if I have time and ability to write a few words in answer to your question, for which however, a short letter will not suffice, it being a subject which is more proper for verbal communication.

The state of repentance, of the law, and the drawing of the Father, is generally speaking, one and the same, because the one as well as the other, is a preparation for Christ, and for regeneration, or the state of the new covenant. But there is sometimes a distinction observable.

One, who constrained by the sincere reproofs, demands, and anguish of his conscience, labors in his own strength, refrains from evil and does good, in order to sooth his suffering mind, is properly speaking, still under the law. But if I should call it a state of repentance, it must be accompanied with a greater humiliation and contrition for sins committed; and the more a soul, in the consciousness of its sinfulness, misery, and weakness, sighs and longs for forgiveness in Christ, and for his operating power and grace to renew the heart, the more properly might this be called the drawing of the Father; although these three appellations, as already said, signify generally the same thing, and are often united.

The assurance of the forgiveness of sins, is commonly taken for believing in Jesus; but in my opinion, this is incorrect. That which I have just now more fitly called the drawing of the Father, I might also with propriety call, believing in Jesus; for the Father draws us to the Son. But faith in Christ has its gradations. In the beginning it is a "Coming to Jesus," (John 6:35); that is, with hunger and desire, just as I have said respecting the drawing of the Father. It is afterwards a *receiving of Jesus* (John 1:12), which cannot take place, unless the sincere will of the soul lets go at once the world, sin, and self. In advancing, faith is an *abiding in Jesus* (John 15), with a fervent inclination, otherwise called retiring, within, or cleaving to him (1 Cor. 6:17), and thus by abiding and walking in Jesus, we are increasingly rooted and grounded in him

(Col. 2:7), which, however, is not accomplished without afflictions and trials. Faith is, finally, a dwelling of Christ in the soul, and of the soul in Christ (Eph. 3:17; John 17:23), and *becoming one with him*. By referring to, and considering the passages quoted, you may perhaps attain more light on the subject.

On the whole, you perceive, that I do not merely regard faith as an act of the understanding, by which we represent and imagine to ourselves that Christ has made a sufficient atonement for us, but chiefly as an act of the will, and of the heart, in which our love, desire, and confidence are turned away from ourselves and all created things, and directed to the grace of Jesus, in order that by him, we may be delivered from guilt and the dominion of sin. Confidence, it is true, is a material ingredient of faith; but as soon as there is a hungering after grace, or a coming to Jesus, it is accompanied with confidence, though this is frequently much concealed by sin and fear. For no one ever comes to a physician, who places no confidence in him whatsoever. If we only continue to come, confidence will manifest itself in due time.

That which is otherwise called an inward attraction, is properly speaking, faith in Jesus, accompanied by a fervent and tender confidence. This inward attraction manifests itself to some souls, like a flash of lightning; but alas! it is seldom that proper room is made for it, or that it is duly attended to; otherwise the soul would be speedily delivered by it from bondage and disquietude, and strengthened to entire resignation.

Your question respecting free will, is equivocal. By a free will, is generally understood, a will to will what is good, and an ability to do what is good; and in this sense, no one has by nature a free will. But if by it be understood the voluntary direction of the will, freely to choose the good or evil that *is presented to it*; not only has every man, in this sense, a free will, but also the devil himself. But on the one hand, man possesses naturally, neither light, nor anything, to which his will might be able to turn itself; yet the will is free in the element of darkness, as a fish in the water, but it is neither able nor willing to depart from it. The light, it is true, now shines through Christ; and when it offers itself to anyone, his will is then free to open the window of his heart, or not. And on the other hand, man is not able to do this by nature, but through the mercy of God. He *can* do it, but will not, because the light gives him pain, and on that account, he hates it. God, therefore, not only offers light and grace, but likewise gives a good impulse and inclination to the will, so that the light appears desirable to him, and the evil, hateful. And as therefore, God for Christ's sake, most assuredly acts thus towards man, there remains no excuse for the unbelieving. However, the Lord forces no one—he offers faith to everyone, (Acts 17:31, marginal reading,) and then the man is at liberty to accept or refuse. In other respects, that man has in reality a free will, who has entirely resigned and lost his own will in God. A fish may lie at liberty upon the land, and spring about, but it is no where truly free, except in the water. That which water is to fish, God is to the spirit. He that follows his own opinion, impulse, and will, either in a obvious or a subtle manner, is a captive slave. The kings of this world are, by nature, as little free, in respect to the will, as a prisoner in jail. Our spirit and our will live entirely under restraint and pressure, until we thoroughly commit them to, and lose them in God—for to this end we were created; and then we are free, happy, and blessed indeed. May this be

verified in our experience!

It is, however, unnecessary, dear brother, and often injurious, when the soul seeks to know so precisely the different degrees of spiritual life. It is not necessary to say much upon the subject; it may occasionally serve for the information of him who has to instruct others, but he must not seek to lead others according to any particular plan, even as God does not guide every soul in the same manner. For instance; many at the commencement, enter upon a course of severe legality; others into deep repentance and distress on account of past sins; and others again, are drawn by lovingkindness and tender mercy. Some attain to a view of their depravity, etc., at the beginning; others, afterwards. He, therefore, that will minister unto others, must follow God, and observe him, and act as a nursery maid that follows a child, and only turns it away, when it is running into danger. But it is our own exercise in prayer and self-denial, which ought to give us the true insight into the ways of God. Solitude, prayer, and self-denial! O how necessary are they to every soul at this period! In these we ought ourselves to live, and when necessary write, and give occasion to others to exercise them.

A minister ought likewise to endeavor to inspire the soul with a good confidence towards God in Christ, yet so as never to lose sight of self-denial, in order that the individual may detach the heart, voluntarily and from love to God, from everything else, and fix it alone upon him. He that walks disorderly must be admonished; yet we must not prescribe too many laws of self-denial for peculiarities, but leave grace to counteract them, and chiefly insist upon the complete surrender of the heart. We ought to know how to give way to the weak, and yet keep the end in view, in order that by making a little circuit, they may be brought imperceptibly nearer to it. God grant unto those, who have at present to converse with others on spiritual things, a rich measure of his Spirit! O who is sufficient for it!

My time is expended, I must therefore break off. You will perhaps, be unable either to read my writing, or to understand my meaning properly. Brother N_____ may read it with you; otherwise it is not for everyone, particularly as I write in great haste. The Lord bless and strengthen you, particularly in the inward man! Remember me also. I remain,

Yours in weakness,

Letter 15

To _____:

It is more and more apparent to me, that God loves your soul, and has his eye particularly directed towards you, to aid and preserve you, and gradually to lead you to place your life and delight alone in him, and in the unconditional and voluntary submission to the whole of his divine will. This is the reason for all your sufferings and troubles; and from this arises, chiefly, all your vexations, and the disrelish and

indifference you feel towards divine things, because the life of self sees its end approaching, and still does not believe that its fate is so fully decided, and that the sentence will be executed, without mercy. I conjecture also, that there are sometimes seasons, in which a little hope is given to it, which makes it feel still more severely, when the hand of divine love again nails it to the cross, and leads it where it would not.

But let your depraved nature know, once for all, that the heaven-born spirit, and the will of the spirit, will no longer take part, nor be on terms of intimacy with it. No, my dear brother, let us expect no more life, comfort, or pleasure from that quarter, nor grasp it when it presents itself; for in reality, we have no need of it. Let us only be planed down, endure the cross a little longer, and in believing expectation, give unto the true and faithful God the glory, and soon a very different, solely-satisfying life, comfort, and delight will be perceived, and impart itself to the soul; a life, a quarter of an hour's enjoyment and experience of which, is sufficient to counterbalance a hundred years of waiting and suffering. In due time, everything that was previously so difficult, will be easy, and that which before presented itself to us as a profound abyss, and as something unattainable, will be found close at hand, and become natural.

Everything depends upon God's free mercy, the impartation of his influences, and the operation of his grace. Receive it therefore, consent to all that God works in you, and the attractive influence he gives you to experience, and follow this impulse, but only as far as its strength extends; then suffer, be submissive, and wait. God gives us both to will and to do according to his good pleasure; but he often imparts the will, yes, and a sincere, cordial, and fervent will too, long before he gives the power to do, or attain the wished for object. This is painful, but is at the same time a purifying, humbling pain. We must eventually experience, that it is not of him that wills; the mercy of God must grant the blessing. It is not our will that must seize it; for the will to do appears sometimes to fall off, like the blossom from the tree, and to sink into a holy resignation, that room may be made for the fruit itself.

Be of good courage, my dear brother! I cannot think otherwise, than that the Lord leads you; endure with him to the end, as quietly as you can. Do not regard yourself too much, however difficult it may be to avoid it. The Savior had incomparably more to endure, in order to redeem us, and still he bears our burdens. O let us love him, for he first loved us! I desire particularly to be cordially remembered to your dear old father; may Jesus visit, refresh, and strengthen his heart with his grace and love, that his old age may be in this life, an infancy and commencement of an eternal life! Amen. Jesus!

Letter 16.

Very dear and much esteemed sister in the grace of God:

Both your letters have arrived safe. From their contents, I have learned and considered, with much compassion, your afflicted and tempted state, and have spread your case before the Lord. *He*, the Lord,

can help you; you must not expect assistance from yourself, nor from any other creature, nor from any particular object, but from him alone. I confess, your trials are severe and painful; but preserve your courage, cast not away your confidence. These things must be; but the end will be peace.

I am not at all surprised, that you think your dearest friends have not a sufficient insight into your state; because your heart does not or cannot think respecting the Lord himself, who is, nevertheless, love alone, that he regards and acts towards you with so much love and mercy as he does. The black veil of unbelief, which at present covers your eyes, is the only cause why you imagine God and your friends to be otherwise than what they are. God has no pleasure whatever in our pain; but he is often compelled to make us sting, in order to deliver us from our inward depravity. The evil there is in us, is the fuel to this flame. Submit therefore to God's gracious arrangements, and all will be well.

I particularly request you will observe, that by "evil," I do not so much understand the deed, as the principle from which all evil deeds proceed. Methinks you do not sufficiently perceive where the evil lies, that causes all your pain. You have certainly done wrong, dear sister, in giving up your house, and hiring another, which is perhaps not more suitable for you, without sufficient reason, and what is still more, without the advice of good friends; but that you should deduce from this mistake such inferences as you do, as though you had now sinned against the Spirit of God, and hardened yourself against the Lord; that he will now punish you with death, and that you will eternally perish; and that you allow yourself to be brought by this, into such a state of confusion, distress and despair, is evidently a device of the adversary, who makes use of the principle of evil within you (and from which the Lord will deliver you) that he may cast you into this temptation.

If you have failed in this matter, (which is the case,) confess it frankly before God and your friends, entreat forgiveness, and do not make a bad use of your fault or sin, but a good one. When children break anything, or are disobedient, they are punished for it, but are not expelled the house; and by promise of amendment, and childlike humiliation, the matter is settled. See Micah 7:8; 1 John 2:1. Do but go forwards again with courage, and make a good use of your fall. This good use consists, not only in going more prudently to work another time, but chiefly in letting yourself be led, after the commission of a fault, to the discovery and sincere confession of the evil principle within. This would be such a benefit to you, as would recompense your stumbling tenfold; and the Lord has this in view, and expects it from you, it being his intention to lead you into such a discovery and confession.

Learn from hence, that your happiness or unhappiness does not depend upon *the house*, but upon the state of your mind. When it is well within, all is well. You must have too good an opinion of yourself, (do not be surprised at my expressing myself thus) or you would not allow this affair to distress you so much. Is it possible that the very sight of your wound or sin makes you faint? Do you not believe that you have other, and greater sins than this? Those who are really poor sinners, are deeply humbled at the sight of their sins, but not so much disturbed and utterly cast down. As long as we are not sincerely humble, we

resist God, and he resists us (1 Peter 5:5), and it is this which is so hard to bear. Consent sincerely to your nothingness and misery; and submit to be and to be found such as you are; the Lord is then with you, and will break your fetters.

Your ideas of the riches of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, are certainly too mean and contracted. Think of what I have said above, respecting disobedient children. If anyone who had offended you, were to entreat your forgiveness with tears, would you not forgive him? And shall the mercy and goodness of God be exceeded by that of a sinful man; or is it merely for those, who have deserved it by their faithfulness and their virtues? By no means! Even our very faithfulness and virtues, to be good for anything, must be expected and received from the mercy and goodness of God. O may the Lord enable us worthily to appreciate the blood of the Son of God, of the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the whole world! Repenting sinners ought to cast themselves with all their sins into this abyss of mercy, and all their sins shall be consumed like stubble in the burning furnace! This is the comfortable assurance and promise, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and also to cleanse us from all iniquity." (1 John 1:9)

You have too much improper love for, and confidence in yourself, and too little love and confidence towards God. Is not that improper? You think and care a great deal too much about your body, its health, and life, just as if it belonged to you, or as if life and health depended upon your care, although we know not what is best for us. And you care in the same manner about your soul, and hold it as fast as though you were your own preserver and savior. Are not both your body and soul the Lord's? Have you not committed them to him, when you first found that you were in a lost condition? And are you not willing this moment to renew the surrender? Do so, therefore, beloved sister, in fervent sincerity, and do it as often as self-love seeks to plunge you in anxious care regarding yourself. Commit unto God your body, health, and life, your soul, your time, and your eternity, leaving hold of, and losing yourself in his faithful hands; you are then in safety, and beyond the reach of all tormenting sorrow! O my dear sister, do not think that God does not love you infinitely more than you love yourself, and that he will not take care of you, receive you, preserve and protect you, infinitely better than you are able to do! Yes! he will do so, if you only resign and commit yourself to him in this manner, and this also he will work in you.

You follow too much your own opinions, and too little the opinions and counsel of the children of God, your good friends. But have you not reason to believe, that your light is still small, and that particularly at present, you are in confusion, darkness, and temptation, and consequently not in a condition to judge of yourself and of your present circumstances? Would it not therefore be more proper and more pleasing to God, if you did not build upon the dangerous practice of opening upon, and appropriating to yourself a passage of scripture, or upon your own mutable, passing, and disturbed thoughts, but that in an artless and childlike manner, you believed what others, who assuredly know you better than you know yourself, judge of your state and advise you? O how soothing and salutary would you find such a childlike submission! And if, as regards your house or habitation, you submitted your own will and judgment

entirely to that of another!

How salutary it would be for you, were you in secret to say unto God, “O Lord, I have brought myself into this dilemma, by following myself! Have pity upon me, a poor ignorant child, and lead me aright! And because I am unable, in my present dark and confused state, to distinguish or to choose what is pleasing to you, and will not follow myself any longer, I will commit the matter to some particular individual. Do therefore, instruct that person how to advise me, and then, whatever advice I receive, I will believingly accept as the expression of your adorable will, submit to it gladly, and regard the result, whatever it may be, as good and proceeding from you, with the help of that assistance, which I look for from you!”

See, my dear sister, this is the brotherly advice I give you, for I know no better. If you follow it, I am persuaded you will reap benefit from it, and find peace for your soul. I repeat it once more: it is not the houses; when you are inwardly wrong, all is wrong—when you are inwardly well, all is well, everything and everywhere well. It is alike to the Lord where we live, but not how we live. A royal palace is too narrow for him, that lives to himself, and a little cottage is large and beautiful to him that lives to the Lord. I pray God, from my inmost soul, that he may guide and bless you, and that he may make you acquainted with himself, in order that you may love him, and unreservedly commit yourself to him! Amen.

I salute you with fraternal affection, and remain through grace.

Letter 17

Dearly beloved brother:

In the supposition that you are still at N_____, I write these few lines, in haste, greeting you. May Jesus bless you! You do nothing else but look back upon yourself, which cannot fail of disturbing and dispiriting you. Had I done so, I should long ago have perished in my misery, for I am not so holy as some take me to be; but I hold my peace, and even let them praise me to my face, lest in addition to this, they should scold me for my humility. I believe the light of truth alone, in which I secretly and simply regard myself as the most miserable of mankind, and do not defend myself when praised by others. The commission of a fault, particularly when others also knew of it, made me, formerly, as ill as it does you. Afterwards, I was directed to a cure for it, which was the valuable love of self-contempt, which, every time I used it, tranquillized and refreshed me so wonderfully, that in consequence of it, I quite forgot my disease. But this medicine should be taken courageously, and not merely tasted with the lips, otherwise it will be found much too bitter.

I am not jesting—there is more truth in the above, than I am able to express. Looking back upon yourself injures you more than all your faults, and self-love is certainly the cause of it. But why are you so astonished at the discovery? Did you not know that you were a self-loving child of Adam, like myself and

others? Ought we to be melancholy on making such a discovery, or rather ought we not to strike up a *Te Deum laudamus*, that the Lord has granted us such a special favor, as the knowledge of ourselves? No one can more cheerfully chant a *Te Deum*, than he who knows and despises himself.

You say, in your last, that the pain on account of what you have done, is still very poignant. This I do not understand. Yield yourself up in God's name! We are not a thing that is so much worth looking at. If you cannot offer yourself up as well as you could wish, bear with yourself willingly and quietly, and sweetly turn away your inward eye from yourself, and fix it inwardly upon Him, in whom is all your salvation.

We must heartily believe that we are wretched, evil, and incapable of doing any good; yet we must not tell this to everyone, but speak of the greatness, and goodness, and blessedness of our God, and that in him all salvation and felicity dwell. Let this be the subject on which we meditate, of which we speak and sing, and in which alone we rejoice. Amen!

Letter 18

Much esteemed and dearly beloved sister in Jesus, whose Spirit be with your spirit:

I have duly received your very welcome letter, and have perused with much union of heart, the precious truths it contains. It is true that self-love has struck its roots much deeper within us than one would imagine. The eye of God alone can trace them out, and his hand can alone eradicate them. He that perceives but little of this self-love, goes, as he ought to do, to his labor; but he that perceives much of it, gives up his work, and resigns it to the all-piercing eye of God, and his adorable and faithful hand, which makes its commencement and beginning where we leave off, and where, after being brought into judgment by his justice, we must confess with Job (14:4), "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Escaping and departing from one selfish principle is often but the introduction to another, until we see no more possibility of escaping and reforming, give God in judgment the glory, and by suffering, die unto self, in order to make room for the divine life of Jesus Christ, which alone is pure.

It is, however, as you say, by looking back, that we first of all discover that to have been self-love, which we mistook for the pure love of God. But how much ought we to praise and love the Lord, that he discovers this, and many other things to us in the sequel, and not on the outset! His divine hand makes use even of the evil that is in us, in more ways than one, to make us better. Self-love, which in its way, makes us fear hell and love heaven, is that which generally excites men to listen to converting grace; and the Spirit of God employs, throughout the Bible, such inducements as these, because fallen man is incapable and unsusceptible of any other. And not only so, but I well remember to have read, what you may now find in *Bernière's Hidden Life*, that we ought not to desire perfection, because it is such an exalted state, but because it is the will of God that we should attain to it. It is now nearly thirty years since I read this in French, in the writings of that departed saint, and through it received a kind of sentence of death to my

self-love, which was hit in the most susceptible part by this expression. But I thank God, that I did not meet with or understand it sooner, because I required another wind to bring me there. And how much has been since discovered of this evil, which for awhile seemed good, until the leprosy had spread and insinuated itself into everything, from head to foot, both inwardly and outwardly (Lev. 13), and I found myself obliged to submit myself helpless and without advice, solely to the decision and the hand of the divine High-priest. And herein we will continue with God, that he may fulfill in us all the good pleasure of his will; and sincerely consenting to our own nothingness, cordially rest in his all-sufficiency, and in this, that no one is good, pure, and lovely, but God alone, and what he works. O yes, my dear sister! in this we may rest with childlike confidence, and sweetly rejoice, and really feel happy, that the Lord our God is what he is, that we are such nothings, and that He is God alone! O how good and excellent it is, that seeing there is nothing more in us that can boast, that the Lord acts towards us so wonderfully, and that although we have nothing, yet that we can be so satisfied and tranquil in the conviction that he is our purity, our treasure, our peace, and all our salvation, from pure unspeakable love to man! This he will be to us, more and more essentially. We must not reflect on our own purity or impurity, but close our eyes in childlike confidence, casting ourselves wholly upon him, and waiting for his operating influences and his salvation. Amen.

I must now break off, dear sister, while cordially saluting you, and presenting you as a living sacrifice to the Lord in his presence. Be He your life, your peace, your all, in every inward and outward circumstance! I remain through grace,

In tender affection, your obliged brother.

Letter 19

Dearly beloved brother in the grace of Jesus:

Although we correspond but little by letter, yet I can say in simplicity before God, that I love you, and find myself united with you in spirit; as also, that your last letter of the 17th of January, has afforded me pleasure. I observe, it is true, that you form too good an opinion of me; but this is the effect of your love, and I wish to derive benefit from it. I have endeavored to lay before the Lord in prayer, your state of mind, respecting which, like a brother, you have communicated something to me; and shall continue to endeavor to do so, according to the grace which I myself expect from him.

The great importance of perseverance in the exercise of prayer and inward retirement may be sufficiently learned, next to the experience of it, merely from the tempter's artifices and endeavors to allure us from it, and make us negligent in it. He knows by this delightful exercise alone, his gloomy empire in the soul will necessarily be destroyed, through the imperceptible influx of the light, love, and life of Jesus; and that all the flowers and fruits of the fairest gifts of grace and virtue fade of themselves, if he can only break them

off from this their root. Jesus alone, is the Mediator and medium, by which divine life and strength can be again imparted to our illegitimate and depraved humanity. By the exercise of the prayer of the heart, in which faith, love, hope, etc. concentrate themselves, we are, and continue united to him, and rooted in him—the hungering desire and affection, and ardent inclination, being as it were, the root, by which we imperceptibly receive from Jesus, sap and strength, although we do not always obviously see and feel how it is, and whether it is taking place. O let us pray, and prepare ourselves for retiring within our hearts! The most imperfect prayer is of more advantage than the best diversion from it. The adversary lets us do many things, which seem to be good, and even incites us to them, only to cause us to neglect prayer.

My dear brother's letter only confirms me in what my own experience, and the experience of others, has repeatedly taught me—that the tempter especially watches, in the season of abandonment, barrenness, and darkness, to detach the soul from the steadfast exercise of prayer, and to weaken its strength, these being precisely the times when we might be prepared for making the most rapid advancement, and for thoroughly forsaking ourselves, if we only continued firm in enduring the Lord's will, and knew how to submit ourselves entirely to him. I mean to say, that when we cannot proceed with the exercise of prayer in the customary manner, we ought not to hold fast, with firm efforts and self-will, what the Lord pleases to take from us; but humble ourselves, quietly consent to our nakedness and poverty, sacrifice our relish, light, and pleasure, to his good pleasure, and make the latter our prayer and our food; we should then find, in time, the advantage of thus letting go of ourselves, of privation, and the loss of self, so to speak, and be made capable of a more profound, or rather of a purer retirement, mode of prayer, and union with God, which is the very object the Lord has in view.

But our misery and weakness is, that we are so much under the influence of self-love, and seek ourselves, even while thinking we are seeking God; and if we then find nothing for ourselves—no light, relish, nor anything that is agreeable, we imagine we are unable to find God, become weary, and coward-like, and even seek support for this selfish principle in other things, because it is no longer granted in God, and in that which is good. O my God, how extremely unsuitable is such a disposition of mind for one, who has devoted himself to your pure service and your love! Destroy this principle of self-love, that we may seek, not ourselves in your service, but you in reality, not our own pleasure, but yours; for you are our end, and in you, and not in ourselves, is all our salvation! Amen.

Before the day of Pentecost arrived, the disciples could not hold out long in solitude, without the bodily and visible presence of Jesus. "I go a fishing," said Peter. Time appeared long to them in solitude, and such is the case also with us. We go, as it were, a fishing, in a book, in the company of others, etc. and it is a favor when we can catch nothing during the long night, and when the Savior meets us, and shows us, as he did the disciples, the fruitlessness of all self attempts. I testify with fear, shame, and deep acknowledgement of the divine long-suffering and goodness, what my own experience has taught me with respect to this—that the exercise of prayer is of so much importance, and that in seasons of inward darkness and barrenness, we fall into this temptation so easily. The injury occasioned by it is not immediately

perceived; but the individual gradually wanders further, and sometimes so far from the track, that he has scarcely courage enough to turn again. A soul without the exercise of prayer, is like a solitary sheep without a shepherd. The tempter is aware of this—he avails himself of the dark and destitute state of the mind, to draw the soul away from its shepherd—he then cunningly spreads his nets, puts the mind into doubt and confusion, places something believable before it, urges it to a variety of changes, and that it should make trial for once, of some particular exercise, of this or that particular place, or join itself to some superficially pleasing sect, by which many well-meaning people in this and former times, during the darkness of the night, have been deceived, as a warning for us, that when in a state of darkness and barrenness, we ought not easily to change our exercises, but continue where we were.

In the name of Jesus, let us only take courage, begin again where we left off, and conduct ourselves precisely in the same manner as before our deviating! The wonderful goodness of our God makes use of everything, even of our very faults and sins, for our benefit: adored be his wisdom! We must also, by looking back, make the best possible use of ourselves, and lay up from it a good stock of self-contempt; although we ought by no means to exculpate our faults on this account, but avoid them with all diligence (Romans 6:12). When by divine light, we perceive our nothingness, it produces humility, but a humility of which we are sometimes a little proud; but when our nothingness is felt by experience, self-love has no hole left for escape; we can then do nothing more than stand and confess our disgrace.

There are many who talk of denying self-righteousness who have, perhaps, little or no righteousness to deny; but this poison is the first to steal into the minds of faithful souls, that they imperceptibly place their righteousness and their confidence in their fidelity, in self-denial, in their virtue and graces, in their devotional exercises, and not entirely in God alone. The Savior then opens our eyes, as with our own clay, by which his wonder-working hand has alone the glory, we the shame. The experience of our weakness and misery, and of our entire nothingness, ought not to dispirit us, but to give us occasion to empty us of ourselves, to forsake ourselves, to turn unto God the more nakedly, and consequently the more efficaciously, in order that he may fill us with himself, and become that in us, which we ourselves could not attain nor accomplish. And this is the will of God concerning us, that no flesh might glory in his presence, but Jehovah alone become our righteousness and our glory. You see, therefore, dear brother, that the state of destitution, emptiness, and abandonment, to which the experience of our misery gives occasion, would make us subsequently capable of the most sublime method of prayer and of union with God. Blessed be the wondrous and infinite lovingkindness of our God in Christ Jesus towards us!

Having been continually interrupted, while writing, and led to think on other subjects, by visitors and engagements, my letter may perhaps appear to you irregular and obscure. I only wished to show my artless love, and accordance with that which the Uncction itself teaches. Let us continue, my dear brother, to go to school to this infallible teacher of wisdom, and become ever longer little children after God's own heart. O yes, it is truth, which the Uncction teaches, and there is no other truth besides! I greet and salute you in the spirit of love. Remember me before God, whenever you are enabled to do so; I desire through

God, to do the same.

Remember me kindly to the dear members of your community in N_____. I often send them a hearty blessing. May Jesus warm and animate their hearts and ours with his precious love! Amen.

I continue in a weak state, and but little able to write, and this weakness now tells me to break off.

I remain, through grace, etc.

Letter 20

Dearly beloved sister in Jesus, the crucified and exalted Redeemer:

I have for some days past, felt myself impelled to write something to you regarding the present state of your soul. And although I find myself so dark and void, that I do not see what I ought to say to you, yet my mind will not be satisfied till I have done so. I will therefore obey in simplicity, hoping that God will grant me something, which may serve to strengthen and prove a blessing to you in your present affliction.

You may rest assured that I am more concerned for your soul's advancement in true holiness, than I can express or manifest outwardly. And notwithstanding the wretched state in which you describe yourself to be, I am still quite at ease regarding it, and am under no apprehension of evil consequences. Were I concerned for you after the manner of men, and were I glad to see your own life—the life of self—preserved, I might have reason to fear; because our Lord attacks it so forcibly and severely, and pursues it so warmly, that it must, very likely, soon give up the ghost, which takes place and is accomplished by the complete and eternal resignation of yourself into the free hands of God.

You see and feel nothing but sin and corruption within you and in your outward conduct. Whithersoever the mind turns and directs its view, everything is misery, grief, and sin; and the way to escape from it is closed and appears as if it were always to continue so. Ah! thinks subtle self-love, could I only find a little nook, to which I might retire and take a little rest, like a drowsy man, who throws himself first into one position, and then into another, without being able to sleep. Listen, O soul! cease your turning and twisting! the more you seek to make matters better, the worse you make them; the more you endeavor to perform something good of yourself, the more faults do you commit. There is now an end to all self-working.

You say, you do nothing good. You ought rather to say, I do not see that I do anything good; for subtle self-love is not satisfied with the practice of virtue, but this left hand of iniquity must also know and see what the right hand does, in order to take pleasure therein. But God, whose intention it is to destroy this life of self, and to have our virtues pure and disinterested, does not permit the soul to reflect upon them, nor to review its virtues, either before or afterwards. The impurity alone is seen.

Therefore, as long as it pleases God to leave you miserable, corrupt, and without strength, let it also please you. You behold your real self, at present, as you are in yourself; thank God, for having thus disclosed your inward wound to your view. The gold is now in a state of purification—the dross appears, the gold is hidden so that nothing but the refuse is visible. Rejoice, therefore, dear sister, that you are so wretched, and that God is so holy, and so perfect. Wretchedness and nothingness is our proper station; holiness and all-sufficiency belong unto God. He that longs to see himself beautiful and holy, only manifests his self-love—at least at present, it would be a fault and an imperfection. Resolve, therefore, with Job, to sit quietly on the dunghill of your misery, and to love God notwithstanding. You ought, I say, to love your wretchedness, but not your sins. Say unto God, in the most thorough conviction of your depravity, “Lord, I will nevertheless not sin! Lord, I will still remain entirely yours! I resign my will unto you for time and eternity. Let happen what may, only enable me to love you and glorify you!” And when you think that you have committed some sin, or really have come short, continue to say the same.

I am not surprised at the ill temper, impatience, and anger, in particular, that arise in you. Previously, when the dealings of grace with you were so lovely and gentle, nature and sense occasionally participated in it; but in the way in which you are at present, they are deprived of all inward and outward support. It is impossible that nature and sense should acquiesce in this total destitution; they must die, and yet will not; they often know not what to do for vexation, and are ready to murmur against themselves and everyone else, and sometimes even against the holy ways of God, just like a dog, that bites at the stone which is thrown at it. If you feel this or something similar in you, regard nature as such an evil brute, and say to yourself, “Let this wicked thing perish with all its rage! What have I to do with it? Resist as long as you will, you obstinate nature, you shall die notwithstanding, and be destroyed!” and then leave it, and pay no attention to its fury. Possess your soul, at the same time, as much as possible in patience. Do not break out too much into words, if it be any way possible to contain; nor give way immediately to desponding thoughts, such as wishing to die and the like.

Sometimes it will occur to you, that it is impossible for you to endure it any longer—that you must give it up and return to the world—that you will certainly be lost forever, etc. But reflect for once, dear sister, have you not previously often and heartily surrendered yourself to God and his guidance? Have you not often sincerely besought him to cleanse you thoroughly from all your corruptions, and to sanctify you perfectly by such ways and means as he might find best? Have you not frequently and cordially vowed, with his assistance, to continue faithful unto him till death? What? Have you entirely forgotten all this? Now, when God has heard your prayer, and touches you where it gives you pain, will you give up your courage, and turn back again? Is this keeping your word? Yet no!—you are no longer your own; you have given yourself to the Lord, and he has accepted you; you have nothing more to say in the disposal of yourself. Certainly, God will not allow that which belongs to him, to be thus taken from him.

But in opposition to this, you will say, “I feel nothing but corruption, sin, and inability. I am every instant in danger of falling and sinning, yes, methinks I sin really; the longer I live thus, the more I increase the

number of my sins.” I do not believe that you sin really, that this, willfully and knowingly; for you are not so fond of sin. The view and perception of sin causes you these bitter sufferings, and that which alone so much distresses you is, that you see and feel nothing within you but sin; how then can you willingly practice it? But that in such a state of severe purification, we must feel so lively and forcibly, the very corruptions which had been previously cherished and obeyed with delight, so that we think nothing else, but that we really practice them, and finally, that sometimes some particular corruption will unexpectedly break out again, contrary to our will, is neither contrary to experience, nor the Holy Scriptures, which say, “wherewithal that a man sins, therewith shall he be punished.” (Book of Wisdom 11:17; Rom. 8:3). You are also perhaps acquainted with the lines I wrote some time ago upon this subject:

*I once committed sin, with pleasure and with lust,
But now must suffer sin with sorrow and disgust;
This suffering is wholesome—but what grievous pain,
When sin, by sin within us, is condemn’d and slain!*

But that you think you will fall into sin every moment, arises partly from the darkness which at present covers your path, which occasions all manner of doubts, fears, and apprehensions; so that you think all kind of danger is at hand, when there is often nothing of the sort. Close your eyes to all that surrounds you; walk in faith and resignation, and fear will vanish. And when the light dawns upon you, you will say that you have walked in the right way. This fear arises also in part, from the withdrawment of all perceptible strength and support. The case is with you, as with a child, that is always afraid of falling, although the mother holds it fast behind by leading-strings, without the child’s being conscious of it; but as soon as it is in danger of stumbling or falling, it would be aware of its mother’s supporting hand. No, my dear child, there is no need to be afraid; your mother is near, although not before your eyes. The more you are afraid, the worse you will stumble; and if you were on the point of falling, you would be conscious of something in you, which held you back, or ordered everything outwardly in such a manner, as to keep you from stumbling. Rely upon the supporting hand of God without seeing it, and repose, upon the guidance of his divine providence, by which he will overrule all things, both internally and externally, to a good end.

Commit yourself to God, and let your love be pure and disinterested, and so shall you be healed. Give yourself up entirely unto God and his unlimited will, both for time and eternity. Banish all care regarding yourself, so that you would no longer look after yourself, although you knew, that by acting thus, you would sink into hell; for of what value are you? And what is it that depends upon you? *Consent to everything except to sin.*

If it occur to your mind, that you are at present, or may become the ridicule and scorn of all men and of evil spirits, let your will agree to it, and say, “Of what value am I! I will glorify God, notwithstanding; I will love him, notwithstanding.” If the thought arise in your mind, that your wretched condition will become still more wretched—that it will continue so till death, and that you will perish eternally—consent

to all this, and say, I will nevertheless not sin, I will still love and glorify God; what does it matter what becomes of me!" Act thus with everything that passes in your mind. In this manner resignation will give place to a disinterested love, and your bitter and disturbed emotions shall be changed into a soothing and profound peace, and your distressed condition into an unlimited immensity and liberty of spirit.

Remember that God continues to be God; and that he is as kind and lovely now, as when you saw and tasted his goodness. Love him therefore now, quite as much, and if possible, still more than before. God has many thousands, who praise him in heaven and on earth; let him then have one instance, in you, out of thousands, who praise him in hell, where you imagine yourself to be. The former do it in the enjoyment of light and delight; do you do it in the midst of darkness, and while hanging with Jesus on the cross, in external and internal affliction. O how beautiful, disinterested, and lovely is the praise of God, which proceeds from the heart and lips of a suffering soul, out of whose mouth, like Job's, nothing proceeds, but "the name of the Lord be praised! The Lord is good, the Lord is gracious, he alone is the source of life! O that every creature might know and serve him! Love him, all you righteous in time and in eternity! O what a blessing that God is God; that he is so holy, so glorious, so blessed, and so perfect as he is! etc."

If, my dear sister, you have little perceptible enjoyment in this state, it is so much the purer. If you possess no clear knowledge or light from God of his perfections, there is no harm in it. You cannot, therefore, praise and love God otherwise, than as the unknown, hidden, and incomprehensible God, of whom you neither can nor ought to form any idea how he is, or where he is; and therefore, in so doing, you act in a manner, which is the most perfect and well-pleasing in the sight of God.

You think that your friends are unacquainted with your state, and have a better opinion of you, than the fact warrants; but this is a little temptation, and a lack of simplicity of faith. Let me tell you, however, that you yourself are ignorant of your own condition, and that you have a worse idea of yourself than the case deserves.

It is not however necessary that you know much of yourself, and of your state. It were better if you and I knew nothing more of ourselves. Judge not therefore respecting yourself, because you are in darkness; but believe those, whom you know would not willingly flatter or deceive you, although you may suppose you feel the contrary within you, to what is told you.

I know, dear sister, in some measure, what it is to have a powerful view of the holiness and purity of God, and to cherish some inward and sincere desires after holiness, and yet, notwithstanding all this, to see and feel nothing in one's self but sin and self. O, we ought to be ready to sink into the earth, at the sight of ourselves! And nature ought willingly to do so before God, and experience a little of the distress of those who shall exclaim, "Rocks, fall on us, and hills, hide us from the face of God."

I know, in some degree, what it is to be acquainted with God to know him to be supremely excellent, beautiful, delightful, and lovely, and yet be unable to love and glorify him; but on the contrary, apparently

only dishonor, offend, and act in opposition to him—to know this supremely beautifying being, and yet at the same time, to see one's self cast so far, so very far away from him and the enjoyment of him, into misery, sorrow, and darkness, yes, and to believe nothing else than that this will last forever, and forever become more aggravated! The troubled mind then thinks, “O, had you never known God and his goodness! Had you not known him to be such a God, and such an adorable being, you would now perhaps not experience such distress and torment! You now know something of his excellencies, you now long so fervently after him, and yet must remain separated from him.”

O the admirable wisdom of God, how lovely, yet how severe in its dealings towards those that are his! You allure them to you with lovingkindness, and let them behold your countenance; but soon, and before they have properly seen and enjoyed you, you depart, and hide yourself with such severity! You wound them with the arrows of your love, and let them be forsaken in their pain! You lift them up to behold the glories of heaven, and cast them afterwards down into hell; and yet you continue to be love itself, and desire that your bride should love you, as well in hell as in paradise!

But I see that my letter is growing longer than I intended; I will therefore only add a few short and necessary admonitions, which ought to be particularly attended to during prayer or retirement, or in your daily walk; and with these I will conclude.

I have already often stated my sentiments regarding the seasons of retirement. If circumstances allow, do not neglect them, either on account of your unfitness, or the repugnance of nature, or from any other consideration or temptation. Do not, however, continue too long alone at one time, unless God favors you with some particular grace and strength. Use little or no effort in prayer; for the exertion of the mental powers, would injure both the body and the mind. If you seek by the smallest effort to collect or elevate your mind, you will soon perceive that it will occasion irritation, anxiety, and darkness. When I said that you ought to commit yourself to God, I did not intend that this should be done by any formal act, or by much inward exertion and mental reflection; but what I mean, is, that you ought to forget yourself, as much as possible, nor voluntarily reflect upon your state, and the circumstances connected with it. Abstain from all care respecting yourself, and then leave yourself to God, and let your vessel sink, which is also an excellent species of prayer.

But it is not good for you at present to seek God as an object, in an anxious manner in your prayers, either by means of much elevation of thought or repeated retirement. Remain, as much as you are able, peaceful, joyful, and cheerful, at the moment.

Continue as you are, and unite yourself with God, not as with something which you have first to seek, but as with something which you already possess; for God is certainly with you and in you, although concealed by darkness. O that I could impart to you a peaceful and enlarged heart, both during prayer, and when not engaged in it; how serviceable would it be to you!

If, when employed or in company, something unexpectedly occurs to call you to recollection, although secretly, and without unction—follow it that moment, in childlike simplicity, if circumstances permit; or cease a moment from your work; you will experience the benefit of it: it is God's time.

In your walk and conversation, strive more and more to make progress in childlike simplicity and innocence, and without reflection. Take no thought for the future, and look not at the past; both disturb, and are contrary to your present state. The present moment should be your abode, for God and his will are to be found in it alone. Generally speaking, you will scarcely ever fail, when you go to work in outward things, as it may appear to you at the time. If you look forwards or backwards, you are already involved in doubt and anxiety, and are no longer able to recognize what is the will of God. Be not scrupulous regarding works of obedience, if not in themselves sinful. All self-made choice, however good it may be, must yield to obedience.

Do not converse much with people, unless there be a necessity. If possible, never speak as long as the influence of anger or irritation is powerfully felt. Say little or nothing regarding your sufferings to others. Let it be sufficient for you, that the Lord your God beholds your sorrows, and that his eye is upon you. You must, however, account that a temptation, which would lead you to avoid the society of his children altogether, or to cease visiting me on any pretext. We are all miserable and sinful in ourselves, and it is our duty to bear one another's burdens. You ought therefore to visit me as frequently as before, and not conceal anything that might serve to make me acquainted with your state, when it occurs to you. You give me no trouble, nor do I suffer anything on your account that disturbs me; but if my suffering could avail you, I would certainly, with the Lord's assistance, not shrink from it.

Let us become little children, nor reflect much about anything. If I had given way to reflection, I would certainly not have written this letter, but have continued altogether silent, and have hidden myself on account of the great poverty, wretchedness, and blindness in which I am at present—yet I have the confidence that this letter will be neither disagreeable nor hurtful to you.

Be only patient and courageous, in God's name, dear sister, in loving and in suffering; and whatever may happen, through divine grace, I am, and will remain,

Your affectionate brother in Jesus, and companion in tribulation in Christ.

P.S. Keep this letter to yourself, because it may be of little advantage to your friends.

Letter 21

To the same.

May the once crucified but now exalted Jesus bless you, my much loved sister in Christ!

I have read your letter with feelings of devotion, have laid the state of your mind before God, and examined it anew. Certainly, the account you give of yourself is a very painful one. It is enough to make human nature melancholy to read it, much more so to feel it, and that too for any length of time. But the eye of faith views things in a different light to that of nature and reason; it beholds a glory in Jesus quite as great, if not greater, while hanging on the accursed tree, on the hill of Calvary, scoffed at, naked, and forsaken by all, as when he stood transformed on Mount Tabor; and such is also the case with all his true members and followers.

It would carry me to too great a length, and me thinks it is unnecessary to reply to everything you mention regarding your state. Speaking generally, I would only say, that the more you make me acquainted with your state, the more confirmed I am in the opinion, that all these very painful sufferings are assuredly the dealings of God with your soul, to unfold the deep depravity of your heart, and to mortify the most secret remains of a life of self. We do not know ourselves in seasons of relish and enjoyment; the cross must discover to us what we are. O how firmly and deeply rooted are the subtle unbrokenness of the will, the confidence in our own works and ability, complacency in the virtues and graces with which the Lord favors us, and such like selfish principles in the heart! It is true that, in the beginning, the Lord overlooks much of this kind of impurity in his weak children; but when he sees that it is time, and that the soul is sufficiently resolute and established in grace and knowledge, he then begins to press the matter out of the wound, and touches the poor soul just where it gives her pain. The soul is then attacked by very severe and great temptations and sins, in order that the subtle principles of self, which are still concealed, may be brought to light, and entirely eradicated.

It is no wonder, beloved sister, that all that is within you stands amazed at this strange and uncommon procedure, in which, instead of that purity of heart you so ardently longed for, you are conscious of nothing but corruptions and abominations, both inwardly and outwardly. O, you cannot be at all easy at seeing yourself so wretched! You would gladly be entirely pure and holy, and yet you must see and feel yourself entirely the reverse. Only be content with your wretchedness, and shut your eyes against yourself; God will sanctify you assuredly, but in such a manner, that you shall not see your holiness, lest you exalt yourself on account of it.

There is still something concealed within you, that seeks to help and excuse itself, frequently without your knowledge. When at such times you look around, and behold yourself wretched, faint, desperate in every point, and shut up on all sides—either a violent feeling of discontent and irritation is excited, or else a profound dejection and melancholy, both of which are injurious and painful. I am also well aware that it sometimes happens, that all your sorrow and suffering, with all its vexations and apparently dangerous concomitants, its intolerableness and wearisomeness, places itself, as in a moment, in the most lively and susceptible manner before your eyes, by which your affliction and distress increases to the highest pitch, so that it seems no longer supportable. This is something which proceeds from the Lord, for which reason, the soul ought to be passive under it; for when suffering is thus at its greatest height, and the poor

soul is driven to extremity, even then the most thorough and magnanimous surrender of ourselves may be exercised—when the soul, in the deepest resignation, sinks into death, and gives itself up eternally to the unlimited good pleasure of God, which is the very way to obtain rest, into which we enter by forsaking ourselves, and giving ourselves up to God, who is the sole rest of our spirits.

The Lord himself, the faithful guide of your soul, will find means to lead you out of yourself and into him, through death, into eternal life, through the strait gate, into unlimited freedom, out of the most miserable dungeon, into the most delightful liberty of spirit. Do but let the Lord work; he will accomplish what he has begun. Let your enemies alone also, and regard not their rage; without divine permission, they can do nothing to you, the combined powers of hell cannot compel you to consent to a single sin. Temptations and sins of every kind may approach and surround you, as much as they will, but as long as you remain in a state of passive and resigned mortification, you may walk unconsumed in the midst of the flames.

I believe and am aware that you commit many faults, particularly such as you are not conscious of until afterward; but do not trouble yourself too much about them—it is not your intention to sin; therefore when you really sin or think you do so, recant it, and commit yourself to God anew. I believe that almost every error in this state, arises from a departure from resignation.

God occasionally gives you grace to surrender yourself entirely to him; and although this be only at intervals, and for a short time, yet the mind perceives the benefit of it; a proof that you can be cured only in this way. When we cease to care and labor, then God begins, and will be all in our nothingness. May he himself completely work this happy death in both of us, and grant that we may lose ourselves in him, in such a manner, as that we may never find ourselves again in ourselves!

All you have to do, is, as you mention, continually to regard yourself as a sacrifice to the justice and love of God, which kills and consumes all the life of self in you without mercy. Abraham really thought that his beloved son Isaac must suffer, and was obliged to consent to it; but God would only have Isaac offered, and the ram burnt. And thus the Lord knows how to preserve that which is his own in you; everything however, must be offered up—life and health, body and soul, enjoyment, relish, gifts, and virtues, and even the darling image of holiness itself.

I say you are a sacrifice to the *justice* and *love* of God, and not to his *wrath*; it shall not come upon you, as you sometimes write. The wrath of God, properly speaking, is only poured out upon the wicked; it is his justice, mingled with love, that purifies his children. The beloved parent is not angry with his poor helpless infants; for it is thus that we are described in the prophet Ezekiel. (16:5-6.) Refer to the passage and see if that can be called anger.

Possess yourself, as much as possible in patience. The bitter cup of affliction will soon be drunk up. *You please God, when you suffer for his sake.* Is not this a sufficient reason to fortify yourself in patience? Yes, I thank God, with my whole heart, that he has called you, and deigned to take you so strictly into

his correction, in order that through suffering, he may perfect you in true holiness. Yes, I thank him also, with inward satisfaction, for all that grace, which he manifests towards you in this state, so that in the midst of temptation and suffering, you still hate sin, and love holiness; that you inwardly desire not to draw back from the cross; that you love his good pleasure, praise his goodness; and that, finally, you place your highest consolation in this, that God may be loved and glorified in you and others, although, as you say, every drop of your blood should be consumed by it. If this desire be really in you, so as you express yourself, and as I also believe is the case, thank the Lord for it with me, and boldly believe, that flesh and blood have not imparted it to you. God is glorified in you, even now, in your humiliation; and will glorify himself, in future, still more, both in time and eternity.

With this, therefore, I will conclude, and resign you into the Lord's faithful hands. What else might have been added, is already said in my former letter. In other respects, this state does not admit of enjoying or observing many rules; and if I sometimes give any particular directions, you must not anxiously bind yourself to them, nor revolve them much in your mind. God himself will work and remind you, every moment, of what is well-pleasing in his sight. He will not forsake you, his disconsolate child, though all the world were to do so.

As for myself, I am obliged and sufficiently inclined to serve you, how and when I can, according to the ability which the Lord grants; even as one child gives its hand to another. But as the light and grace of God, with respect to the inward way, is less powerful in me than you and others suppose, I would not readily advise anyone to follow my instructions further, than he himself may believe them to be the will of God, and of advantage to him. God will give us grace to be mindful of each other.

Be of good courage, my sister, and love Jesus and his cross, in whom I am,

Your affectionate fellow-laborer and brother.

Letter 22

Dearly beloved brother in the grace of Jesus:

I have before me your favor of the 9th of March, in which you desire further explanation regarding something I said in my last. You refer to that passage, where I say, "Looking solely unto God in Christ, and not regarding but forgetting ourselves, produces every virtue; this has, however, its gradations." These gradations you desire to be made acquainted with, as though you did not know them as well as myself. I will however, simply state what occurs to me on the subject; although I do not remember how I viewed the matter at the time.

I am now able to say, that we must look chiefly unto God and forget ourselves in a sevenfold manner, and experience teaches every time, although with a remarkable difference, how by so doing every virtue and

every good is produced. We do so:

I. In a way of seeking.

II. In a way of feeling.

III. Experimentally.

IV. In simplicity.

V. By contemplation.

VI. By resignation.

VII. Essentially.

According to everyone's particular state and the divine guidance; for everyone must act according to his state, and the manner in which he is led, without being concerned whether his state be high or low; because that particular state to which God destines us, is for us the most perfect.

I. In the state of repentance, be it at the commencement or subsequently, whenever the soul feels her sinfulness, distress, anxiety, and alarm in the conscience, from a presentiment of divine justice, with reference to which, she sees nothing before her but darkness, death, and perdition: In this state, I say, there is no better, nor any other remedy or refuge for the soul, than to look, not at herself, but unto God in Christ alone, in order that her wound may be healed, and every virtue be wrought in her. It is only like daubing with untempered mortar to look around upon some supposed good work, or to endeavor to help and tranquillize ourselves by duties, well-meant exercises, self-made promises, and resolutions of amendment. By the works of the law shall no man be justified before God. The law is too holy and the flesh too weak to render due obedience to it. Conscience cannot be pacified in this manner, but the man sinks ever deeper into it, and after he has endured his misery long enough, and done his best, he finds himself at last, at the end of the seventh chapter of Romans, exclaiming, "O wretched man that I am! etc." But if the soul gives God the glory, and cordially assents to her demerit, misery, and nothingness, and then looks away from herself, in order to look unto God in Christ, who graciously receives, and heals the sinner, she will certainly be saved, though burdened with mountains of sins, and though the heart were the residence of seven devils. The soul, while sincerely confessing her wretchedness, ought to turn away her eyes from it, and look unto God in Christ, who is able and willing, through the blood of Christ, to forgive and blot out all our sins; and though her sinfulness and misery continually present themselves to her view, and though it appear to her as if she were unable to look unto God in Christ, or as if he would not regard the soul, yet she ought only steadfastly to continue, in Jesus's name, to look away from herself unto Christ, who will never forsake her, nor allow her to be put to shame, but at length embrace her with infinite compassion. It is thus we forget ourselves, and look unto God in Christ in a way of seeking; just

as a sick and pining infant looks up to its mother, or those who were bitten by the poisonous serpents in the wilderness who looked not at their wounds, but at the brazen serpent, and were healed. And thus, whosoever believes on the Son of God shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

II. In the state of enjoyment—be it that the Lord graciously allows the soul to see and taste the riches of his mercy, in the forgiveness of all her sins, or that he imparts to her other perceptible gifts of grace, joy, light, pleasure, comfort, or the like. Here the soul ought to be particularly careful not to regard, but to forget herself, in order that the gifts of God may not be polluted by presumption and self-complacency. She ought rather to shut her eyes, both against herself and the gifts of God, after having thanked God for them, that she may not wish to possess any of them herself, but again divest herself of them, in order that she may solely behold God in Christ, and take no delight in herself, but in God, the giver and source of every good gift, and who is alone good and lovely.

This forgetting ourselves and the blessings we have received in ourselves, this stripping ourselves and closing our eyes against ourselves and all created things, that we may not be desirous of possessing or beholding anything in them for ourselves, but of looking unto God alone, appears irrational to the carnal mind, and reason may think, “Of what use is it to me, if I receive and possess this or that particular blessing from God, if I must again forget it and retain nothing of it for myself?” But sense and reason are blinded with respect to the kingdom of God. Experience teaches, that the more we divest ourselves of every blessing, and the less we are desirous of selfishly possessing them, the more nobly we possess them in reality; and when we also again divest ourselves of that which is noble in our possession of them, that we may regard nothing but God, our bliss and blessings again increase. For the more sincere our self-contempt and self-renunciation are, the more virtue, peace, and substantial blessedness does the soul possess. But because many, alas! selfishly regard and retain the good they receive from God, they continue deprived of that which is better, and even the good they have is lost and spoiled. And thus a person in this situation, in a way of feeling, must forget and disregard himself, and look unto God alone in Christ, who works every good; and though the Beloved, at this agreeable period, adorns the bride with one ornament after another, and then says “Behold you are fair, my love,” she does not look at herself, but replies, “Behold you are fair my Beloved!” (Song. 1:15-16)

III. In the way of sanctification, the individual must have a sole regard to God in Christ, and not look at himself, and this must be done in a practical manner. Many well-meaning people, who have felt a little of the grace of God in Christ, have a hearty and earnest desire to live to the glory of God and to follow after holiness; but it is to be regretted that this is generally undertaken in such an improper manner.

These individuals seek out their enemies, so to speak; they try and examine their life and conduct; they strenuously resist that which is evil, are diligent in the exercise of virtue, and make themselves appear as pious as they possibly can; but the result is either a self-created external form and hypocritical appearance, without root or foundation, or they torment themselves by despondency and unbelief, or else

they quite lose all courage, because they find so many imperfections, and know of no means of making themselves as holy as they perceive they ought to be; for the soul goes to work in its own strength, and without God. The easiest and most proper way of attaining to holiness is, to look unto God in Christ, and to forget ourselves and our miseries as much as possible. “Let us run the race set before us,” says Paul; (Heb. 12) but in what manner?

“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” This is that beautiful exercise of occupying ourselves with God and his beatifying presence, of which it is said, in Ps. 16, “I have set the Lord constantly before me.” This filial view of faith, this collectedness and occupation of the heart with the omnipresent God of love and with his divine perfections, is a real stratagem in the inward conflict; by which the soul, instead of openly facing the enemy, acts as a child that flies to its mother at the sight of a dog, instead of fighting with it, and hides itself with confidence in her lap. By this looking unto God, and this occupation of the heart with him, and with his divine perfections, the soul becomes wonderfully enlightened, strengthened, satisfied, and sanctified, as though while asleep, and that in a real and radical manner, because the impression of the presence, majesty, all-sufficiency, and perfections of God, gradually penetrate, wean the individual from everything, and make everything that is not God, little and trifling in his estimation.

IV. If the man be steadfast and faithful in this exercise, God blesses his endeavors, prevents him in it, and meets him with his attractive influence, in the center of his heart, and with the secret impression of his intimate nearness, love, all-sufficiency, and divine perfections. Such a one finds himself no longer adequate to the contemplation of God, and to the discrimination of his perfections, in succession, by the efforts of his understanding; nor is he able to employ himself in this manner; yet when he keeps near his heart in simplicity, he there finds a general and secret impression of the nearness, majesty, love, and all-sufficiency of God, which, although it appears, as already observed, to be entirely hidden and almost imperceptible, is nevertheless accompanied by a latent power, by which the heart is exceedingly drawn off from, and disinclined to all created and transitory things, in order that it may unite itself with God, and keep near unto him. The soul has therefore nothing else to do in this state, but to follow, in simplicity, this inward drawing and central inclination, and cleave by it unto God, seek to continue collected in his presence, and with a meek and simple believing eye, *look only unto him, and not unto herself*; and thus, by means of this simple state of inward collectedness, the soul will be best preserved from all evil, become the recipient of radical virtues, and be made capable of a real union with God, and of receiving innumerable blessings.

But if the individual will not act here with simplicity, but regard herself, and follow her own imagination, she will only confuse herself and impede her progress; for her former external, sensible, and mental meditations and exercises, no longer afford the mind any nourishment or pleasure—it accommodates itself to them with difficulty; as it regards the senses, she is in a weak and barren state, and occasionally her thoughts easily wander, and the more she tries to help herself, by the exertion of his rational and

mental powers, the worse she makes the matter. It is only when forgetting everything else, and abiding near the heart, or to speak more correctly, near to God, that the individual is in some measure aware of the attraction and impression above-mentioned, in which she finds herself at ease, so that she has even a secret presentiment that she has nothing more to do or desire. Such persons, nevertheless, find it difficult, at the commencement, to be satisfied with it, on account of their inexperience and the simplicity of the exercise; and the soul not infrequently returns to herself and the view of herself, instead of remaining calmly with Mary at the feet of Jesus; because this is the “one thing needful” for her, and brings with it greater blessings than others attain by being careful about many things. But I find I am writing too much at length, and will therefore express myself more briefly.

V. The individual looks unto God alone, and not at herself, in a way of contemplation, when it pleases God really to reveal himself to her inwardly in reality (John 14:21), and to presence himself with her. In this state the eye of the soul is opened, and inclined, by a delightful effect of divine power, to the enjoyment of this present and all sufficient good, and to regard and cleave unto him, solely and steadfastly, and this is called the state of contemplation. It is here not very necessary to remind such persons not to look at themselves, because they are already sufficiently instructed therein, by the unction imparted to them, and because they are easily drawn unto God, by the impelling and attracting power of his presence. Paul, amongst others, tells us how much good the steadfast contemplation of God in this state produces, “While beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor. 3:18)

VI. We must look solely unto God in Christ in a way of resignation and mortification; and not regard, but forget ourselves in the various and important states of inward suffering, privation, and purification. This truth is then supremely needful to the soul; yes, the more extreme and severe the trials are, the more needful is the recollection of this. In the more elevated paths of mortification and purification, we can neither find light, nor consolation, nor grace, nor God; while on the contrary, everything appears against us. We behold and experience our poverty, darkness, weakness, and the indescribable depth of our wretchedness, in the bitterest manner. All our former gifts and communications seem as though they were lost—and lost, we think, by our own fault. All our exercises, efforts, mental elevation, recollection, etc. or by whatever means we were accustomed to help, preserve, or unite ourselves with God, are of no further benefit to us. What is to be done? Nothing. What is to be suffered? Much, but apparently without hope of deliverance. But what has the wretched creature left, and what advice is to be given him? He has nothing left but his great wretchedness and total nothingness; and all the advice that can be given him is this, that he sincerely and truly acquiesce in his wretchedness and nothingness, and resign himself to the pure grace of God in Christ, in this character, without seeking anything further in himself, or expecting anything from himself, or hoping anything for himself, but to justify God, and let him do with him as seems good to Him in time and eternity. This God must work, and the man suffer; it is then that he departs out of himself, that he forsakes himself, that he dies to himself, and learns what it is, to look

alone unto God in Christ, in a way of resignation and mortification, and not look at himself, but forget himself in high degree; by which means, not only much good is produced, but we also become filled with the self-existent good.

VII. This takes place also essentially, in the state of divine unity and transformation, of which Jesus speaks in John 17, and of which other saints have testified, both in the Holy Scriptures and elsewhere, but of which I can say nothing from experience. The Lord give us grace to feel and know what is well-pleasing in his sight!

This, my brother, is what I have written you in haste, in answer to your questions, and during continual interruption. You will know how to derive benefit from it all, and to distinguish the mistakes which are mingled with it, from that which is divine truth.

I have, however, no great opinion of persons being much acquainted with the different degrees of the christian life, for self-love delights in exalting itself, and forming itself into something to which God has not hitherto conducted the soul. Nor do I wish this letter to be viewed in such a manner, as though one degree ought always to follow the other. It is true, there is something in it, but the case is not the same with every soul, neither do they always follow so regularly and distinctly; besides which the different temperament and deportment of the soul, causes a perceptible difference in the manner of its guidance. God has also not the same intentions with regard to all.

Let us, in the spirit of children, abide with God for the time being, and resign ourselves wholly to him, according to the full extent of his grace in us, and with all our faithfulness; and in every trial expect nothing from ourselves, but everything from his infinite goodness. Amen. May he himself perform it!

Remember me as your weak brother.

Letter 23

Beloved brethren, sisters, and friends, in the grace of God, whose names, I pray, may be found written in the book of life:

In compliance with your repeated requests, I would gladly have visited you in person, that with the divine blessing, we might have been enabled to strengthen and edify one another in our vocation and faith, and rejoice in all the blessings we possess in Jesus, our blessed and supreme head, God blessed forever.

But as the providence of God does not at present permit this, I take the liberty of affectionately saluting you through this medium, and heartily wish you all increase and establishment in the grace of God. Your love and the remembrance of you, as far as I became acquainted with you during my last visit, have often refreshed me, and at the same time compelled me to offer up your souls to the author and finisher of

faith and to commit you to his superintendence and gracious influences, in order that none may remain behind, but that everyone, according to his measure, may make progress towards the prize of our high calling of fellowship with God in the spirit. In this sense, may the Lord unite us more and more fully, as in one heart and soul, in the sweet love of Jesus!

O what an unspeakable mercy of God it is, when we not only feel within us the vocation of grace, but also cordially give place to it—when we are impressively convinced of our miserable and fallen state by nature, when we sincerely feel the burden of our sins, and are thus driven, by inward distress and grief, to Jesus, when we perceive in a lively manner, the great necessity of a change, a universal and thorough change; and when, at length, we take a humble and sincere resolution irrevocably to offer ourselves, with body and soul, to the Lord Jesus and his service, and to follow him in the narrow path of self-denial and the cross, determined also, willingly to bear the hatred and contempt of the world and the enmity of the devil on account of it! Happy moment when such a feeling and determination arises in the soul! Inestimable grace, which is more to be esteemed than all the deceitful riches and pleasures of the world! But here keep firm footing, my dearly beloved, who have experienced the happy hour, in which you have sincerely given your word to Jesus.

When an awakening takes place anywhere, persons are easily carried along with the stream; the novelty of the thing touches the senses, and the individual also feels affected—nay, the grace of God gladly avails itself of such opportunities to get the soul into the gospel net; but now let everyone pay attention that it be not a fire of stubble which burns within him, but a flame of the Lord, which is not easily extinguished again. The first resolution is soon taken; but after the primary effervescence has a little subsided, the individual is put to the test, in which foresight, courage, and divine grace are necessary.

When he comes again amongst worldly-minded people, who have already heard that he intends to become religious, or more serious than he was before, what astonishment is expressed! What apparently faithful cautions—what seemingly reasonable arguments and sophistry assault the weak mind! If he then gives only a little heed to the serpent, and revolves the matter over in himself, with his carnal reason, he is immediately weakened and overcome. It afterwards seems to him very probable that such is the case; that there is no need of making such a noise about it, nor of injuring ourselves with others—that running here and there is of little avail; that it often occasions more distraction than edification; that we can quietly serve God, without identifying ourselves so much with the hated people that there is also much strange fire and dissimulation amongst them, and that they are not all so holy as they outwardly seem to be—that it is not altogether possible to live in such a manner, etc. O beware, beware, you that love your souls, of thus conferring with flesh and blood, and of refusing him, who speaks quite other things to you, by his word and by the teachings of his grace in your hearts, but continue in that which you have heard and known from the beginning!

How many receive the word of the gospel with joy, who afterwards let their courage fail, when they see

their enemies, and feel, that not only hearing and speaking belong to godliness, but also doing and denying; who regard as beautiful the gospel pearl, Jesus and his blessings; but stop short, or turn about, when they learn that they must sell all in order to obtain it. O my dear friends stand firm, and do not let your courage sink! The Lord is with us; a soul, a Jesus, an eternity is certainly worthy of some little labor.

How many let their courage fail when they see that Jesus not only distributes bread and wine, but crosses also. As long as the first sensible emotion lasts, the individual is zealous and would even suffer death with Jesus. But if the Lord in his wise dispensations, withdraws the milk of sensible consolation and sweetness, and lets the soul continue for a while in barrenness and darkness, that he may try the fidelity of its love, and establish it the more firmly in self-knowledge and humility—the man is then ready to despond and complain, or even to seek comfort elsewhere. O my brethren, do not sink, do not faint! Be strong, and wait for the Lord! For no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor has it ever occurred to any unenlightened human heart, what God has prepared for those that wait for him.

If you will not be deceived nor led astray from the path of life, it is necessary to cleave, with me, in faith unto him who has called us. He has inwardly been beforehand with us in our hearts, by making known to us his dear and gracious vocation, by reproof, by impressions, by excitements, by light, and love, and life, according to everyone's state and measure; to this we must cleave in all simplicity, if we are desirous of continuing firm and of growing in grace. Multifarious reflections, speculations and the activity of the understanding, as well as distraction in the senses, and outward multiplicity lead us violently away from our inward center; we must therefore avoid them as much as possible. There is nothing, either in heaven or earth, either in us or out of us, that can so thoroughly heal, sanctify, and satisfy us, as the love and grace of God, manifested in Christ Jesus. It is this, which thus inwardly meets us in our hearts, with its salutary influences. Now if we adhere to this, in a devout and introverted frame, often presenting, in childlike sincerity, our whole and inmost heart open and naked, to this discerning and healing light of life, and seek after every aberration, to return with our hunger and devotion, again into our heart; as the Scripture speaks, (Isaiah 4) we shall not only continue preserved from all going astray but we shall also grow up in all things unto him who is our head, Christ Jesus, and experience, more and more, the unsearchable riches of his strength and grace in his saints.

For we must not fall into the foolish idea of being able to attain to complete regeneration at once, and reenter paradise, as it were, by a single leap; by no means! The waving sword of the cherub—I mean the word of God, which is quick and powerful (Heb. 4:12) has much to hew and cut off, which can never enter into the kingdom of God; this is not accomplished in one day, nor even generally speaking, in one year. Therefore a continual growth and progress certainly belong to christians, and the degrees of grace are very different in those that are called. A christian that retains his previous habits and infirmities, and remains in the same state, from one year to another, has great cause to reflect maturely upon his state, whether he be not a tree without life, or a branch which abides not in the vine. For this is the very reason why so little growth in sanctification is perceptible in awakened souls in the present day. The individual

does not abide in Christ, in the manner above-mentioned, nor accustom himself sufficiently to the true prayer of the heart as to believe that God is inwardly near him, in his heart—to cleave unto him in a childlike manner, to possess, in a meek and quiet spirit, his affectionate converse and communion, to wait for his gracious operation and attraction, attend to it and give place to it, to adhere to him most cordially, and as a child from its mother’s breast, receive grace for grace. This ought to be our daily work, yes, our chief employment; but because it is neglected, the individual does not properly attain to the power of the new covenant, in which God writes his laws in the heart, nor to an experimental acquaintance with God, his riches, and his truth.

O my dearest friends, let us apply ourselves more diligently to this delightful exercise of prayer, for we cannot exist a single moment of ourselves! What are all our virtues and all our piety, unless fellowship with Jesus lie at the bottom of it? It is all only form without power, a shadow without substance. All our faults and falls proceed from our not abiding with Christ within; nay, we even commit many, without perceiving them because we are not in the light. We often think we are walking purely and sincerely, while if we came nearer to our hearts, and to the Lord within them, we should soon perceive, that we did not stand complete before the Lord. Innumerable selfish motives, and the whole inward mystery of wickedness, continue concealed from the eyes of many until death, to their great dismay at that hour, only because they do not seek to lead a retired life in the presence of God. Nay, the most precious and most essential operations and communications of God in our hearts are not experienced, nor the most divine truths vitally known, because we do not sufficiently continue there, where alone they can be known and enjoyed. O how much is this to be lamented, seeing that such great and precious promises are given us in Christ, that even during this life, we may become partakers of the divine nature, by the inward acquaintance with him, who has called us to this glory! (2 Peter 1)

Therefore, my fellow-called, if we are desirous of being thoroughly redeemed and sanctified, of living peacefully, and dying happily, we must become *inhabitants of our own hearts and fellow-inmates with God*, Jesus has opened to us this new and living way in his blood, so that eternal love, with its attractions and influences, can now approach very near to us, and we can draw near unto God in our hearts, with childlike confidence, without reference to our misery and unworthiness. Let us then draw near (Heb. 10:22), and freely use this invaluable privilege. Let us accustom ourselves, the whole day long, and even while in business, to the Lord’s presence, and seek in simple faith, to make ourselves known, and become intimate with him in our hearts; but we must by no means regard as superfluous, a frequent seclusion in sacred abstraction, in order to this sweet and prayerful exercise of recollection and retiring to God in our hearts. We shall then more and more essentially experience how the Lord will meet us with the tender attractions of his love, seeing that he unceasingly waits and knocks at the door of our hearts; and we shall experience, that it is his delight to dwell with the children of men:—“Come and see!”

But think not that by this we would dissuade you from the use of the outward means of grace; by no means! Rather would we take occasion to remind you, not to despise or lightly esteem any one good

action or guidance away from self-love, pride, or excessive prudence. We must love and esteem every good thing which is able to lead and assist us to the attainment of the supreme good. Only we must use everything in due order and measure, and not attach too much importance to it, much less continue cleaving to anything that is not God himself; otherwise that which is in itself a good and innocent means would certainly become an obstacle, and cause detention in the attainment of that which is alone needful. God has regulated all outward things for the sake of the inward—nay, he himself, so to speak, became external in Christ, in order that he might call his creatures, who have wandered outwards, to that which is within, and there be truly near unto us. We ought therefore also to keep in mind this kind and salutary object which God has in view; and in the use of all outward means, diligently attend to our hearts, waiting for the first impressions of divine grace, and observing how it opens and affects the heart, in order that we may submit ourselves to it, in filial obedience; and thus, both by the Holy Scriptures, as well as by other good instructions, we may come to Christ himself, that so we may have life in his name.

Prove, by grace, in all things that which is the best; and do not spend the short time and the noble powers of grace in unnecessary things of a secondary nature. Be not so tenacious of your money, as of your time and the grace entrusted to you. Let us go directly to the mark; it will soon be evening with us. One thing is needful, which is, that we die to ourselves and every creature, and live unto God, in spirit and in truth. It is this, which both Scripture and grace in the heart demand of us; and it is this, in which alone we can find health and peace, both living and dying. With this we have enough to exercise, to suffer, and to experience; he that has attained to it, may do what he pleases, if he finds that he has any time to spare, or any desire for pleasure.

Avoid all unnecessary interaction with the men of this world, lest time be stolen from you, and lest you yourselves be polluted and carried away. The most dangerous kind are those, who make great pretensions to reason; particularly those that are Christians only in name and appearance, and who do not act, directly and sincerely, according to their previous calling; for such have, as it were, truly studied every gilded pretense, by which they may render void the strict, simple, and inward life in Christ, and seduce unstable minds.

Allow not the hope of your calling to be darkened in any measure, by anything of an extraordinary nature, nor by the powers and operations of strange spirits, which, under an imposing and peculiar appearance, may present themselves to the senses and self-love. Whenever such-like temptations take possession of any individuals look at the result, and how the tree is known by its fruits. A holy foresight is necessary with regard to all that strikes the senses, all that is peculiar, and all that has an imposing appearance.

Permit not yourselves to be detached from simplicity in Christ, by any pretense of superior knowledge and wisdom. Nature seeks room, and resists close confinement; it is easier for her to amuse herself with ideas, than to suffer and die. The poor and simple life of Jesus is offensive to scornful reason, which sophisticates, until it has found a convenient middle way, which just terminates in a point with the broad

way. With respect to us, let us be affectionate children; dying, praying, and loving shall be our wisdom. Let reason scorn us as long as she pleases; we shall see who fares the most peaceably, and to whom the heavenly Father will reveal his mysteries.

O yes, my dear friends! We ought to become such like children of grace; and as such, we ought to love one another sincerely and cordially. If we only detach ourselves more and more from all secondary things and notions, and exercise ourselves in that which is alone needful; how we may be truly faithful to the vocation of grace, in dying to the world and all false life, and remaining near to God in simplicity of heart, our spirits will then flow together, as of themselves, in delightful unanimity and unity. In this way, eternal love would delight to dwell among us, and to bless us, as the dew that falls from Hermon upon the mountains of Zion; and we should ever more deeply experience the unknown blessings, which are to be *enjoyed in the true fellowship of the saints*. Seeing that we have cast out the world, and the world has cast us out, let us therefore give each other the hand; and as real strangers and pilgrims, brotherly and courageously go forward, in one mind and spirit, to the happy land of inward and eternal fellowship with God in Christ Jesus. Faithful is he that has called us, who also will do it!

In him I remain, through grace, etc.

Mulheim, 30th September, 1734.

Letter 24

The Author's Ideas Respecting Marriage.

Although with regard to marriage I am inexperienced, and have no particular insight or revelation respecting it, yet at your request, I will attempt briefly to state to you my sentiments and opinion on the subject, according to the Holy Scriptures.

Speaking generally, the expression of Paul (1 Cor. 7:38) decides the matter. "He that marries, sins not, but does well; but he that remains single does better." This is the appearance the subject presents, when in other respects the balances are equal.

But there may be various cases and circumstances, such as those mentioned in 1 Cor. 7:2-9, and 1 Tim. 5:14, in which the case is reversed, and when it must be said, "It is better to marry." For that which is better, does not solely and principally depend on the external state. A humble soldier of the cross, in the married state, is better in the sight of God, than the proud, who in the single state, do not preserve their bodies in sanctity and honor. (1 Thess. 4:4)

After being expelled from paradise, we must be content with an almost animal body of humiliation (Phil. 3:21), till our celestial robes are prepared (2 Cor. 5:2-5), and consent to animal labor, eating, drinking,

sleeping, etc., the use of which is seldom altogether blameless; and the present mode of procreation participates still more of wretchedness and corruption; otherwise, the law of circumcision would not have been instituted, nor should we have been conceived and born in sin; however, it cannot now be otherwise.

Health is certainly better than sickness, and perfection than imperfection; but as we are destitute of both, we must not be presumptuous, but adore the kind and long-suffering condescension of God, who bears with and overlooks our infirmity, nay, even uses it as a remedy to lead us gradually, by its means, to greater perfection. Medicine is a gift of God, and it is good to use it; but he that uses it unseasonably and profusely, is injured by it; and it is still better if we do not require it.

In consequence of the fall, we are fallen from an angelic paradisaical state, into an impure animal condition of body and mind. Our great Restorer purposes leading us back again, with advantage, into the glory we have lost—not in the way we should suppose, nor by a single leap, but through needful trials, humiliations, and mortifications; until, by degrees, from brutes we become men, from men, saints, and from saints, we again become angels.

No one has reason to boast of the inheritance he has received from Adam: however, one person has this particular disposition and viciousness of body or mind, and another that, which are not all to be removed in the same way, and by one particular remedy, although the general cure of the soul is needful for and the same to each and to all.

Nor have all those, who are in a state of grace, the same measure of light, faith, and power, or the same particular election and destiny. That which causes one person much disturbance, confusion, and detriment, does no injury to, and is easily and peaceably endured by another. In such cases, who will give any other general rule than this? “Let everyone examine his vocation and faith in the light of God, and continue in that whereto the Lord has called him,” (1 Cor. 7:17,20,24) but let him not judge another. And with this condition, that everyone examine his vocation in the light of God, the Holy Spirit certainly leaves the soul, that is in a state of grace, at liberty to choose that which each considers to be the most serviceable for himself, and the most pleasing to God, either to remain single or to marry.

When the Apostle says (1 Cor. 7:7) “everyone has his peculiar gift from God; one after this manner, and another after that:” he probably does not refer to natural gifts, as though one, whose disposition did not, as it were, impart chastity to him, must of necessity marry; but he meant to say, “There are those, who trust, with the help of God, to be able to abide in the single state, with the Lord.” “He that can receive it, let him receive it.” (Matt. 19:12) But as I well know, that everyone cannot receive this word, but that many a one, who perhaps in other things manifests his faith and fidelity, supposes that it is not proper for him; let such a one therefore marry in God’s name; “he sins not.”

Of the three kinds of eunuchs, mentioned by our Lord in Matt. 19:12, I know not whether the two first

can be reckoned among the chaste; but those, “who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake,” may truly be called chaste. They were not born so, nor was it a consequence of their natural disposition; grace, and a noble impulse of faith animated them to this chaste conflict. (Wisdom of Sol. 4:2)

The marriage state itself is very different according to the state of the persons who enter into it. “To the pure, all things are pure; but to the unbelieving, nothing is pure; for even their minds and consciences are defiled.” (Titus 1:15) Marriages are, indeed, in general, under the divine permission; but it is not every marriage that is made in heaven. A truly holy marriage state, as all are called now-a-days, is perhaps very rare; yet there is a difference amongst them. In the mutual love and fidelity of two hearts, which are really united in the Lord, there is indeed something good and beautiful, in this pilgrimage state; and in itself, it is not displeasing to God, but a sacred mystery.

Married christians must, however, be aware, that their state is under the divine forbearance; (1 Cor. 7:28) that accompanying afflictions are necessary for their preservation and purification; and lastly, that it is a state, which does not accompany them into the next world, but terminates with the present. (Matt. 22:30)

Letter 25

Christian advice to a person who had many doubts and scruples in her mind respecting marriage.

Dearly beloved friend and sister in Christ,

You have requested me to write to you something respecting the subject you mentioned to me. I must confess that I do not willingly speak of matters of this kind; but since you wish it, and because I would not have you continue longer in a state of disturbance, and in reflections which can only cause injury and hindrance to the soul, I will briefly and in simplicity disclose my sentiments to you respecting it, as far as God permits.

It is generally speaking, undoubtedly true, what Paul says, (1 Cor. 7:1) “That it is not good for a christian man to touch a woman,” and therefore it is good for a person in the single state to continue so. (Verses 8, 26.) Yes, and that he who continues thus, does better, and is more blessed; as is expressly said, in verses 38 and 40. But all do not receive this word; and besides, “he that marries, sins not,” as the same apostle says again, verse 28. It may also be the case, through the providence of God, or by reason of inward and outward causes and circumstances, that it may be said of the individual with truth, “It is not good for man to be alone. (Genesis 2:18)

In short, the single state, in itself, does not make us acceptable in the sight of God; but he that remains

single, to the end that he may cleave to God more unobstructedly, and be holy, both in body and spirit, pleases God (See Isa. 56:4-5. Wis. 3:13-14; 4:12). He that marries, does not sin on that account. But he that marries and turns away his inmost love, delight, consolation, and joy from God, and fixes it, whether in a greater or less degree, on the creature, sins, and shall suffer loss.

It is therefore necessary, first of all, that in this matter, you thoroughly resign your will to God, and leave to him alone the choice, and afterwards impartially and frequently pray, and entreat the prayers of others, that you may be led and guided in it, according to his good pleasure, so as to please him in all things; and then further, that you consider and examine, with a tranquil mind, and in the presence of God, what is the best and most useful for you, both as to body and soul. And after having done this once or twice, decide in yourself alone, in the name of God, and with the sole intent of pleasing him, how you will act in this matter, seeing that your mind has been long enough disturbed by it. If it then appear to you, that it is not pleasing to God, nor serviceable and profitable to yourself, give the individual an entire refusal, and think no more of it. If, on the contrary, it seem to you to be acceptable to God, and useful and needful to body and soul, be silent, and refer it, the sooner the better, to your parents, and hear what they say to it, for if they will by no means consent to it, you are not at liberty, either by divine or human laws. O how well it would be, if you could expect all this with a tranquil and retired heart, and in resignation, after the example of Isaac! (Gen. 24:62-63) May God give you grace to enable you to do so!

With respect to us, to whom you have made it known, we are unable absolutely to tell you the will of God in the matter; but in our minds, we find nothing particular against it. But it is not at all proper, that you should inwardly disturb and distress yourself so much as I have some presentiment you do. Only resign your will entirely to the Lord, and he will do all things well.

But that which is the most important of all, on which the most depends, and which also requires the most exertion and grace, is still to be mentioned; and that is, that should it take place, you must be careful above all things, that the first and greatest command of God remain unfringed upon—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind." The center of your heart must be a temple and habitation of God. Beware of becoming an idolater, or of admitting images into the innermost sanctuary, which is the case, when we inordinately and too ardently cleave with our affections to the creature, "Possessing as though we possessed not," is the short, but difficult rule of the apostle Paul. (1 Cor. 7:39)

Now, therefore, whatever may be the results, keep this saying firmly and unshakenly with the help of God—that your heart and inmost love belong wholly, undividedly, and eternally to God alone, and remain devoted to him. Regard him, as I do, as your only treasure, comfort, support, and salvation, and you shall experience peace and blessedness, wherever, and in whatever state you may be, both now and forever. Amen!

Letter 26

To the awakened inhabitants of the town of Meurs.

Your wish to make me acquainted with your names, and the desire of your hearts to belong entirely to the Lord, has occasioned me heavenly joy and delight, and has moved me to lay both your names and your intention at the feet of our dearest High Priest, that he may bless and confirm the same. O that all your names were indelibly engraved in the book of life, and that at the great and decisive day, they may be pronounced amongst those blessed names, which Jesus shall then confess before his Father, and before his holy angels!

This inestimable favor and honor is not only earnestly desired for you by me, but is kindly intended for and graciously offered by Jesus himself, to the most wretched amongst you. Could we, who are deserving of the curse, behold, even only through a fissure, the opened heart of Jesus, what should we not see! what should we not feel!

As long as we lived in a state of carnal security, without God and without Jesus, we stood on the brink of perdition's yawning gulf, and were unconscious of it. Jesus loved us, sought us, and we knew it not. It is he that has taken us by the hand, that has drawn us away from that dreadful abyss, that has directed our minds to himself, and instead of the well-deserved pit of hell, has opened unto us the unfathomable abyss of his loving heart, in order that we may flee to this safe and blessed city of refuge from all sin and danger, and become eternally happy in him. O come my dear brethren! Taste and see how gracious the Lord is, and how unspeakably blessed we may be in communion with him, even during the present state of existence! Seek no where else alleviation for your burdened hearts. All besides is deception. You will not find it out of Christ, but only be adding to your burden by seeking it elsewhere.

He that abhors all his sins, has a right to believe, that he has the forgiveness of all his sins, and cleansing from them in the blood of Christ; but whoever wishes to receive Christ, and yet secretly retain both the world and sin, his faith is vain. He that gives all for all, shall certainly obtain the pearl of great price; but how can a person receive anything, whose hands are already full? Do not console yourselves on unsubstantial grounds, till Jesus consoles you in his due time, lest you be injured by it.

Be willing to occupy the lowest place, till the Lord himself says, "Friend, come up here!" (Luke 14) Only wait at Jesus' feet, you troubled hearts—no one waits in vain; for while we wait, the precious corn grows up. We are not so happy in the world, when all things go well with us, as we are with Jesus in troublous times. Every tear and every sigh will bring, in due time, abundant fruit. Learn to keep Lent with Jesus. Be not disquieted, dejected, or fainthearted, when sufferings, trials and temptations arise. We ought rather to fortify our hearts with confidence, when these things befall us, even as they happened to our great forerunner. For us, he was led by the spirit into the desert, that we might not think we are alone in it. O let us put on the suffering mind of Christ! Let us not lose courage, when the tempting serpent approaches

us in angel's guise, and says, "This or that will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me." He that overcomes, he that endures to the end, shall inherit all things.

Place no confidence whatever in your own hearts, your courage, your strength, your light, your virtues, or your faithfulness; but like myself, be as little children, who must perish, without a mother's care. All that is our own is worthless, and everything else is free grace, for which we must every moment wait and receive. But we can never trust too much to our gracious Redeemer; to him, the most miserable may approach on the footing of free grace, cordially seek his favor and friendship, pray to him without ceasing, filially depend upon him, and then boldly venture all upon him. O he is faithful, and will perform that in us and through us, which neither we nor any other mortal would be able of himself to accomplish!

Now then, my dear brethren, if you have really given your hearts and your sincere consent to this dearest friend of sinners, as you assure me you have, bow with humble thankfulness before him, who has commended his love to you, and who alone can establish you. If the angels in heaven rejoice over one sinner that repents, my poor heart shall also rejoice over your happy lot, and cordially extend to you the hand of fraternal affection. Examine yourselves narrowly, lest any anathema be cherished in your hearts, and that they may cleave with guileless sincerity to Jesus, and become daily more complete in him. If we continue in him, we have boldness, we have fellowship one with another, we shall rejoice over each other, and shortly meet each other before the throne of the Lamb, with endless joy, to glorify him who has ransomed us from the earth by his blood. Amen. So let it be!

With this wish, I salute you collectively and individually before his face, and remain through grace,

Your faithful, weak, and obliged brother.

Letter 27

A warning admonition against the snares and temptations of the enemy of souls.

1. Let us love, and esteem, and use the Holy Scriptures or the Bible, according to the state and circumstances of our souls. It is undeniably the best and most divine book in the world, and a revelation or expression of the will of God to us; and it manifests an extremely reprehensible ingratitude and arrogance to neglect and despise it. We must not, however, forget that the power and illumination of the Spirit of God are indispensably necessary to understand it aright, and to walk according to it.
2. Let us constantly set before us the pure and holy precepts and self-denying life of Jesus Christ for our imitation. "He that says he abides in him, must also walk as he walked." We ought not to look much about us, nor pay attention to others, except so far as they are in Christ and follow his steps.
3. Let us never forget the doctrine of Jesus Christ, especially respecting the denial of self and of all created

things, as the primary and most necessary characteristic of his true disciples. He has said, “The way is narrow, and the gate is straight.” Let us therefore regard and reject everything internally or externally, that would represent it to our corrupt and carnal natures as broad and easy way.

4. Let us watch and pray: watch over our deceitful hearts, thoughts, and affections, that we may not allow them to wander thoughtlessly and at liberty to the creature, but continue near to God, yes, cleave unto him with our affections, desires, and inclinations. Let us also watch over our senses—our eyes, ears, mouth, and tongue. They are the port-holes into which sin, confusion, and a thousand temptations will enter, if we open them too frequently, needlessly, and imprudently. Finally, let us also watch over our corrupt natures, that we may never give way to them, nor follow their will.

5. Let us also, at the same time, pray, and that more with the heart than the mouth, especially for the Spirit of Jesus, that he may rule and work in us. It is he who alone can lead us into all truth, and will do so; without him, it would be impossible for us to persevere or to perform anything good.

6. Above all things, let us love one another, and exercise filial interaction with God in our hearts, and a reverential walk in his presence; because this simple exercise, if we are faithful and steadfast in it, introduces us, through the divine cooperation, into that true fellowship with God in spirit on which all religion and our eternal salvation depends.

7. Let us seek, in serenity of mind, to be very faithful and attentive to the inward teachings and admonitions of the Spirit of grace. Although we may be delivered from the law, and no longer so conscious of its threatenings, reproofs, and the terror it excites in the conscience, yet we can never be disunited from the law of the vivifying Spirit of Jesus, whose gentle and internal attractive influences and directions we ought the better to attend to and follow, and with so much the more ease and fidelity.

8. Let us avoid all unnecessary converse and hurtful association with the world and frivolous people, and likewise with those, who under the name of piety, live in false liberty, according to the impulse of the flesh, sense, and reason; because, by intimate interaction with them, the minds of those that are unsettled, may easily and often unconsciously imbibe something of their disposition, and suffer from it; while those who are truly the children of God, and their society and conversation, ought to be so much the more dear and precious to us.

9. Let us especially beware, in all our actions, words, and gestures, both in our outward and inward walk, of all subtle hypocrisy, dissimulation, and a self-assumed deportment, which is so displeasing to God; but seek, on the contrary, to do all things in simplicity, sincerity, and cordiality, without reference to man, but solely in order to please God.

10. Let us ever keep watch over our corrupt reason, in which the old serpent so gladly lurks, and endeavors under the most believable pretexts, to allure us from simplicity of heart into all kinds of useless speculations and injurious disputes; so that the better part is often forgotten and neglected in

consequence of it, and the man falls imperceptibly into all kinds of errors and mistakes, as painful experience daily proves.

Finally. You know, that the Son of God is manifested to take away our sins, and that there is no unrighteousness in him. He that abides in him, sins not. He that sins, has neither seen nor known him. Little children, let no man deceive you. He that does righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.”
(1 John 3:5-7)

Letter 28

A Letter of encouragement addressed to a few awakened individuals, in the prospect of danger from persecution.

“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

Beloved brethren in the grace of God,

Is it not stated in the covenant which we have established with the Lord Jesus, my dearly beloved! that he shall give us the kingdom in the same manner, as his Father gave it to him? that is, that through much inward and outward tribulation, we must enter with him into the glorious, incorruptible, and eternal kingdom of God; but everything according to the all-wise arrangement of our heavenly Father, without whose will, not even a hair shall fall from our heads. Ought we then to wonder, and not rather to rejoice, when that befalls us which our Lord has previously announced to us? Yes, verily, we have now much more reason to lift up our heads, with filial confidence, that our affairs go on prosperously, and that the Lord is in the midst of us with his blessing, because the adversary is so much enraged at us. If, on first devoting ourselves to Jesus, we proclaimed war against the kingdom of darkness, it cannot be otherwise; we must expect from it in return, every species of hostility. Only let the eye of faith be steadily fixed upon him that has loved us, and we shall be able to come off more than conquerors, for his sake, in all things, and boldly to say with that hero, who had all those enemies before him with which we have at present daily to struggle, “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

Through divine goodness, much good seed has been for some time sown in and amongst us. A sifting, purification, and establishment must now take place. The thirteenth chapter of Matthew must now be experimentally expounded, in order that everyone may perceive how and where he stands. For we must by no means suppose that we are to have nothing but intellectual consolation and sweetness in the company of Jesus. For although we feel it unspeakably blissful to be with him, yet all that is good must be tried, to prevent it from being lost or spoiled. The cross is therefore mere grace and goodness. No, my brethren, we have not entered the vessel with Jesus, for the purposes of diversion and amusement. A little storm already arises, and a greater one may follow. The vessel feels the gale. Let us possess our hearts,

therefore, in calm and unshaken confidence in him, who is in the vessel with us, who can command both the wind and the sea, in order that he need not shame us by saying, “O you of little faith, wherefore did you doubt?”

And what is there, that should move us? If sufferings overtake us, we shall not suffer, God be praised, as evil-doers. We have always shown due respect, obedience, and duty, towards the constituted authorities, even as we have been taught. We have not aimed at stirring up disturbances or divisions in church government; neither have we formed new sects, or intend to do so.

Our consciences are at ease both upon these, as well as upon other suspicious points, which might be falsely laid to our charge. Our assembling together has been, according to the apostle’s admonition, to provoke unto love and to good works—to learn how we, who have put on Christ, might also walk in him, and be more and more established in him. These meetings of ours have not been privately held, but so that anyone might have been present; gladly wishing others to enjoy those blessings, which we have found and hope to find in Jesus. In short, our only aim has been, how each one ought to walk in his state and vocation, as a true christian and christian citizen. He that suspects us of anything else, is either misinformed or maliciously inclined. Who is there that will harm us, if we be followers of that which is good?” And if we suffer notwithstanding, we suffer as Christians, and need not be ashamed of it, but glorify God under these circumstances, by highly esteeming his reproach, and by a filial confidence in his faithfulness which endures forever. Be of good courage, therefore; the cause is the Lord’s—he will bring it to pass—his is the kingdom!

Nevertheless, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual. All the victory lies in a peaceful, passive, believing, and praying state of mind. The harsh and impetuous force of nature must be nailed to the cross of Christ, and be broken and mollified by a believing descent into his meek and conciliating mind of love; so that nothing should be cherished but compassionate charity, benevolence, and beneficence, even towards our adversaries. In this way, Christ triumphed over all the powers of hell. If we walk, at the same time, worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ, even those shall be added unto us, who now oppose us, when they behold the beauty of truth, and what blessedness we enjoy with Jesus.

Much consideration, consultation, and acting according to human prudence, is of little avail in this matter. As long as innocence remains in its native nakedness, no one can lay hold of it. All our strength, peace, and salvation must be sought in thus inwardly abiding, with a childlike spirit, in Jesus. Everything is then given us at the hour and moment when it is needed. Let us therefore not be drawn out of our fortress, nor distract ourselves with unnecessary apprehensions, human forethought, and endless conversation on present circumstances, but continue so much the more within, with Christ, by faith and prayer, in order to wait for the enemy at our posts.

Let us likewise not weaken ourselves by an unbelieving view of and abiding with ourselves. We must venture ourselves on God; he will not desert us. He pays us the costs of all we have to do and suffer for

him. We ought therefore not to take our weakness or inability into account. If we only abide with filial confidence in him, we can do all things through him that strengthens us. And although the Lord often lets us feel our weakness in the season of trial, yet this ought not to make us afraid; it is for our good, in order that we may be no self-made heroes, but creep the more helplessly into his strength, and that he may be all things and alone in us.

We have only to do with the Lord. The world acts its part. Let it do so. The Lord will carry on and complete his work in our hearts, by means and in spite of everything. Be this our only care. To this every foe must secretly contribute, although they purpose the contrary. Let us then remain resigned to him, unconcerned for the future, looking solely unto him with an introverted eye, and boldly pursue our course, forsaking, more and more entirely, all created things, and all we are, that Jesus alone may possess and rule in us. O my dear brethren, let us forsake ourselves! In us there is nothing but perdition, misery, and weakness. In Jesus there is real life and salvation. Let everyone seek and experience it for himself. We must be found essentially in him. The door is opened in his blood, and near, in spirit, even to the greatest sinners. Ah if they did but know it, how would they hasten to it!

Now my brethren, receive these lines, with which I have felt induced to greet you, in the simplicity of love. Be strong in the Lord. The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge! Selah.

In his grace I remain,

—YOUR HUMBLE BROTHER AND SERVANT.

On the Nature and Usefulness of True Godliness.

Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. 1 Tim. 4:8.

It is a very lamentable thing, that in these our last, dark, and corrupted times, godliness, piety, or the true service of God, and religion (for all these are one and the same thing,) is become so rare and so little known upon earth. Nay, even among christians, or those whose profession or peculiar character it is, according to the Word of God, to let their godliness shine as lights in the eyes of other nations upon earth; among these, I say, true piety or godliness is so little known, that they universally manifest disgust at the very name of piety. Or if they talk of godliness, they do not even know of what they are speaking; and where others form an idea of it, it is soon perceived, on close examination in the light of God, that their conceptions of it are far from being in accordance with the nature of the thing itself, and that

notwithstanding all the external appearance and form of godliness, its power is universally unknown, and is even rejected as mere imagination and error. I have therefore felt myself induced to give you a definition of it, on this occasion, with all possible brevity, according to the measure of light and grace, which God shall bestow. If there were still a single church of primitive christians any where to be found, such as existed in the first two or three centuries, the task would be unnecessary, and I should esteem myself happy to learn of them and to read in them, as living epistles written by the Spirit of God, (2 Cor. 3:2-3) something of that, concerning which I esteem myself too mean and unworthy to write with ink.

I. What True Godliness Cannot Be

In order to form to ourselves an idea of the nature, quality, and essence of true godliness, or describe a real godly man, it is only reasonable that we do not direct our thoughts *first* to such things which the hypocrite and the ungodly can have in common with those that are really godly; nor, *secondly*, to anything which the godly alone, but only some of them possess; nor, *lastly*, to something which they may all, but not at all times possess—but we must seek for such properties, which the truly pious alone, and all of them, and at all times, solely possess. This is so evident that no one can deny it. Let us see, with all brevity, what results from these propositions.

First, Godliness does not consist in anything which the ungodly and the hypocrite can have in common with the truly pious. Hence, when we refrain from outward vices, when we do not curse, nor are drunken, nor steal, nor quarrel, etc., but lead an externally sober, just, decorous, retired, quiet life, it is no sufficient proof that we are pious and godly—nay, though we should have all this, and nought besides, or nothing more substantial, we should only rank with the ungodly and the hypocrite.

We may diligently attend to outward ceremonies, which are good in themselves, and to pious duties; we may be baptized, and go to church and sacrament; we may read, learn, and meditate upon that which is good, make external prayers, fast, and give alms; we may commend and in some measure love piety, and the pious; we may associate with them, possess much literal knowledge of the truth, know how to converse in a pious strain, and with all this, be in reality not yet pious.

We may be convinced of God and his truth; be sensibly affected to sorrow, or to joy; we may be reproved and distressed in our consciences; we may desire and form resolutions to repent, and really change and amend ourselves externally, and avoid obvious sins; nay, we may even abandon secret sins, (which we still love at the bottom,) from distress of conscience, and fear of hell; and yet not be truly godly. All this is evident, and has also been circumstantially enlarged upon by others;¹ and yet were all those, who have only this, and nothing more to be struck out of the catalogue of the pious, there would probably be found,

1 See Mead's Almost Christian, Spencer's Nature and Grace, Wilkinson's Saint's Pilgrimage.

in whole towns and countries, not many pious people left.

Secondly, I say, that true godliness cannot consist in anything which some godly men may possess, or have possessed, but which all have not. Under this head may be included ecstasies, revelations, the gifts of prophecy, a wonder-working faith, extraordinary light in divine mysteries, brilliant gifts, an outwardly manifested zeal, and every other extraordinary gift of God's grace. Godliness does not consist in any of these.

Hence we must not particularly desire any such like high things, and by no means be envious, when we see or hear of them in others; for self-love often thinks, "Ah, if you had such gifts, such light and zeal, as this or that individual, you would then be truly pious, and able to edify others," and induces us to imitate something or other, to which we are not called, and without the grace of God. All this arises from a principle of self-conceit and self-love, and is a very dangerous temptation of Satan, against which we must arm ourselves by prayer and humility, and only labor to attain the substance of godliness, rejoicing meanwhile in the gifts which God has bestowed upon others. He that possesses such things, has no cause to presume upon them, or to exalt himself above others, to take heed that he do not cleave to them, and rest in them or take a selfish pleasure in them, and also to stop both his heart and ears against the praise and applause of others; since they are only gifts, which in themselves, make no one more pious, but in possessing which, the individual stands in greater danger than others who do not possess them.

Thirdly, I said also that the essence of true godliness cannot consist in anything that all the pious possess, but not at all times. All the pious, or most of them, often experience spiritual and divine consolations, peace, sensible delights, sweetness, occasional assurances, and various other divine communications and gifts of grace. I say they experience such things *frequently* but not at all times or without variation, from which follows, that the substance of true godliness cannot consist in these things.

And therefore those act, in my opinion, imprudently, who, having received gifts of this kind from God, speak of and esteem them almost more than the essence of godliness itself; and seem to adduce them as unequivocal signs and essential properties of faith and godliness, nay as the true end, which we must always strive to attain, and give ourselves no rest, till we have attained it.

Hence it is, that many a well meaning person, who reads or hears such sentiments advanced, and has not yet enjoyed the like sensible gifts of grace, may fall into despondency, dejection, and doubt about his state, and be hindered in the path of self-denial and the cross, by frequently striving, from selfish motives, after joy and consolation, and seeking on all sides for signs and assurances of his salvation, more than for the marks and properties of true godliness.

Those that possess these gifts of grace, generally think well of themselves, and often secretly imagine they are now God's favorite children—that they are now holy, nay, better than others, and make themselves sure of heaven. Here the soul frequently forgets the true and only sure path of self-denial and the

cross, and lays herself down to rest upon the soft couch of sensible enjoyments, desirous of erecting her tabernacle, before she has finished her journey.

Now if the Lord, in his wisdom, withdraws from such a one the milk of sensible consolation and sweetness, he becomes dejected, discouraged, and uneasy; and seeks to return, and possess that, which, because it is a powerful support to the life of self, it is the will of God to take from him, that he may make him, like the Captain of his salvation, perfect through sufferings.

For although it is an undeniable truth, that in the course of godliness, many great and various gifts of grace are generally met with, and even enjoyed in a perceptible manner, as is confirmed by the whole of Holy Writ, by innumerable testimonies of the saints in every age, and by real experience to this present time; yet such gifts of grace, I say, are only met within the course of godliness, and are, as it were, the resting places and inns on the road, which are neither the way itself, nor the end of the way, and where we must not therefore always remain, but which are only occasionally met with, and must be used merely in case of need, for refreshment and recovery of strength, that we may afterwards continue our journey with the greater alacrity. Were we to reflect a little further upon this comparison, and apply it, we might pretty well discover the proper use of the gifts of grace, of which I will say nothing more at present, having elsewhere given thorough instructions on the subject.²

II. The Nature of True Godliness

We have hitherto taken a view of that which may be regarded as godliness or piety, and in fact is so by most men, which nevertheless, can by no means, constitute its real essence and substance; the question therefore is, wherein does true godliness consist? Now though it be by no means difficult to answer this inquiry in few words, yet it is difficult, nay even impossible, to impart a proper idea of it to him who is not himself in possession of true godliness. For they are the things of the Spirit of God, which the natural man cannot understand. May the Spirit of God himself enlighten our understandings with his truth, and powerfully draw our hearts to obedience!

True godliness (ευσέβεια) is that inward state or disposition, which is wrought by the Holy Spirit, and the occupation of the soul, which springs from it, by which she again renders that homage and worship to the triune God, which is due to him, and which is in some measure worthy of him. It consists in filial fear and veneration, in a heartfelt confidence and faith, and in a fervent attachment and love to God, which three things are like so many essential parts of the spiritual temple, in which God is worshipped. For since he is a Spirit, it necessarily follows, that he must be worshipped not in a mere external, ceremonial, and

² The author alludes to a tract of his, entitled "The Manual of True Godliness," which appeared in 1727, and contains many useful instructions.

hypocritical manner, but inwardly, heartily, in spirit and in truth, if it is to be done in a manner worthy of him, as divine Teacher himself demonstrates. (John 4:24)

I say the Holy Spirit produces this state or disposition of the soul, while inwardly giving the individual to know (to one more, and as though at once, and with great power, and to another more imperceptibly and gradually) in a supernatural, vital, and powerful manner, the truth, glory, and loveliness of the omnipresent being of God.

This immediately produces in the soul an unspeakably profound veneration, admiration, filial reverence, and inward humiliation of all that is within her, in the presence of the exalted Majesty of God. This glorious being appears to her to be alone great and good, and she herself, together with every other creature, utterly mean, little, and despicable. God is exalted and magnified by her, while she herself is abased in the deepest humility. She esteems herself dust and ashes—nay even as something less; and therefore cannot bear to see herself honored or esteemed by others. She is conscious, that to this Majesty, every knee in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, ought to bow and to worship; and this is the object of her desire. She contemplates the Divine Being, as almost the only being, and every other, regarded in his presence, as nothing. It appears horrible and inhuman wickedness to her to offend such a God. She would scorn a thousand worlds, rather than commit so great an evil. Hence she is most deeply ashamed, in true humility and sorrow of heart, at the retrospect of her former sins, as also at the infirmities and the self-love, which still cleave to her, the first and most subtle motions of which, are disgusting and most distressing to her, and the total annihilation of which, she ardently desires and waits for.

This veneration of God and this mean idea, or rather total disesteem of herself and of every other creature, at the same time produces in the soul an entire mistrust of herself and of all created things, and a real faith and confidence towards God in Christ Jesus, to whom she yields, resigns, and commits herself wholly, both in body, soul, and spirit; that he may do with her, and in her, and make of her, whatever he pleases, in time and in eternity—hoping and trusting that he is able and willing, and will assuredly overrule everything for her good, and his glory. It produces in the soul a departure from herself and from all that is not God, and an ardent hunger, thirst, and flying for refuge to, nay, a real entering and transition into Christ, with whom she inwardly unites herself; and by a continual and believing attachment, retiring into, and abiding in him, she receives grace for grace, essential, spiritual, vital power and strength, by which she is wholly penetrated and animated; so that by degrees, all inward and outward acts, words, thoughts, and inclinations are produced and inspired by this new principle of life.

On which account, she most willingly ascribes all the good that is found in her, or may proceed from her, with the utmost inward consciousness of her own nothingness and depravity, and with a heartfelt acknowledgment of the free grace of God, to this divine source—the vivifying Spirit of the Lord Jesus in her; so that the soul can then say with truth, in the words of St. Paul, “Now I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God;” (Gal. 2:20)

and learns to understand, in their full import, these words of Christ, “He that abides in me, and I in him, brings forth much fruit; for without me, you can do nothing.” (John 15:5) And in truth, this essential union of faith in Christ Jesus is the sole basis of all true godliness; and the new life which springs from it, is true godliness itself, which is therefore emphatically called in Scripture, “Godliness in Christ Jesus,” (2 Tim. 3:12) in order to distinguish it as something vital, powerful, and essential, from all self-made, superficially pleasing, and shadowy religion.

A simultaneous consequence of the above-mentioned inward knowledge and vision of God, is, that the whole heart is, as it were, blissfully taken captive, and entirely made willing to detach and turn away, by thorough self-denial, all its desire, pleasure, joy, and delight, and its whole affection from itself and all that is not God, and to direct and fix it all upon this alone all-worthy object, to love him solely, and to cleave unto him with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and to love nothing out of him, which cannot be truly loved in him.

The ungodly (*asebes*) and the godly (*eusebes*) stand, in scripture, in direct opposition. An ungodly person is one who is detached from God, and cleaves to himself and the creature; a godly man is one, who is detached from himself and the creature, and adheres to God with all affection. His whole heart says to all that is not God, “I am not for you, and you are not for me; you are not the object of my desire; I can do without you all. God alone is all-sufficient. He is my treasure. He is my all. He is the center of my affections. In him alone I have enough.” He embraces this lovely being with all the powers of his love, and seeks pleasure, joy, consolation, and delight in him alone. He cleaves unto him in his inmost soul. He immerses himself in him, until at length, after every intervention and partition of sin and self-love is cleared away, by the exercise of great fidelity and patient endurance, and through the powerful operation of the grace of God, he becomes entirely one with God, or one spirit with him. (1 Cor. 7:17)

This, taken together, is otherwise called in scripture, “Walking before God, or in his presence,” and is in reality nothing else than true godliness, the true service of God, or real religion, in which Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and all the saints and prophets of the Old Testament, as well as Jesus Christ, our Savior and Forerunner, together with the apostles, primitive christians, and all his true followers, in every age, have served God, as will be evident to him who refers to the subjoined passages of scripture, with a desire after truth that is according to godliness.³

Now although true godliness, with reference to its origin and essence, is wholly inward, yet as a divine light, it is impossible for it to remain so concealed, as not to let its living characters, even frequently without the soul’s will or knowledge, shine forth in the individual’s whole life, speech, deportment and conduct, which is entirely different from the life and conduct of the men of this world, and is diametrically

³ Gen. 5:17,24,6,8,9:1, 39:9; Heb. 11:27; 2 Kings 20:3; Ps. 16:25-8:15, 116:9, 123:1-2; 1 Kings 17:1 Kings 18:15; 2 Kings 3:14-5:16, etc. John 8:29; Acts 17:27-28. 2 Cor. 5:9; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 4:12-13, 11:22-23; 1 Peter 3:2-4.

opposed to them. He verifies on the contrary, that saying of Christ, “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; make the tree good, and its fruit will be good.” Where true godliness dwells in the heart, there Jesus himself resides, and there must necessarily a life, that is in accordance with the doctrine and the life of Jesus, be also manifested, and all his virtues shine forth—humility, meekness, love, gravity, a rejection of honor, pomp, and the treasures and pleasures of the world, patience, fortitude, kindness, mercy, temperance, and all the other virtues of Jesus Christ. For although a hypocrite may, in some measure, possess the outward semblance of these virtues, yet a truly godly man does not let his light shine the less on this account; which may be said as a warning to those in particular, who are fond of speaking of great and merely outward godliness, and in other respects, allow themselves a thousand liberties in conforming to the world—nay even look upon and despise a serious, self-denying, outward walk as hypocrisy and dissimulation, “He that says he is in Christ, ought also to walk, even as he walked.” (1 John 2:6)

From this inward disposition of the soul, or godliness, all inward exercises of virtue and acts of godliness from time to time arise (for it comprehends them all in it,) such as the duties of humiliation before God, invocation, meditation, contemplation, adoration, thanksgiving, praise, love, resignation, etc. Since all external duties, such as hearing, reading, or conversing upon good things, praying, singing, and the like, emanate, and must necessarily proceed from such a foundation and disposition of the heart, in order to be practiced to advantage, and to deserve the name of serving God.

From what has been said, it may be easily perceived that the principal distinction between true and false godliness lies in this, that the latter consists merely in an external appearance, form, and covering, while the heart, in the mean time, remains unchanged, full of the love of the world, and of self, and of every abomination; but true godliness possesses in it a divine power, and produces a thorough change in the man, powerfully withdraws his heart, affections, delight, and all the powers of his soul from all created things, attaches him to God, his origin, and translates him into a truly holy and divine life and walk.

III. The Usefulness of True Godliness

And ought not he, who is thus godly, to be blessed in God? Yea, he is truly blessed. He knows God and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent, which is eternal life. (John 17:3) The understanding, which with much weariness and anxiety had long roved about in its utter natural darkness, groping like a blind man for the wall, and had sought truth by the deceptive light of reason, and had found only lifeless, frigid, uncertain ideas, opinions, and conjectures, then sees, without much individual exertion or seeking, “light in the life of God.” (Ps. 36:9) It recognizes the truth, and him that is true; and by the contemplation of this truth, the eye of the understanding is enlightened, gladdened, and satisfied, having now reached its object and its aim. To know that God is, and that he is what he is, (Ex. 3:14) affords unspeakable felicity to him to whom the Son reveals it, (Matt. 11:27) and he cannot do otherwise than heartily assent, and say, “Yea, O Lord, it is well that you are, and that you are he, who you are! Yea, Amen!”

If it be bliss, as it really is, to possess all that we desire and wish, the individual that possesses true godliness, must be truly blessed, because she unites her will with God's which is always accomplished. Formerly she was pained and tormented in the infernal flame of her own will, which rendered her so frequently dissatisfied; for one thing or another was always wrong, in the opinion of her perverse self-will; and thus she writhed and agonized, day and night, within herself, in doleful apprehension, care, grief, uneasiness, and anxiety, like a gnawing worm, to the injury of both body and soul; but now she has entirely and unconditionally resigned her will in the exercise of real faith, and thorough self-denial, into the hands of God, in such a manner, that the will of God alone influences and operates in her, by which the soul is placed in a tranquil and very peaceful state.

Her will desires nothing but God; and because it possesses him (essentially and in faith, if not always in a clear and perceptible manner,) it cannot will or desire anything besides; since God, as its proper and infinite object, fills and calms the infinite capacity of its desires. He can say with the pious patriarch Jacob, "I have all, I have enough;" (Gen. 33:11) which no one else, were he even the greatest monarch upon earth, can say with truth. For no one knows what it is to have enough, but the truly pious soul, because no one has ever experienced it. People suppose indeed, that this thing or that would satisfy their hunger and desire; and the poor, erring spirit that has departed from God thinks to itself, "Ah, if I were in this or that particular situation, if I had this or that, if this or that were but removed, I should then be quiet and content. Yet how frequently and constantly does our faithful Creator make the man conscious, that these are only broken cisterns, and can afford no suitable food for the soul! One thing alone is needful, and that is God, in whom the truly pious soul, withdrawing all her desires, love, and affection from every other object, collects them into one; and thus the spirit arrives at its origin, center, and aim to which it belongs, and likewise to its rest and true felicity, which is also increased in the hope of its future extension and manifestation in eternal glory; (Col. 3:4) so that in this respect, we are already saved or blessed in hope.⁴ (Rom. 8:24)

The consequence of all this is an unclouded and cheerful mind, and a well-regulated, harmonious, undisturbed, peaceful deportment, seeing, as before observed, that self-will is broken; and hence the affections and passions are moderated, and brought into proper order, by which even the body, as is easy to suppose, is more benefited than injured.

It would, however, require larger limits to touch upon the supreme felicity that accompanies true godliness, even in this life, although all that could be said, would be only obscure and inadequate; and hence it is, that in order to know it, the soul must really experience it. Paul expresses the whole of it in these few words, "Godliness is profitable for all things, (the infallible remedy and panacea,) having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. 4:8)

⁴ In German, salvation and blessedness are expressed by the same word.

So much at least is evident from what has been said, that it is wrong to regard true godliness as something melancholy, grievous, difficult, and vexatious; since, abstractedly considered, it is quite the reverse. It is true it occasions severe affliction, agony, and death, to obdurate self-will and natural depravity; but it is this very self-will and this natural state, that makes us wretched and miserable, and must therefore be taken out of the way, and necessarily be removed by the power and Spirit of our Savior Jesus, in order that we may be here and eternally happy, joyful, and blessed in God.

Therefore observe, here, two or three of the principal reasons, why godliness appears so difficult and disagreeable, not only to the greater part of the children of this world, but perhaps also to the majority of those who make a profession of religion. The first is, because some, and alas! too many are too negligent and tender of themselves in denying the world, in crucifying the flesh, in mortifying their self-will, their sensual enjoyments and every selfish pleasure, joy, affection, and gratification afforded by the creature; on which account it is impossible to attain to true peace with God, and a substantial experience of his all-sufficiency. It is impossible to serve two masters. (Matt. 6:24) He that will delight himself in God, must no longer seek pleasure in the creature; and he that seeks his delight in the creature, will not find it in God.

In some individuals the fault lies in a subtle but very dangerous insincerity, in secretly, yet knowingly cleaving with affection to some particular sin or creature, by which the Holy Spirit is grieved, and the heart continues uneasy, and the conscience feels its accusations. Others are deficient in a calm and strict attention to the heart, and to the admonitions of the indwelling Spirit of grace, and continue to live in a state of mental dissipation, and more in the senses and reason, than in the spirit, (Rom. 8: 1, 4, 5, 9, 13) by which innumerable sins and selfishness are neither recognized nor removed; add to this, that men, by listening to carnal reason, often set bounds and limits to their self-denial and sanctification, or let others do it for them; and are thus tolerably well contented with a small beginning, and with denying one particular thing; while they retain everything else, under the appellation of weaknesses, without seriously resisting them.

The second principal reason why a godly life appears difficult and disagreeable, even to many pious people is, that many, who though perfectly desirous of pursuing it with more sincerity than the former, yet often run into the contrary extreme, and are improperly too active in that in which others act too slothfully. These seek, in their own strength, to follow and be faithful to the admonitions and requirements of that Holy Spirit to whom they have resigned themselves, instead of immediately forsaking themselves and their own activity and ability, and passing (in reality, and not merely in an ideal and imaginary manner) by faith and love, into Jesus Christ, and spiritually and sweetly uniting and holding communion with him; in order that he who wrought in them the will, may also work in them to do according to his own good pleasure. Because of this, what they perform is neither pure, complete, sincere, nor abiding; and hence the mind, notwithstanding all its legal efforts, lies prostrate under many difficulties, vexations, reproofs, and fetters. This is a very important point, when well understood, and is more prevalent among

the pious, than might have been supposed.

True holiness and godliness are both impracticable and strangers to the law and the natural powers of man. The vivifying Spirit of the Lord Jesus must make us new creatures, and wholly animate and influence us, that filled with this free and powerful grace of the new covenant, we may deny and overcome everything with delight, valor, and constancy, and live in the exercise of true godliness, in the presence of the Lord. If everyone who is in earnest to attain true godliness, were to plunge himself into this only source of all grace and godliness, that is, into Jesus Christ, in the consciousness of his deep depravity and inability, and in heartfelt confidence, and abide in him; truly we should then grow, flourish, and bear fruit, like trees planted by the water-brooks, and find, by vital experience, that “His commandments are not grievous.” (1 John 5:7)

But let no one suppose that by this, we wish to pass over the mystery of the cross, or to exclude the blessed paths of affliction, by which God leads his people, from the sphere and course of godliness—certainly not. For by so doing, we should condemn all the children of God that were before us (Ps. 73:15), Abraham, Job, David, Heman, Jeremiah, and all the saints, both of the Old and New Testament; all of whom (each in his measure and degree) have been exercised, tried, and purified by God, both in body and soul, by various temptations and assaults of the enemy, darkness, abandonment and barrenness, distress, and various other afflictions and sufferings. On the contrary, the divine saying continues true to the present day, that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, must not only be externally hated, reviled, and persecuted by the world, (2 Tim. 3:12) but be also inwardly perfected by a variety of temptations, crosses, and sufferings, and thus enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Acts 4:22) But notwithstanding this, all inward suffering, temptations, and afflictions, would gradually become easy, nay even pleasant to a godly individual, nor would they be able to disturb his profound peace in God, if he only wisely learnt to place his strength, delight, welfare, and salvation, solely and wholly in God and his good pleasure. I say *in God* and his good pleasure alone, not in himself and his own doings, not in his own ease and satisfaction; not in divine light, gifts, emotions, assurances, and the like; for all this may, and must be often concealed and taken away. But God and his will never move nor change. And when the soul in her sufferings, be they what they may, can only resign herself and her salvation, in obscure faith and the profoundest self-denial, to this faithful Creator, she will certainly attain, in the degree she practices it, and in which all self-righteousness and self-assumed piety is annihilated, the peaceable fruits of righteousness and holiness, (Hebrews 12:11) even in this life.

Nor do I mean, by this, to lay still further discouragements in the way of those, who are sincere in their hostility to sin, and wander about weary and heavy laden, in penitential sorrow and contrition, nor make them distrust their state, because it does not seem to them so easy—by no means. On the contrary, I wish to comfort and establish them, by assuring them, that it will not always be thus, and would only remind them that with such a disposition of heart, they must come to Jesus, in the consciousness of their misery and inability, that he may refresh them, and then make his yoke easy to them, and his burden light;

(Matt. 11:28-30) and that since they have no power in themselves, to break through and attain to the true essence of godliness, they ought, by incessant hunger and prayer of the spirit, to accustom themselves to cleave to the Lord most fervently and to abide in him; for he will then infallibly grant them abundantly, by the impartation of his divine power, all that is necessary for life and true godliness. (2 Peter 1:3)

May he, who is God alone, blessed forever, and who alone can make us godly, so vitally and powerfully touch by his Spirit, the hearts of those who read these pages, that they shall not only immediately resolve to deny themselves and all created things, but really do and perform it through him, that they may follow him and enjoy the unspeakable and eternal felicity of his divine fellowship! We must forsake ourselves in order to apprehend him and be apprehended of his Spirit. We must depart from ourselves in order to enter into him. This exit and this entrance is the basis and most essential act of godliness; because by it, we restore to God what is his, I mean ourselves, thoroughly, wholly, and irrevocably; and likewise by so doing, acknowledge and accept him for what he is, that is, as our God, Creator, Redeemer, our Supreme Good, our One, and our All, forever. If this one thing, this departure and this entrance be neglected, our godliness is worth little, and is only a shadow without the substance. But since the compassionate love of God in Christ Jesus so faithfully calls us to it, let us follow this inestimable vocation of grace in humble resignation by forsaking all we have and are; that so we may be made godly and blessed in him in truth, both now and forever; which is the cordial wish, and most fervent prayer to the source of all goodness, of

—A SINCERE SEEKER AFTER GODLINESS.

On the Difference of Progress in Godliness

“Many are called, but few are chosen.” Matthew 20:16.

I. The Difference

Although God has no occasion for our worship, nor stands in need of any, (Acts 17:25) it is his eternally immutable purpose and gracious will that—besides the myriads of angelical spirits which in various hierarchies, legions, ranks, and stations, surround his throne, and contemplate, adore, and enjoy his most glorious and lovely Majesty—he should also have his church and true worshippers from among the human race and the fallen children of Adam, with whom he may unite himself in an inward and reciprocal manner, hold converse with them, and make them partakers of his divine glory and felicity.

Hence it is, that Eternal Wisdom, whose delights are with the children of men, continually goes about,

as it were, like a faithful and affectionate mother and bride, seeking souls who thus worship the Father in a manner worthy of him, in spirit and in truth. But alas! with the majority she is unsuccessful; in several she meets with some degree of attention, but not exclusively in all things; and it is only in a very small number, that she finds free admission and permission to accomplish unhindered her divine work. In short, “many are called, but few are chosen.” Notwithstanding all this, the purpose and counsel of God stands immutably firm, “The Father seeks such to worship him.” And it is really the case, that Wisdom has always found, still finds, and ever shall find some out of every people and nation, at all times, and in all places, into whom she can enter, and whom she can make “friends of God,” as it is said in the Book of Wisdom, 8:27.

The consequence of this very various behavior of individuals, with respect to the gracious calling of God,¹ is that there is such a remarkable difference observable among the pious in the church of Christ (for with the multitude of the worldly-minded and the hypocritical, we have here nothing to do) particularly since the declension from the first love and power; since the most of them stop short at some beginnings of Christianity, without seriously endeavoring to advance continually; and hence they lead a feeble, more common, and if I may so express myself, more *external* life in the sight of God and man; but others, and those the fewest in number, have gone forward faithfully, and have been drawn and led by the grace of God to something more substantial and inward; in consequence of which they are diligent in leading a more holy, strict, and inward life. With respect to this, I might, it is true, have explained and expressed myself more briefly; and in a mode of expression, very customary in the Holy Scriptures and in the writings of the primitive Fathers, have denominated the former imperfect, and the latter (in its proper sense) perfect; but because there are many, in these truly imperfect christian times, so unwilling to hear of perfection, that it is to be feared they dread the thing itself, as much as they do the word, I have sought to avoid this stumbling-stone.

On the present occasion, we will only endeavor briefly to make that difference, which exists among the pious in the present day, apparent; if haply someone may learn by it to know himself, and under the various external minor points and accidents, with which christianity is now-a-days surrounded and enveloped, begin to seek the inward germ of the hidden life.

The greater part of those who are called of God, stand still in their course, after having experienced the primary effects of repentance, in grief and sorrow for their sins, and anxiety at the dangerous state of their souls, in a hunger and thirst after the grace of God in Christ, and in turning from the dead works of obvious sins, to an outwardly virtuous and pious life and conduct; supposing that such a change having once taken place, that which the Scripture calls conversion and regeneration is already accomplished; and

¹ By this it is not meant to deny, that God may have his sacred purposes in bringing particular souls to particular states of Sanctification and union; but if all would recognize within them the purpose and calling of God, and faithfully respond to it, all men would be saints.

if, besides this, the heart has occasionally felt a degree of comfort, relish, and delight, the man thinks his state the more secure, supposing that he has now really found the treasure, and that having surmounted every obstacle, he has attained to fellowship with God; and hence he appropriates to himself the precious promises, titles, and privileges, which God gives in his word to real christians.

Here their chariot wheels stand still. I do not mean to say that this is invariably their sentiment, purpose, and intention, as though they had attained the end of sanctification, and might betake themselves to rest, but that their supposed advancement is a standing still, if not a going back. Observe here in what this advancement almost invariably consists. They exercise themselves in reading, hearing, conversing, singing, vocal prayers, and such like duties and devotions, which are profitable in themselves; they reflect on the truths of God, and strive to form a conception of them, or as it is customary to say, to attain a great degree of knowledge, and seek, in such and similar activity, their delight and enjoyment. And when they are conscious of some particular transient susceptibility or good inclination in the affections, they rejoice, esteem it very edifying, and often know not how to extol it sufficiently; but if these are lacking, they complain, as if God had forsaken them, and are even ready to compare their situation with Job, David, and other saints, in their painful inward sufferings. I know not if the conduct and progress of many of the pious consist in anything else; for with respect to those improprieties which remain after the first change, they continue in their former strength. I believe, indeed, that they are occasionally resisted in some degree, but never overcome, and hence they regard such things as faults and frailties, from which they do not expect to be delivered during the present life.

Now if we pay attention to the life and conversion of such persons, we shall find them tolerably devout in their religious exercises, but the rest of their time, and in their daily interaction with their fellow creatures, pretty free and unrestrained. They do not regard it as anything particularly improper, to have their minds engrossed by a multiplicity of worldly and unnecessary affairs, and to lay up riches and treasures for the future. They think themselves at liberty largely to discuss indifferent matters, and to associate unnecessarily with the people of the world; they regard it as allowable to please their senses, in seeing, hearing, tasting, and the like—I will not say anything with respect to thoughts; for they are universally little attended to by them, and are left to wander far and wide, for hours and days together, without much scruple and without an aim. And thus the heart is in a measure divided, although they do not always know it. For ah! how little care is manifested by such well-meaning individuals to prevent their delight or affections from straying to some particular created object, and from seeking in it their gratification, solace, and joy! how negligent are they, while following their own will and their own opinions, first in one thing and then in another, frequently under the most believable pretenses; so that the difference between them and the world is often scarcely perceptible!

Is not this the truth? and will not many a one who reads this, being convinced in his conscience, be obliged to answer, Yes? For tell me, is it not sufficiently evident that such characters do not really feel within themselves the power of faith and godliness, for the overcoming the world, both within and without—for

the extermination of sin, of the inordinate affections and passions of self-love, self-seeking, and self-will, and for the destruction of the life of self; and that they do not yet possess within them the great privilege of the new covenant, which is, that God himself will write his law in their inward parts, (Heb. 8:10) and that henceforth they should fulfill the will of God, not from the mere constraint and compulsion of a burdened conscience with respect to some particular things, but from fervent love and affection, and from the free inclination of the heart.

Such characters, therefore, do not attain to true and lasting peace, acquaintance, and fellowship with God in Christ; and however much may have been spoken or written on the subject, and upon the enjoyment of peace, joy and blessedness in Christ, yet these poor people frequent know very little about it from their own experience, except from having perhaps read or heard of it from other pious persons; or rather, notwithstanding this, with all their devotional duties and exercises, they are inwardly kept in a state of much difficulty and secret reproof and dissatisfaction of conscience. But where some degree of pleasure and joy is experienced in the performance of any particular duty and undertaking, which is apparently good, yet it is only superficial and not lasting, much less pure; and it is not long before the customary accusations of conscience again commence, when its voice is listened to. For whatever is done in this state, results generally, though often unconsciously, from the man's own natural powers and efforts, which soon droop again, and only occasion either despondency or else much self-complacency in his own righteousness; but bring little glory to God, and no true and lasting peace to the mind.

We ought therefore, not without reason, to reflect and inquire with reference to this, how it is possible, that men possessing light and grace from God, and who are desirous not to deceive themselves—for we speak here solely of such characters—can think or believe that their state is right and acceptable with God, since its wretchedness and infirmity is so obvious in every respect?

Assuredly no other cause can be assigned, than the lack of observation and attention to what passes within them. For because they allow themselves to be so frequently drawn away, and enticed from the reproofs of the grace and Spirit of God, and after having once obeyed its call, and impulse in their first repentance, they go out of their hearts so to speak, into their thinking or reasoning part, and form or receive conceptions and ideas of christianity, and divine truth, according to the feeble and insufficient light they have obtained by the efforts of their own reason which ideas and conceptions must necessarily be very weak, limited, and insufficient—and then, consequently regulate and bound their christianity, although with a good intention, according to the ideas they have once formed, in which many fix themselves so firmly, that they regard as erroneous, and reject all that does not accord with, or goes beyond them; and living thus turned outwards from the interior into the exterior, and from the light and admonition of the Spirit into human reason, they never attain, either to a true and thorough knowledge of their inward depravity, and of a multitude of secret selfish failings in every point, nor to an insight into the truth as it is in Jesus, and that strict, holy, retired, and hidden life, which is required in a true christian, nor to an experimental knowledge of the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ in his true followers, by which they are

prepared for such a holy and godly life.

I will not, however, accuse all such characters of a knowing and willful infidelity or insincerity, and thus condemn their state entirely; I would only briefly point out its great deficiency, impurity, and insufficiency, if haply one or other, through the cooperation of divine grace, might come more to himself, and ask more minutely, for the old and only right way of dying to self and all created things, and of the hidden life with Christ in God. For alas! ought we not to be grieved and pained to see such well-meaning individuals running in such an endless circle, and satisfying themselves in such a manner with the outward shell, or a mere rational knowledge, and with some particular bodily exercises, duties, and beginnings of christianity, so that all advancement is forgotten over it, and the true inward fruit of christianity, never known, nor its blessedness, in fervent fellowship with God, enjoyed?

II. The Transition to a Better State

There are, however, God be praised, still some to be met with, here and there, in the present day, who find no rest nor satisfaction in such a mere beginning and mixed state; but are desirous, with the young ruler, mentioned in the gospel, of becoming *perfect*, (to use the words of the Lord Jesus,) and to this end devote and dedicate themselves in a particular manner to the Lord Jesus, to be his true followers; who by his grace, are also diligent in the practice of a real, inward, and stricter christianity, and seek to exercise themselves in it, with all their hearts, as in their only necessary work, although even among them a great difference is again observable, with respect to their progress and their states. I will touch a little upon their transition into a better state, and its properties; in which however, I must be very brief, because of my narrow limits.

This breaking through and transition of such souls, to something substantial and inward, generally takes place in the following manner. All external and internal employment and self-activity, on which the man's christianity, though without his knowledge, had hitherto mostly rested, is rendered disagreeable to and taken from him; which in some cases occurs more rapidly than in others; he can no longer continue his reading, meditation, hearing and conversing, his vocal prayers, and the like; partly because the understanding, which had been previously so active, becomes gradually incapable, slothful, and disinclined to operate, reflect, and deliberate, as formerly; and partly because the memory can no longer furnish the conceptions, ideas, and subjects, with which it was filled, nor receive and retain others. And all that such a one undertakes, or is able to undertake of inward or outward employment and exercises of his own, is performed with much difficulty, and has no longer such an effect upon the heart and will as it had before; but instead of the previous pleasure, relish, and sweetness, all becomes barren, ineffectual, and even disagreeable, and vexatious. He perceives within him, on the contrary, either immediately or in the course of time, a more than ordinary inclination, not only to outward tranquillity and solitude, but also more especially, to inward calmness or passiveness, with a simple, fervent disinclination to and forgetfulness

of everything created, and a secret, soft, and tender inclination to God, and a childlike attention of faith to his presence in him, which latter must be very carefully cherished. Now when the individual resigns himself to this guidance, which is so strange to the activity of reason, and yet so blissful; and to this inward and divine attraction, and is obedient to it, he will find his salvation in this rest and tranquillity; (Isaiah 30:15) since by this, he is weaned from all his former aberrations and the workings of human reason, that he may pay attention in his interior and in humble stillness, to the secret admonitions and instructions of eternal Truth in his center; and instead of being occupied with a multiplicity of minor things, he is now directed to the hidden life with Christ in God, which cannot be attained otherwise than by a continual dying with Christ to self and every other creature.

And with this, therefore, all sophistical, presumptuous, and external plausibility in religion, by which the man was able to maintain his credit, either with the world or in his own eyes, gradually falls away of itself, and the soul begins to exhibit a more childlike disposition, and to follow the simple, despised, and hidden suffering life of Jesus Christ, in which very different lessons will be given than before. He must now learn to love the sufferings, poverty, and reproach of Christ; and on the contrary, to avoid and flee, as from things of a very suspicious nature, the ease and gratification of flesh and sense, the riches and treasures of the earth, together with all worldly honor or dignity. Such individuals are then reproved, not only for evil works, but also for an intention not entirely pure, even in good actions. The heart must then be thoroughly and entirely divested of all creature attachment, and of all, even the most secret, pleasure, joy and delight, and be gradually turned away from everything that is not God; so that a single unnecessary or inconsiderate word, even in good and spiritual things, or a short but voluntary and unnecessary wandering of mind, care, or sorrow is not overlooked. The soul is then no longer at liberty to see and hear, go and stay, act and do what and how it pleases her; she now perceives, that she has one over her and in her, to whom she must attend, and to whom her will must be made subject by entire resignation. A subtle obstinacy, inordinate emotions of the mind, self-complacency, a presuming upon the good that she speaks, performs, or enjoys, may grieve this tender guest. And therefore, whenever she thus finds herself in self-seeking, she departs from herself, in real self-denial and mortification, for the sake of the love of God. In short, the language of such souls is, "I die daily," (1 Cor. 15:31) hourly, and every instant; so that by the various afflictions and sufferings which befall them from within and without, according to the all-wise guidance of God, the life of self is totally destroyed.

This sounds hard and severe, nay, it even seems to be impossible; but now observe, how it becomes easy and pleasing to such souls. They live, at the same time, in secret with Christ in God, and in his presence; and God lives and dwells in them, and inwardly fits and enables them for everything. That which leaves them of corrupt nature, and what they lose in the exterior and in the creature, they find again in God a hundred fold. (Matt. 19:29) The more they are estranged from and dead to the creature by continual self-denial, the nearer they necessarily approach unto God and his life, and are known of him and admitted to a hidden walk and converse with him. Previously, the creature lived in them, and they in the creature. God was, as it were, dead to them, and as though he were not. Now, on the contrary, God

lives in them, and they live in God; while all besides, and they themselves also with respect to their own life, and as in reference to them, are as though they were not. Like as they formerly sought and possessed life in the creature and in themselves, but now die and are dead to this wretched life, they find in the center of their souls, true life and being, peace, joy, comfort, and delight, to which they must ardently cleave, by abstracting their affections from everything else, turning inwards into God, and living in their hidden center.

And thus the words of the apostle are verified in them by vital experience, that “God is not far from any one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being;” (Acts 17:27-28) not only according to his universal but also according to his particular and indwelling presence. And thus they inwardly live in God and before him, as a fish in the water, or a bird in the air; not in mere idea and imagination, but their spirits really and essentially imbibe, by unceasing prayer or the hunger of faith, and by drawing near unto God, as the breathing of the Spirit, divine life and strength from him; so that by this permanent interaction of faith and love, the life of God is imparted to them, and they become partakers of his divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4) Thus they live with a meek and quiet spirit, in a simple, resigned, innocent, and childlike state in the presence of God, though not always in sight and enjoyment, yet in faith and reality; so that even as they die to all things, with Christ, they also live in a hidden manner, with Christ in God.

Yes, truly hidden! so that prudent reason overlooks this life; the senses are ignorant of it, the carnal eye perceives nothing of it; poverty, contempt, and suffering are three coverings, which externally conceal it from the world, which does not imagine or believe that a king’s daughter, (Ps. 45:13) arrayed with unspeakable inward glory, is concealed beneath them. She therefore looks upon such characters as a poor, miserable, despised, and afflicted race, as a sect, which is everywhere spoken against, as mean, blind, and foolish people, that only occasion themselves such a wretched life and so much suffering and tribulation. And although the glory that is concealed within, breaks forth in a variety of divine virtues, like so many rays of light, so that their life of self-denial, and their renunciation of the world, its riches, honors, and its pleasures, their resigned, lowly, childlike, innocent, ingenuous, and artless deportment is apparent to everyone; yet this is a form and comeliness which does not suit the world and blinded reason, but which, on the contrary, it often ridicules. Nay, what is still more, they appear, even to other pious people, who judge more according to the outward sense and reason, and govern their religious life more by it than by the Spirit, often black as the tents of Kedar, (Song. 1:5-6) as the curtains of Solomon; being ignorant, that underneath this outward garb, they have inwardly hidden their beauty and loveliness so that their mother’s children are often angry with such souls, who without making any great outward show and appearance, only strive, in quiet abstraction, to keep the vineyard of their own hearts; and thus they continue “the hidden ones” of the land—(Ps. 35:20; 82:3) their best part is not seen, their divine wisdom is hidden; (1 Cor. 2:7) their communication with Christ is hidden, their intimate walk with God, and their life in God is hidden; (Col. 3:3) the enjoyment of so much delight, peace, joy, and blessedness which flows from it, is hidden. In short their life is a life in the spirit, (Rom. 8:1,4,9) and all their glory, rank, and excellence (Ps. 45:13) is inwardly hidden in God.

That such divinely sanctified souls, who seek to follow the Lamb most closely wherever he leads them, by the most thorough denial of themselves and of everything besides, by the most fervent and continual adherence to God, and by such an abstracted walk before the Lord, and let their sanctification be perfected here (2 Cor. 7:1) that such souls, I say, have assuredly and infallibly to expect extremely great and precious privileges and glory, in time and eternity, is incontrovertible from many testimonies of Scripture, of which for the sake of brevity, I will only adduce a few, requesting the devout reader to refer to them, and to meditate further upon them, in the presence of God. Num. 12:6-8; Duet. 10:8-9. Ps. 45:14-15, 64:4; Song. 6:9-10; Jer. 35; Lam. 4:7; Mal. 3:3; Matt. 19:27-28; Luke 2:37; John 14; 15:15; 1 Cor. 2:15-6:41; Rev. 14:1-5; etc.

Let no one think it is a small thing when he is conscious in his heart of a secret inclination, drawing, and affection for a peculiarly retired, serious, strict, and inward life before God, but accept it as a particular grace and holy vocation of God, and esteem it as a great privilege, and as something very blessed, which God will condescend to grant him in time and eternity. I repeat for this purpose, once more, the marks of such a calling, which among others that might be mentioned, are principally these: when a person finds no rest or satisfaction in the mixed life of the generality of the pious, but is reprov'd and has a disrelish for even the most latent sins, imperfections, secret attachment to created things, and all selfishness, self-love, self-will, and self-complacency; when on the contrary, he is inwardly conscious of something attractive and alluring, so that he would gladly be united with God, in the closest and most intimate manner, and live before him, in a state of abstraction from the world when the soul is divested and deprived of her former external activity with regard to reason and the senses, and no longer feels within her any inclination, nourishment, or excitement in her usual exercises and employments, or in consideration and meditation, but in opposition to this perceives within her a drawing and inclination to inward simplicity, resignation, and composure, and to a universal and tender devotion and attention to God, who is present with her, without any particular exercise of her thinking powers, etc.

The first christians, in the times of the apostles and their immediate successors, were evidently such a chosen generation and royal priesthood, such a peculiar people, (1 Peter 2:9) and applied themselves in earnest to a simple, abstracted, and godly life; as might be sufficiently demonstrated from the writings of the apostles, and the testimonies of the primitive fathers. But my limits do not allow me to enlarge upon this point, and therefore I refer the reader to *Arnold's Delineation of the Primitive Christians*, and especially to his *True Representation of the Inward Christianity of the Ancients*, where numerous proofs of it may be met with.

But by degrees, the first love and zeal of many, and in time, of the greater part, began to cool; so that they everywhere contented themselves either with the mere outward profession, or else with a small beginning of grace; and where they were not kept in a state of watchfulness by persecution, fire, and sword, they frequently allowed themselves to be seduced into the external element of this world, and into a multiplicity of secular cares and undertakings; so that little difference could be perceived between

them and the heathen among whom they dwelt—which lukewarmness and declension obtained, as it were, possession and firm footing in the church, during the time so delightful to sense and reason, of the celebrated emperor Constantine the great; and the life of the greater part of the christians was no longer the ancient hidden life of Christ in God, but an outwardly splendid and pompous life—no more an inwardly real christianity, but an outwardly seeming christianity.

Still there have been, in all ages, a few select and precious souls, who while finding no rest for their souls and consciences in the lukewarm and corrupted life of the generality, dedicated and consecrated themselves in a particular manner to the service of God, and made, above others, their whole work and profession, as was only reasonable, consist in exercising themselves with all diligence, in this abstracted, godly, and hidden life, while slighting everything that might in any manner impede or render them slothful in their serious course. Among the rest, there were also many devout young persons of both sexes, whose only care was, how they might please the Lord, and be holy, both in body and spirit, that thus they might cleave unto the Lord with greater liberty;² there were likewise those who are generally called “Ascetics,” or such as exercise themselves in godliness, who being desirous, according to the admonition of the Lord Jesus, (Matt. 19:31) of being perfect, refrained from all unnecessary association with mankind, and from superfluous concerns; and frequently, at the divine call, sold all that they had and distributed it among the poor, and afterwards lived a peaceable life, in a small habitation or apartment, working a little with their hands, and employing all the rest of their time in dying unto all things, by means of thorough self-denial, and in leading a hidden life in God, by constant prayer and communication with him.

And when the lukewarmness and declension to that which is external became so general and so great, many thousands, in order not to be carried away with it, nor allow any diminution in the strictness of their walk, by the slothful and worldly life of other christians, fled from the common interactions with men, and retired into remote and desert places, according to the divine will, and exercised themselves, day and night, with all diligence, in such a holy inward and hidden life before God, and in his presence.

It is not my object and intention to bring forward and recommend the outward mode of life, the bodily exercises, or any other peculiarities of these or the holy individuals before-mentioned, since they had themselves no general rule, nor any particular method, and in course of time, while the darkness continually increased, fell also by degrees into outward observances and human folly; my intention is merely to show that by these devoted souls and solitaries, such as they continued to be till the fifth

2 Of such Justin Martyr boasted before the Emperor, about the year 130, in the following terms:— “There are many among us, of both sexes, who live a life of singleness and chastity till their old age, after having followed from their infancy the doctrine of Christ. (Matt. 19:11) I for my part assert, that I can produce instances of this from among people of all classes.” *Apol.* 2.

Another shortly after him, wrote openly as follows: “There are many among us, both men and women, who grow old in a single life; because they hope in such a state to be nearer to God.” *Athenag. Apol.* page 36. And Augustine says, “It is now scarcely a matter of surprise, that so many young men and women despise marriage and live in chastity.” *De ver. Relig.* Cap. 3. See also *Arnold’s Delineation*, sec, 5. cap. 5.

century, primitive, inward, and powerful religion, was principally maintained and propagated.³ And even in the succeeding wretched times, God has always had his “hidden ones,” (1 Kings 19:18; Ps. 83:3) as may be seen by reference to the *Catal. Testim. Veritatis*, and in other books, such as *Arnold’s Theol. Myst.* Cap. 16-17.

Among those elect and God devoted souls are also particularly to be reckoned those who are generally called “Mystics” (that is secret or hidden) whose writings, next to the Holy Scriptures, contain a true definition of real inward christianity and genuine divinity.⁴ It is true, that most of them lived and were known with their writings in the Romish Church; yet in bearing testimony to the truth, I must say, that the sincere among them were more evangelical and reformed than most protestants; I mean to say, they were real inward christians, who did not continue clinging to externals, but served and worshipped God in spirit and in truth, by withdrawing their affections and confidence from all created things, from themselves, and from all their own works, through true faith and union with God in Christ. And although I do not approve or defend all the minor points and external incidents that occur in such writings, yet it is certain, that more divine unction, light, counsel, comfort, and peace, for a soul that is seeking after God, is to be found in a single page of the true mystic writings, than is often contained in many folio volumes of weak and watery school divinity, as enlightened divines among the protestants themselves concur in testifying.⁵ But why is it that such valuable works are generally so little esteemed and used? Is it not because an inquisitive curiosity does not find food in them, and that the nature of the old man and the life of self is too severely attacked, and that they do not require to be reasoned and speculated upon like other books, which are accommodated to the taste of the old Adam, but insist upon mortification and self-denial? However, as many pious divines among the protestants themselves, have rescued and defended the divine truths, which are to be found in these writings, I again turn myself to those select souls, who feel themselves called to this inward and stricter hidden life.⁶

III. A Particular Address to those select souls, who have resigned themselves to God and his inwardly hidden life.

To you, you elect and beloved souls, you devout Nazarenes—to you my dearest brethren and sisters, who

3 As may be seen in the lives of the primitive fathers, Anthony, Hilarion, and others, and particularly in the writings of Macarius, Ephraim, Syrus, Nilus, and also of Cassian, Climacus, etc.

4 In a work of the author’s, entitled *The Lives of the Saints*, in three volumes quarto, he has collected a variety of facts and information on this subject, to which the reader is referred.

5 Vide Godfried Arnoldi *Histor. Theol. Myst.* Cap. 8. 38. *Sophia* pifat. No. 7.

6 See among the Reformed writers, Voetium de *Exer. Piet. et in Ascetes*. Lodenstein *Beschauu. Zions.* page 39 et seq., Franc Rous *Interiora Regni Dei*, J. de la Roque *dernieres heures*, page 63., Poiret de *Eruditione ejusd. Economiam Divinam*, etc. And among the Lutherans, Lutherum, Joh. Arndt, Varenius, Hoburg. Jac. Speneri *Praf. in Taulerum*. Arnoldi *Myst. Theol.*, Weismanni *Introduct.* in H. E. part 2. page 555 et seq., Aletophili *Myst. Theol.*

have sincerely dedicated and consecrated yourselves to a more exact religion, and to the hidden life with Christ in God;⁷ to you in particular, I have still to address, in love, a word of admonition and incitement on the present occasion. For although some of you even already possess the Spirit of unction, (1 John 2:27) which leads you into all truth; yet the wisdom that is from above, will also manifest itself in this instance, by gladly receiving instruction from another. (James 3:17) But that I may not myself be found lacking, I will seek to keep my own soul especially in view, while addressing yours.

We see from all that has been said, that we are not to govern, form and limit ourselves according to the example of others, although they may be pious people; but that God most certainly demands of us something particular. (Matt. 5:47) I mean stricter duties and a more holy life and conduct, both inwardly and outwardly, than is alas! evinced by others. Let us therefore forget what is behind, and keep the mark and the prize in our eye, which our heavenly vocation holds out to us. Let others live as they please, and though many of the pious are not without their failings, what is that to you and me? Let us only look, with a tranquil and introverted mind, to him who is ever calling to us to follow him. (John 21:22) Great and unspeakably glorious is our high vocation in reality; but let us remember the words of our Savior, “Many are called, but few are chosen.” (Matt. 20:16) It is not he that has more light or a deeper insight into the ways of God, who is better than others; but he who has more love, and leads a more exact and holy life. In this, my beloved, consists that peculiarity, which must be found in us above others.

If others serve God and mammon at the same time, and while professing to be pious, are seeking and laying up treasures on earth, by engaging in extensive secular concerns— let us look unto him, who calls unto all those that resolve in earnest to follow him, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay his head.” (Luke 9:58) And remember, that if the former be Israelites, we ought to be Levites, a royal priesthood, concerning whom God has said, “You shall possess nothing in the land, nor have any portion among them; for I am your portion and your inheritance. (Num. 18:20; Duet. 10:9; Ezek. 44:28) We must show that we are dead to the world, and look no longer at the things that are seen; but that our lives are hidden in God, and our abstracted world and wealth-denying walk must be as a loud voice, saying unto all men, “God alone is sufficient!” (Ps. 73:25)

If others take and allow themselves liberties by an immoderate condescension and seeking to please men, in the company they keep, in their conduct, fashions, and such like vanities—we must be particular in this respect, and not give way to the world a hair’s breadth; better be called self-willed than worldly-minded. How easily may giving way become going astray, and by too great complacency to this Delilah, the inward power be lost, as in a dream. The jealousy of the Bridegroom of our souls does not permit so much to be

⁷ The holy martyr Cyprian, in addressing the females who had devoted themselves to God, bestows upon them the following titles: “Flowers among the plants of the church, the beauty and ornament of spiritual grace, the pleasant and noble scions and children of praise and honor, (of Christ and his church,) a whole and unconsumed work, an image of God, according to the likeness of the holiness of the Lord Jesus, the most excellent of the flock of Christ.” The learned Sandaus, in his *Præfat. Theol. Myst.* borrows these appellations, and applies them, not improperly to the Mystics.

done to please his rival, and he that will not believe must feel to his loss, “that the friendship of the world is enmity with God.” (James 4:4)

If others follow their sensual appetites, and spend and misspend their valuable time in the variety, adorning, and beauty of their dress, their houses, and their furniture; and apply so much valuable attention to the ease and enjoyment of their vile bodies—it is for us to show that we are not sensual nor animal, but spiritual men, who therefore no longer live after the flesh and sense, but after the spirit, (Rom. 8:1,4,9) and do not seek to lie here upon roses and at ease, when our Head and Forerunner was born in a wretched stable and manger, and died upon the cross, wearing a crown of thorns. Indeed I cannot believe it, nor do I know whether the world will believe it, that the inward religion of those is great and exact, who will have everything outwardly so elegant, so convenient, and so precisely to their mind, even did they know all mysteries, and spoke of the most exalted spirituality. He that feels himself called to be an heir of heaven and bride of the King of kings, ought therefore to be “all glorious within,” (Ps. 45:13) that his inward part may become a suitable dwelling and residence of the Divine Majesty; and hence he will find so much to cleanse, adorn, and beautify there, that he will soon lose all relish for any external fancies.

If we see others turning outwards into the senses, and by trifling and unnecessary hearing, seeing, speaking, and thinking, open their hearts as it were to the creature—let our hearts be as an enclosed garden, and a sealed fountain to all created objects, and solely open to the Beloved of our souls. We must wait day and night at the posts of his doors, as a spiritual priesthood; and therefore we are under obligation, because we believe the Lord to be present in the temple of our hearts, (Zech. 2:13) from that reverence which we supremely owe to him, to keep our mouths, minds, and thoughts in holy silence and abstraction. When we speak, we ought to speak from God, before God, in Christ Jesus, and real words of God. (1 Peter 4:11) For can you suppose my dearly beloved, that we who may here behold and address the Lord of glory within us, are at liberty to slight him so much, as to leave him there, so to speak, and turn ourselves outwards to visible things? O how irreverent would such conduct be! Our silent, considerate, abstracted, and retired life and deportment, ought rather to give to everyone an impression of the inwardly hidden holiness and fear of God. It was in reference to this, that Bernières commended his spiritual guide, after the latter’s decease, saying, “mere remembrance of him replaces my soul in the presence of God, if it has wandered from him, and gives me courage and boldness to strive earnestly after true virtue.” (*Lettres viè illum: litt. 35. page 283.*)

If others fix their affections first on one created object, and then on another, and seek and find in them enjoyment, comfort, joy, and delight—let our hearts, our affections, and all our love be solely and eternally devoted, in true virgin chastity, to the Bridegroom of our souls. If we still possess too little love to love the infinitely lovely Good sufficiently, how can we dare to deprive him of any part of it? And besides, what is there in the wretched and needy creature, that may not be found in supreme perfection, and infinite abundance in the Creator, and be enjoyed a hundred fold, even in this life? (Matt. 19:29) Therefore let our whole hearts say unto every good that is not this one and supreme good, “I need you not.”

On the whole, we must be dead to all created things, and lead a hidden life with Christ in God; a life of holiness and godliness, of humility and meekness, of simplicity and innocence, of love and mercy, of chastity and moderation; in short, a life before God and in God.

But my beloved, besides all this, let us most carefully beware, in all our walk and conduct before God and man, of all affectation, dissimulation, outward holiness and formality, which vice has so often gotten possession of us, that frequently without our knowledge, it defiles our life and conduct—if not in a manifest, yet in a subtle manner, by which the mind is stripped of all freedom, peace, and liberty of spirit. Our conduct, walk, words, and gestures, as well as the thoughts and disposition of the heart, must be judged and weighed, not by men, who only see the outside, but by the purest light of God. We must not seek to appear holy, but to *be* holy, and that in the eyes of God alone, who searches the heart and the mind. We must keep our inmost souls constantly naked and open to the rays of this eternal sun, that we may walk in simplicity and purity, and in truth and righteousness. (2 Cor. 1:12) God is a God of truth; we must therefore walk in the truth and in simplicity of heart, if we are desirous of having fellowship with so pure a being.

Be it likewise consequently far from us, when possessing an insight into, and finding ourselves called to this more strict and particular christian course, to imagine ourselves to be something particular, and exalt ourselves above other pious persons, or even claim to ourselves some spiritual privilege or title of honor, and mentally slight, or even despise others. By such conduct, we should show, that though we had a light, yet we had not the reality nor experience of genuine and inward christianity; because the most profound humility and thorough self-annihilation are the essential properties, characteristics, and aim of the truly inward life. But if we really possess some degree of experience and progress in this divine life, the divine unction will undoubtedly teach us that we have to ascribe it not to our own diligence and fidelity; but to the unmerited grace and power of God. What have we then, that has not been given us? If we have become holy and happy, it is by grace and not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. (Eph. 2:8) What have we then to boast of? If there be anything good *in us*, it is not *of us*, nor is it ours—it is and remains God's property, who has it in his power to take his own back again.

And therefore we may not glory, even in any measure in our piety and virtues, or regard them with self-complacency; how much less are we at liberty to do so in reference to spiritual or divine gifts, sweetness, joy, or illumination, even were it ecstasies and revelations! We must indeed accept the gifts of God with thankfulness, but presume so little upon them, as to be able to restore them any moment to the giver without difficulty, and seek our rest in him alone, and not in his gifts. Ah, how many, in the possession of such like gifts and sensibilities, imagine themselves very fervent, pious, and holy, while they are perhaps still full of self-love, self-will, and self-conceit, instead of that most necessary humiliation and self-abasement before God, and beneath every creature! It is written, "Rejoice in the Lord," (Phil. 4:4) and "count it all joy, when you fall into manifold temptations." (James 1:2) But of gifts it is said, "Rejoice not," (Luke 10:20). We must be perfected and united with God, not so much by doing and enjoying, as by

suffering and privation. (Heb. 2:10) Let us remember and retain it well, that the substance of christianity and true holiness does not consist in such like things; but in dying to ourselves and every creature, and in leading a hidden life with Christ in God, and before God.

I say “with Christ,” for ah, how soon everything vanishes that is not founded on Christ! The sole, real, and immutable basis of the inward life is the inward or mystic union and fellowship with Christ Jesus by faith. Here, neither good intentions and resolutions, nor our own willing and running, (Rom. 9:16) nor any legal exertions of our own powers avail to bring about the due foundation and establishment of our holiness. We know what the Supreme Teacher of the inward life says, “Abide in me, and so shall you bring forth much fruit, for without me, you can do nothing.” (John 15: 5) O that we might only strongly believe and continually practice it! What is required of us is to depart from ourselves in the deepest conviction of our own inability, and with fervent desires of faith, to cleave in the center of our souls to this only source of all grace and holiness, and “Receive out of this fulness, grace upon grace.” (John 1:16) Let us, by withdrawing our affections from all created things, continually retire into him, and wherever we go or stay, habituate ourselves to abide in a childlike manner in him; and thus shall the vital power of his Spirit, which pervades us from within, thoroughly sanctify body, soul, and spirit. (1 Thess. 5:2-33) We shall then see, whether Martha, with her well-meant outward labors and efforts, or Mary, with her sitting at the feet of her Savior, will attain the better part, the one thing needful. (Luke 10:42)

But now, my highly esteemed brethren and sisters, if we find ourselves redeemed from the earth, and made kings and priests unto God, and if we have freedom of access in the center of our souls into the most holy place, before the presence of God—let us never forget to ascribe thanksgiving and honor to the precious atoning blood of Jesus Christ, by which alone this grace has been purchased for us, (Rev. 5:9) and is opened to us. (Heb. 10:9) For certainly, had not Jesus Christ died for us and rose again, the way to true holiness and communion with God might have been eternally closed against us, miserable creatures; which I touch upon here particularly, because those who apply themselves to a strict and inward religion, or bear witness of it, are universally blamed, as if by so doing they slighted or even despised the work of redemption accomplished by Christ for us. Now I will not deny, that possibly many, who have not hitherto been particularly humbled by inward affliction, poverty, and suffering, may, with a good intent, in order to resist the general abuse of this truth, have used immoderate and inconsiderate expressions, and may have run into extremes; yet all truly enlightened souls, even the so-called mystics among the Roman Catholics, have in reality more highly esteemed and gloried in the merits of Jesus Christ, as our atonement and justification, than perhaps many of their accusers.

But let us, you elect souls, meanwhile acknowledge with humble thankfulness, that if we had no Jesus *for* us, we should never have had a Jesus *in* us. And if we should ever be exalted to the state of the most elevated and purest contemplation of the Deity, whether in this life or the next, yet this consideration will ever remain most delightfully and supremely precious to us. The Lamb that was slain, is worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and glory, and thanksgiving, and praise; for he was slain,

and has redeemed us to God by his blood, out of every nation, and tongue, and kindred, and people, and has made us kings and priests unto God. Amen and Amen!

“Blessed Savior, Jesus! who by your death and resurrection, have brought this divine and hidden life to light, O may the long-desired, happy time arrive, when instead of all human ordinances, speculations and controversies, this genuine, inward, christian life, may again flourish in its first esteem among all nations, that they may willingly submit their hearts to the sway of your love! Lo, I offer you my heart, most lovely Jesus, sanctify me in this your truth, conceal me ever deeper in the secret of your countenance, hide me, O my high Priest! with you in your pavilion from every danger! Preserve, carry on, and perfect your gracious work in me, that all the life of self may die and decay, till I see no other life, will, or motion in me, than that which proceeds from you and your pure Spirit, to the eternal glory of the Father!” Amen.

On the Shadow and Substance, Form and Power of Godliness, in a Letter to a Friend

“Having the form of godliness, but denying its power.” 2 Timothy 3:5.

My dear friend,

If I were to communicate to you my thoughts on the contents of the manuscript which has been sent me, I should say briefly, that all which is not internal and has not God himself in Christ as its foundation and source, can only be called the mere shadow, and not the substance and essence of godliness. From this general proposition, it is not difficult to deduce all that I have otherwise to say upon the subject.

I. When we conduct or show ourselves before men, in conversation, action, or gesture, otherwise than we mean, or different to what we are in reality, or wish to be, however secretly or subtly this may take place, we do not walk in simplicity; it is falsehood, and not truth; or at least it is something assumed and dissembled; a shadow and not the substance—an abomination in the sight of God.

It is not only wrong to show ourselves *better* than we are, but it is an improper affectation, nay, often a vain desire of being better thought of when we represent ourselves, whether in words or otherwise, to be poorer, more miserable, and worse than we believe and feel ourselves to be.

I have purposely employed above the expression “are or wish to be,” for a person that is evil, proud, irritable, etc. but who still sincerely wishes to possess the opposite virtues. Such a person ought, according to the divine law, and his own conscience, to resist the evil and suppress it, that it may not break forth;

and in doing this, he neither dissembles nor acts the hypocrite; on the contrary, he would be guilty of dissimulation, if he allowed it to break forth; since he purposes and wishes in his heart what is good, and not what is evil. But if such a one, who suppresses the evil that is within him, for instance, anger, and behaves himself meekly, to imagine on this account, that he already essentially possessed the virtue of meekness, or should seek to be esteemed by others as a meek character, he would be deceiving himself. He has the appearance, but does not yet possess the substance of this virtue.

O my God, how much does hypocrisy, formality, and dissimulation pervade fallen and perverted man! And how little are we aware of this abomination in ourselves, since by reason of the thick darkness and confusion which fill our minds, we do not perceive what is in them, because we remain so little with ourselves, and abide still less with you! Teach me, O God, who are so inexpressibly near me, both outwardly and inwardly, teach me to walk under the observation of your eye, in the pure light of your truth, that I may practice simplicity in all my actions and deportment.

II. It follows from the above general proposition, that all the duties which are included in serving God, and which have not real devotion of heart and the worshipping of God in spirit and in truth for their basis and origin, are nothing more than a shadow, outward semblance, a form of godliness, but not the substance.

Hence I remark, that it is not good for a devout person, who walks in the spirit, to engage in too many religious exercises, because by this means, the inward power and devotional feeling is easily weakened and wearied; but he must attend and apply himself with so much the more circumspection and heartfelt devotion to the fewer and more moderate exercises, which he retains.

However, if there be but sincere devotion of heart in all our external religious duties, our works are then no mere and vain shadow, but acceptable to God in their degree; even supposing that we have not yet attained to the worshipping of God in spirit and truth taken in its fullest sense—and at which we cannot arrive by our own efforts.

III. We may infer from hence, that all light or knowledge of God and divine truth which is communicated to us, either mediately from without, or which we attain by the efforts of our own reason; or if, after receiving some real light of truth from God in our center or understanding, we transfer it into our imagination and reason, and form to ourselves ideas of it, draw consequences or inferences from it, and obtain some measure of light or knowledge by our own efforts (even though it were concerning the most spiritual and inward paths of religion)—all such light and knowledge, however profound, beautiful, pleasant, and inward it might appear to us to be, is a counterfeit and imitation, a portrait, the work of our own hands, in which self-love often takes more delight than in the original. For when this knowledge is taken in its best sense, it is only a speculative truth, that is, when the substantially acquired knowledge of the truth within, reflects itself, and represents itself in the mirror of the imagination, and thus the individual contemplates a beauteous object in this mirror, but not the object itself.

By this, I by no means intend to reject any good external means whatever, or any attained knowledge in its right use and due season, for this would be going too far; I only wish to show that there is a difference between the means and the end, the form and image, and the substance. The form can represent to us the substance or original, and incite us to love it; the means may lead us to the end proposed, without which we perhaps never should arrive at it; the making use of them in proper order and degree is very useful and laudable: but it is imprudent and dangerous to stop there, as if they were the end and the substance of the thing itself.

Speculative or reflective knowledge is the production of our reason, (our operative understanding,) and there are various kinds of such knowledge, according to the individual's state; but substantial and contemplative knowledge is the effect of the pure or passive understanding. Reflective knowledge of the truth is a more or less laborious speculative cogitation, effort, and operation of our understanding or reason, and has never the essential truth before its eyes, but merely an image of the truth, as in a mirror; but contemplative knowledge of the truth is a very easy, direct vision, and extremely simple act of our understanding, if that can be called an act, when our eye sees and enjoys the light; and he that possesses this contemplative knowledge has also the substance of the truth, according to the measure of his grace and illumination.

Notwithstanding all this, let it be well observed, that I by no means reject reflective knowledge entirely and without distinction; for God has given us a capacity for this purpose, which is our imagination and reason. A soul that seeks God and his truth, may occasionally be much supported and assisted in her course by means of a good meditation. Nor could enlightened souls ever make known the truth to others, if they did not in some degree make use of their active understanding, and declare the truth in a more or less figurative manner. It is true, that during the states or paths of purifying suffering, all previously acquired reflective knowledge, seems, as it were, to fall away and vanish; for where fruit is to be produced, the blossom must first fall off; if the substance is to enter the heart, and truth present itself there, the image in the mirror must be covered up, that the sight may be turned away from and into it. But even this is frequently restored to us, in the divine good pleasure, and that too, in a manner much more pure, beautiful, and lively; and after we ourselves, and the powers of our souls with their operation, have been purified, God grants us occasionally a holy diversion and excursion of this kind; yea, he sometimes leads us out to look at his paintings and delineations, and then again inwards to contemplate the original substance of truth; and thus going in and out with our Shepherd, we everywhere find food and pasture. But let it be observed, 1st. That a person thus inward must not linger too long or too frequently in this kind of activity, nor apply himself too powerfully and with all his energy to it; but let the Lord lead him to it, rather than undertake anything from his own will. 2nd. He must also not neglect occasionally, and even frequently, to discontinue entirely this kind of activity and mental cogitation, that he may lay open his whole soul fervently, nakedly, and passively before God, and the essential light of his divine truth; otherwise he would be in danger of imperceptibly losing the truth, if he always sought its image and shadow, and wished to seize it as something substantial.

IV. The general proposition, with which we set out, teaches us that all godliness, virtues, and good works, which do not spring from the union of faith with God in Christ as from their inward root, and therefore do not proceed from the bottom of a heart that has been changed by grace, are not that which they are called, but only a self-made resemblance, mask, and form, and not the substance of the thing; nay, when beheld in the light of God, all appears, on account of the natural depravity of its source, to be more evil than good; “splendid sins,” as one called them.

But by this I will not say, that all is evil, which is not perfectly good; and that we must not begin to practice the virtues, before they can be performed without fault, or till we are assured of a real and universal change of heart. When a soul that seeks God does good with all possible sincerity, in the intention of obeying and pleasing God, it is certainly not without his grace, nor is it any evil or mere self-made form; even supposing that she had not yet arrived at a total change of heart, and that therefore the virtue did not proceed purely from Christ. The soul then does what the law requires of her, and what, with the cooperation of preventing grace, she is able to do. It is certainly requisite for her not to lay much stress on her actions, virtues, or faithfulness, since all is assuredly still very human and imperfect, and even only the semblance of virtue, in comparison with the spiritual virtues, which the Spirit of God, in his own time, produces in the soul; it is also necessary, that she disregard all her own doings, and immerse herself, with humble confidence, in the grace of God, with inward longing and believing patience, pressing forwards to union with Christ, and expecting the operation of his Spirit in her; but it is unnecessary and very dangerous for her to distress herself with incessant scruples and despondency in all her attempts to do good. Let her do good, as she is able, however imperfect it be, and expect that the Lord will purify and perfect it. “There is none good but one, that is God.”

V. When we seek by our own endeavors, labor, or activity, to destroy and eradicate evil, sin, or self within us, that which is evil is not essentially slain and destroyed in us by such well-meant endeavors, but only in appearance; it seems to be dead sometimes, but it is not yet dead, it is only asleep and hidden, and afterwards comes so much the more dangerously and dreadfully to light. In order that the evil may be essentially and thoroughly slain and eradicated in us, God must do it, and we must be passive under his operation.

The former, however, precedes the latter. We are bound, according as our state and the grace we have attained requires, to resist that which is evil, to suppress it, to turn away our will entirely from it, and inwardly to hunger after full redemption through Christ. “O that the salvation were come out of Zion unto Israel; O that the Lord would redeem his people from their captivity!” And this is therefore a denial of self, a crucifixion and a mortification, but not the real death and dissolution of the life of self, which is God’s work alone, and a free favor, an impartation of the death of Jesus Christ. However, no one dies with Christ, who is not crucified with him.

“Yea, O Lord! whatever may be called true goodness, virtue, holiness, is all your work, and a free gift

of grace.

*My heart, without your power and grace,
No real good can e'er possess.*

How easy it is to say this, but how much does it cost to learn to practice it, if we sincerely seek to acquire it, and are not content with the mere exterior of this knowledge; I desire, O Lord! to experience, through your grace, its substance and reality. Therefore let all my own work and virtue perish and vanish from me; that in the day of trial, your work alone may stand and receive commendation. Only let your grace never depart from me, lest your hand be too heavy upon me; for without you I can do nothing, am nothing, and have nothing, but sin and misery!”

VI. All that is called inwardness, or inward life and devotion, which has not for its foundation the Spirit of Christ and the real denial of ourselves and of all things, but which we produce by our own efforts and the mere exertion of our own thoughts, is only an imaginary inwardness, an empty shadow and form, but not the substance.

The whole mystery and essence of true inwardness consists in this one thing—in living with God, and in his presence; but no one can do this who does not die to himself and to all things. It is certainly very good for one who strives after this inwardness, to subdue and restrain his senses, not purposely allow his thoughts, especially the thoughts of his heart, to rove about upon unnecessary objects, to retire occasionally, even externally, for the purpose of sacred recollection in the presence of God, and in other respects to strive in all things to live a life of abstraction; but let him know that with all this, he would never become an inward man, unless, through the power and teaching of the Spirit, he turn away his heart, desires, and affections, from everything, and center them in God; resignedly surrender his whole will into the hands of God; and in all things seek, with simplicity, to set the Lord before him. Now as often as he strives to enter in reality into this state of mind, expecting at the same time the operation of God to lead him substantially into it, he practices what is termed “peculiar recollection.” In other respects, it is unnecessary and dangerous to endeavor to place ourselves in a forced frame of mental devotion and united exertion of the thinking powers. The head and all the rest will follow, in due time, without difficulty, if the heart and affections only go before.

I do not say that a soul cannot become inward before she has really denied herself, and is dead to herself in all things; for the inward turning to, and abiding with God, above-mentioned, is the best, nay the only means of becoming thus abstracted and mortified; I only say, that with his inmost and total will, the man must sincerely turn himself away from all that is not God, in order that he may retire to him in his heart. And he that acts thus, is in no danger of false detachment, and does much when he thus continues with God, without doing anything.

VII. Another inference from the first mentioned proposition, is, that if in our inward exercises, we do

not keep ourselves naked and open before God, in all filial simplicity, humility, and resignation, such as we are, but show ourselves in any way different, or make ourselves something, that we neither have, nor desire to have—we are then guilty of dissimulation, and our deeds are then a self-created shadow, and no reality, a form and no substance.

It is thus that not only all who are manifestly hypocritical act, who draw near to God, as his people, with their lips, while their hearts are far from him, but there are also subtle, double-minded individuals, who likewise do not lay their whole souls open before God in their most inward exercises and prayers, but still cover their nakedness in some measure with a fig-leaf. Ah, how much is required before men will lay themselves entirely naked and open before God! Even those who are sincere, may through inattention, occasionally say or think something in their prayers, which they probably do not find or perceive in themselves; or they may frequently present themselves before God in another guise and form, than what they are and feel themselves to be; which occasionally proceeds from what is called a good intention, while dealing with God as if he were a man, who when he is addressed, is often better pleased if some particular expressions are employed, or if the individual appear before him in some particular dress. Thus for instance, the man may present himself, though unconsciously, in the robe of his own virtue or piety; another time he may seek to make himself very poor and little; again at another, he may place himself in a state of great sorrow and contrition of heart, etc. If the grace of God produced this, it would be well; but we endeavor to effect it by our own efforts, and do not expect it from God, and then it is a self-made thing; a shadow, but not the substance.

But in order to discover and avoid such like faults and selfishness in ourselves, it is not necessary, but rather injurious to be always examining in an anxious and scrupulous manner, and retrospectively considering each and all of our inward acts. All this may be avoided without difficulty and danger, if we be not of ourselves too operative in our inward exercises, but look unto God, and think more upon him than upon ourselves and our own doings, and in other respects seek to keep ourselves with all simplicity, innocence, and openness in the presence of God, so as we are, and as he forms and places us.

“O God! is it possible, that a rational creature, even a believing soul, can dissemble before your all-seeing eye? Who could believe it, did not melancholy experience too often prove it! Alas, that miserable self-working, by which sincere souls stand most in their own light, so that they are unable to perceive the folly of such an assumed deportment! Lord, deliver them all, and your servant likewise from it; by your strict light and judgment, take away all such folds and coverings from our hearts; bind the hands and feet of our imperfect self-working, and anatomize our inmost souls with the two-edged sword of your living word, and lay our very entrails and our inmost souls naked and open to the light of your health-bringing countenance. Make us simple and peaceable children before you, and place us yourself in that form and figure, in which you prefer to see us, till we are all changed from glory to glory, into the original image of your resemblance, by your Spirit! Amen.”

VIII. When we observe anything good in another, or when we read or hear something, or otherwise receive light and insight into any good disposition or state of the inward life, and fix our imagination strongly upon it, without the guidance and grace of God, and, as it were, establish ourselves in it, before God translates us into it—we have not the reality and substance of that particular good or state, but only the form of it.

All that we see, read, hear, or consider with ardent desire and strong devotional feelings, impresses its form or image in our minds, but not its substance, unless faith, as the inward hungering desire of the soul, lays hold of the substance at the same time. Hence it is, that he who associates frequently with, and takes pleasure in the society of pious people, often assumes, unconsciously, many of their expressions, habits, demeanor, and opinions, which is not always improper, but still it is only a form, an affectation and imitation, if he do not, at the same time, inwardly possess the substance of it.

In the same way, we may sometimes read of others, or of much more elevated states of the inward life than that in which we walk, or of such into which the Lord has not yet introduced us, and form to ourselves a conception, image, or idea of them. Were this done frequently and with strong devotional feelings, we should find what was read, so deeply and lively impressed and expressed within us, that we might easily be led to imagine, that we were in possession of the substance of these states, while we had only the image of them. In this way, for instance, one who is not yet dead to himself, or quite a novice, might dangerously deceive himself, were he to read much of passive prayer, or of exalted states; and he to whom God grants this noble gift of prayer (either as a foretaste, or in a more permanent manner,) and gives him to sit with Mary at his feet, would on the contrary, occasion himself much unavailing or injurious distress, were he with fervent devotion to read much upon active prayer. In the same manner, one who enjoys much sweet and susceptible devotion, might imagine himself in the contemplative state; and a contemplative individual might confuse and distress himself if he heard or read much of severe trials, painful sufferings, and purifying dispensations.

Hence it is not profitable for one who is not well established in the state and path in which God designs more particularly to lead him, to read a number and variety of books, and associate with all kinds of people, however good and excellent they may be in themselves; but rather keep chiefly to such good men, through whose medium he receives power, unction, and grace for devotion and recollection; such as in some measure accord with his particular calling, and the way in which he is led, entering as it were, without compulsion, and with a secret delight into the mind, and thus making it sufficiently evident, that they are suitable for him, at least at the time. For although the individual must love all the children of God, and may associate with them; and though he be not forbidden from reading other books, which treat of the inward way—yet it is well, when this is done with moderation, and not with too strong devotional feelings, in order that the mind may not be disturbed, unsettled, nor filled with imagery. He that walks through a desert by an unknown path, must not always look aside, nor wish to examine every byway, if he be willing to avoid going astray.

IX. When we receive in our minds any particular impression, invigoration, sweetness, unction, and peace from God, or any other grace and divine communication, and seek to retain or augment it by our own efforts, or even from self-love; or when we strive, by our own exertions to excite them within us, and to experience something of the kind—it is all a production of our own, which only obstructs our progress; and were we even to succeed in it, according to our own ideas, yet all that is brought about, is something merely human, and not divine; an image, a shadow, and no reality.

“Teach me, O Lord! to live in all resignation and childlike dependance upon you, that I may receive, with humble thankfulness, what you give; but neither seize, desire, nor seek to retain what you do not give nor permit me to keep. O that I might be in your hand like yielding wax, which lets itself be moulded into every form at pleasure, and takes no other shape than that which the master gives it! I will be as you make me, and not otherwise; and willingly continue devoid of that which you either do not give, or after having given it, take away again, that so I may rest alone in you, and in your sacred good pleasure.”

X. Only that which passes in the spirit, in the inmost soul—that which is there done, suffered, experienced, and enjoyed, is, properly speaking, substantial; since it proceeds more immediately from God, and takes place in the most noble and essential part of man; but all besides, all that passes in the powers of the soul, the inward or outward senses, etc., however good, useful, and necessary it may be of its kind and in its season, yet when compared with the former, it is only the form and not the power.

How good and profitable, yea how necessary, are frequently the susceptible, sensible sweetnesses, refreshments, and delights in good and divine things, and other similar gracious gifts, to tear us away from the false enjoyments of sin, and the transitory pleasures of this world! but how obstructive and injurious are these good and useful things, when we take pleasure in them, and do not really restore everything to God when we stop short there, and wish to erect our tabernacles in such an agreeable place when we do not regard these things as the gifts of God, but as God himself, and the sensible pleasure we enjoy in the reception of these effusions of divine goodness, as the real and essential union with him! Is not this also taking the shadow for the substance, or at least the blossom for the fruit—embracing Leah instead of Rachel, and reckoning seven years too soon? (Gen. 29:25-27) That which is sensible has certainly some resemblance to that which is really spiritual; but they are not therefore one and the same thing.

Finally. We may also observe on this subject, that all our inward acts of prayer and devotion; of collectedness, humiliation, resignation, adoration, and love, in so far as they proceed solely from ourselves in short, all that is not God nor God’s work in us, when viewed in its proper light, is something self-made, and only a form but not the substance of godliness.

When an individual, by passing through many trials and paths of humiliation, is in some measure purified, and hence is permitted to experience in his center, the pure and substantial operation of God, everything that he had previously done or experienced, even his most inward and simple activity in communion with God, notwithstanding the grace that cooperated with it, then appears sensual, outward,

and imperfect, as something affected and not real, and as something human, mixed, and of no value. Yet that which preceded this state is not to be altogether rejected as evil, or even to be disesteemed; much less ought it to be regarded in this light, with reference to other seeking souls, who perhaps may not have experienced similar purely divine operations. For the soul that experiences them, regards them not as they are good in their kind and season, but as they are in comparison with the sublimity and purity of the substantial operation of God, which the man then experiences, with reference to which, as before said, all appears to him mean and unsubstantial. Such a judgment is good and proper for himself, but not always good and useful for others.

It is scarcely credible how feeble, worthless, and faulty is all that we do, even that which is most inward and spiritual, in so far as it proceeds from ourselves. It is therefore very advisable for a devout individual, in his interaction with God, gradually to learn how to cease from his own fleshly works, that he may keep a Sabbath to the Lord, and let him work in him by his Spirit; and when in advancing further in the experience of the pure operation of divine influence, he perceives a secret displeasure and disgust at his own works, and on the contrary a peaceful inclination to inward passiveness, that he should resign himself, without apprehending any danger, to this guidance of divine Wisdom.

But lest any unmortified person should from hence derive occasion for a state of religious apathy and false detachment, reference may be made to what has been already said in the preceding pages, and the following general rule may also be observed, except in an extraordinary state of suffering—that as soon as God works, we must be passive; and when we are not conscious of his operation, we must wait for it, as before said, in a state of sacred calm and solemnity in his presence. It is, however, not advisable to be altogether quiet at such times, and not do anything. We may, nay, we must work at such times, when grace gives us liberty to do so, but as our state may require, altogether simply and fervently, with the heart and affections, meekly and resignedly as in the presence of God, and ready, at the least hint or consciousness of his operation, to be passive, and make room for him.

“O Lord, you all-sufficient and infinite Being, the supreme Being, the sole Being, yea, more than Being; You alone can say with effect, *I am*; and this ‘I am’ is so unlimited and undoubtedly true, that no oath can be found, which places the truth more beyond all doubt, than when this word proceeds from your mouth, ‘I am.’ ‘I live.’

“Yea, amen! you are! My spirit bows before you, and my inmost soul confesses unto you that you are. How happy do I esteem myself that you are, and that you can not cease to be! How blessed am I, in knowing that God is, and that I can make this confession, that God is! Hear it all you creatures, God is! I rejoice, O my God, that you are; it delights me that you are. What a blessed and happy thing it is that you are so good, that you are, and that you are he, whom you are! I had rather that I were not, and that all things were not, than that you should not be.

“Yet what am I, and what are all things? Am I in reality, and is all in reality? What is this *I*? What is this

all? We are only because you are, and because you will that we should be; poor diminutive beings, that in comparison with you, and in the presence of your Being, are a form and a shadow, and not worthy to be called a being. My being, and that of all things vanishes, as it were, before your Being, much sooner, and in a greater degree, than in the full blaze of the sun, which is so overpowered by the greater light, that it is as though it were not. O that you would thus overcome and annihilate me, and that the sight of you might thus supersede, and as it were, extinguish me; your grandeur, my meanness; your immense light, my twinkling light, yea, my obscurity; your most pure operation, my defective working; your all, my nothing!

“I am only a form, a wretched shadow, when you are not in me, and I in you; when you are not the basis and the being of my being. All that I know, and all I contemplate, is only a self-created, lifeless non-entity; or at least an uncertain image, an unsatisfying, transient form and shadow, if you yourself do not enlighten me, and if you do not grant me yourself to contemplate. O you solely substantial truth! all that I seek, all that I love, all that I possess is only a shadow and semblance, but no reality, if I do not seek you, and love you, and possess you, O, you who are the solely substantial good, the joy, the delight, and the glory of my soul! all my works, yea, every motion and effort of my internal and external powers, are shadow and not substance, unless you yourself are the origin and mover of them, O you original, solely essential good, and infinitely prolific life!

“But what do I say? Without you, I am not only a form and a shadow, but a wretched and horrible monster; and when I work of myself, all my works, however good and holy they may appear, are hateful, nay even sinful in your sight; not only because they proceed from me, who am altogether sinful and corrupt; but also because I seek, please, and exalt myself in all things, under the most believable pretexts and appearances, and ascribe to myself the glory which most justly belongs to you. O what a dreadful thing is self! I justly abhor myself, when I behold myself in the immediate presence of your purity. Self pervades me; I am utter selfishness; all my outward and inward motions are selfishness; all my virtues as, proceeding from me, are selfish and impure in your sight.

“O that I might be no more, nor have any longer *in myself*, either life, or understanding, or will, or thought, or any other motion; and that you, my God, my Jesus, might be and work all in me! Let that, O Lord! which you yourself do not speak and work in me, be forever silent and cease. Condemn and destroy in me, all which you are not, and which is not you. Take entire possession of the place which I now occupy and do in me and through me, what is pleasing in your sight. Let me exist no more, but you alone be all in all; and thus do you lead me entirely out of myself, and of all that belongs to me, into you O my God, my origin and my end! Then shall I no longer be in a state of non-existence and appearance, but in a state of reality, and be delivered from every evil, to the eternal glory of your name! Amen.”

True Wisdom, or Communion with God and Ourselves Alone

“Think that God and yourself are alone in the world; and so shall you possess great peace of heart.” —Thomas a Kempis

True Wisdom

I. Nothing is by nature more unknown to us than God and ourselves; we are occupied and concerned about other objects and things which are irrelevant and unnecessary, but we forget God and our own souls.

Man is become so devoid of understanding by his melancholy fall, that he is wholly turned away from God, with his affections as well as with his cares and occupations, which are entirely directed to vain and worthless outward things. Nay, his folly and distraction of the senses go so far, that in consequence of his ardent and constant application and attention to the trifling concerns without him, which contribute nothing to his improvement or true happiness, but are even an impediment to it and dangerous to him; he entirely forgets and neglects, to his temporal and eternal woe, not only God, but himself also—that is, his soul and its welfare.

Is it not surprising to see how rational creatures so wretchedly immerse and bury their noble faculties in the visible things of this world, and that although they generally know and acknowledge that the latter are transitory things, which they must at length most certainly forsake; yet they allow themselves to be so engrossed by the desire, enjoyment, care, and consideration of such vanities, that they stagger about like drunkards or madmen, and imagine they have accomplished some mighty work, when all happens according to their wish in the world.

Every fool has his own puppet and foolish fancy. One man busies himself with honor and dignity, another with money and property, a third with pleasure and sensual gratification. They think and talk of buying and selling, of houses and gardens, of furniture and apparel, of eating and drinking, and of every novelty that occurs; and this not merely as need may require, and in a cursory manner, as ought reasonably to be the case, but with their whole attention, even as if they were matters of the greatest importance.

Their hearts and heads, their mouths and hands are filled from morning till night with external things; it is only on God and the state of their souls that they never think, or at least not in the manner they ought; and their actions plainly evidence, that such subjects are not considered by them as of equal importance and necessity with other things, because they leave themselves neither time nor space for them—nay, they occasionally undertake some vain or worthless employment on purpose, or resort to gay and mirthful society. And these things and the like, they term “killing time.” For since the poor creatures are ignorant of the great and solely important work and business for which this life is given them, they are also unconscious how highly necessary every moment of it is to us. They say, they must divert themselves

a little; while alas! the mind is already so lamentably diverted and turned aside, that it is much more highly necessary to sit down quietly, to abstract all their ardor and attention from external things, and apply them for once to the consideration of themselves.

Hence it is also, that although the grace of God may inwardly announce itself with its reproofs, yet the constant confusion and aberration of the mind towards outward objects, never allows it to become truly serious concerning itself, for the purpose of examining the state of the soul, with earnest attention and sincerity, in the presence of God, nor be concerned about that which can alone avail in the hour of need and death. Ah, what must be the sensations of such poor spirits, when they must eventually close their eyes forever upon every beloved object; when roused by the stern voice of death, they at length come to reflection, open their eyes, and experience too late, that the world with all its lusts is vanished like a shadow, and that they possess nothing more of all their highly prized trifles and delicious dreams, than the empty and perturbing images of them! And in this lamentably blind and senseless state, almost the whole world, great and little, rich and poor, learned and illiterate, pass their lives.

I say also the learned of this world;¹ even those among them, who take the precedence of others in their application to the study of spiritual and divine things, for the most part, no wiser, and continue equally as blind and estranged from God and as ignorant of themselves as the rest, although all they do is meant to have reference to God and the salvation of souls. How vain and unprofitable, nay even detrimental, are the greater part of their occupations! Only look at the unnecessary prolixity and wonderful preparation they make before they come to the point! It seems to me just as absurd, or even more so than if a person, who intended traveling to Rome, were to imagine he must previously study all the voyages and travels, not only to Rome, but to every part of the world, and a regular conception of them in his memory, but at the same time never set out on his journey, meanwhile imagining, that he had made much progress in it, although he remained sitting quietly at home as before.

It is often the case, that many good things are introduced into the head, but not into the heart and the practice. It is just as if these things had no reference to such persons, and that they need only know them and talk about them. And thus with all their labor, investigation, controversy, and meditation on divine things, they never arrive at themselves, and much less at God; but are constantly running outwardly about themselves and the thing itself; while, by the various and violent efforts of the understanding and the continual distraction of the mind, the intention becomes, on the contrary, more and more diversified and absorbed in self-conceit, and hence the individual becomes more and more unfit for paying attention to his own heart, to God, and to the inward operations of his grace. They make a great noise, and quarrel

¹ Reference is here made to those learned men, who by dry speculation and the fertile efforts of their perverted reason, think to acquire, without divine illumination, the knowledge of God, and his truth; who lose their time in learning and investigating so many worthless subtleties, needless opinions, external events, and a variety of minor sciences, which are of no avail with regard to the principal thing. In other respects true learning and the learned, who are at the same time pious, meek, and lowly of heart, are to be highly esteemed. See Kempis, book I. cap. 2 and 3.

about the shell, while the simple quietly carry away the kernel. Yet such characters think, nevertheless, that they act more wisely than others, and that they have well applied their time and strength in this manner. But alas! when their most important and serious studies and employments are calmly viewed in the presence of God, what is it all but vanity of vanities, and vexation of spirit; seeing that it avails nothing to true sanctification and fellowship with God.

The Most High laughs at all the artificial imagery of the wise of this world; and they themselves, when death and judgment shall call them, must eventually, with shame and grief, lament their folly in having spent the valuable time of their short life in so many needless and childish things, and in having disturbed and consumed their noble mental powers by them, which were given us of God, for higher objects.² Would to God, that they would at length become wise, and penitentially seek again to forget what they have learnt, with so much loss of time, in order to know nothing but Christ and him crucified.

But to come a little closer to the point. How far and estranged from God and their own hearts are, for the most part, even those who are *called*! How ill do we keep watch over our own hearts! How little do we remain at home, to converse with God and ourselves, and forsaking everything else, make this our sole, our constant, and our chief employment! O how much is it to be regretted, that we let ourselves be so easily and variously allured and diverted by the subtlety of the adversary, from the great work to other matters and minor points; from God and our interior, to other objects and that which is external!

How often do we let our thoughts and senses rove about to needless (I will not say vain and evil) things! How frequently do we immerse and entangle our minds in the external concerns of the present life! How inquisitive are we to hear and talk about all that happens, and of what this or that person is doing, which rarely concerns us nor can profit us! How lamentable is the pernicious custom that well meaning persons have on coming together, of speaking and judging so readily and frequently of others!

And what else can result from all this, but restlessness, obscurity, and coldness of heart, dissipation of thought, irreverence, and estrangement from God and from that which is internal? Ah, I fear that many a one, in consequence of this trifling, is so unacquainted with God and himself, that he knows better what a hundred others are doing, than what passes in his own heart and is wrought in it by God!

O how unwillingly do we come to ourselves! If there be many who have received a little light from God, so as in some measure to perceive the universal corruption, which reigns in themselves and others, or if they possess any insight into, or impression of any particular truth, the subtle serpent immediately hastens there to lead the mind away from itself, outwards, to others; so that the individual employs that light and grace, which was only bestowed that he might know and amend himself, to regard others, and

² Of this, the learned Hugo Grotius is an example, who though a towering figure in philosophy, political theory, law and associated fields during the seventeenth century, on his death bed, exclaimed, "I have spent all my life in ingeniously trifling!" His last words were purported to be, "By understanding many things, I have accomplished nothing." —Note of the Editor.

forget himself, to judge of others, to be zealous against others, and to endeavor to convert others, while he himself remains inwardly in his own wretchedness and corruption, generally without being conscious of it. For while he can see and judge of everything so acutely and minutely in others, it seems to him as if he himself were not in much danger. In conjunction with this, there are a variety of arguable pretenses for acting thus; such as, that he must let his light shine, and employ his talent; that he is zealous for the glory of God, and is under obligation to reprove sin; but meanwhile he does not perceive the intention of the adversary, who only seeks to direct the mind outwards, and to involve it in disturbance and dissipation.

There are again others, who, desirous of making sure of their purpose, practice a variety of outward means and external devotions. They pray, they hear, they read, they meditate, they associate with good people, and the like; which would all be good and profitable, if such exercises were only employed in a proper manner, and to a proper end. But many lay so much stress upon the *means*, that they lose sight of the *end*, and entirely neglect it; and although God has ordained and granted us such an excellent guide, that by its means we might be brought back from dissipating our senses with external things, to ourselves, to our interior, and his true worship, in spirit and in truth—yet it becomes to many a real impediment, because they cleave so closely to it, that the senses are kept in continual distraction, and the influences of grace are thus exhausted; and how is it possible for those, whose senses and reason are in continual action and agitation, to attain to a thorough knowledge of themselves, and to fellowship with God; since they do not seek, even in prayer, to attain to true composure and collectedness of heart; but have constantly so much to do, to tell, and to complain of to God, that the Lord, so to speak, has neither time nor place to address a word to them in reply. (Ps. 85:8)

Another stratagem of the arch-deceiver to hinder and restrain the well-meaning in that which is solely necessary, is, when he excites them to an immoderate exertion, investigation, and speculation of presumptuous reason, by which they are often entangled in all manner of unprofitable controversies in the theory, outward ceremonies, and secondary considerations, or to subtle sophistry and particular opinions. Such a one then frequently seeks, without divine direction and illumination, to fathom and comprehend, with his reason, the deepest mysteries; and many a one often admires his own light and progress, when he has found out or agreed to something new, by which his soul is not made better, and which will not be inquired for at the last day. And there are many, who devote their whole attention and application to such-like things, and thus imperceptibly waste their strength and the invaluable day of grace. For, because all they do seems to aim at that which is spiritual, the danger is not observed; add to which, reason finds its life and pleasure in such employments, and they are much easier to nature, than following Jesus, the Savior, in affliction and the renunciation of all things.

And thus one man is kept in a more obvious, and another in a more hidden manner, in a state of dissipation of thought, multiplicity, and mental confusion, although they often do not think so themselves, and even pass for very pious characters with others. The Most High knows how rare those are,

who become truly sober, and come to themselves—who seek to turn away their hearts and minds from all that is and occurs without them, that they may walk and commune alone with God in the Spirit. Hence it is also, that the generality of awakened souls either live in a state of frigid security, or of believable zeal and outward piety, or else in continually lamenting and complaining, without making true progress in sanctification; and instead of enjoying delightful freedom and profound peace in communion with God, continue inwardly oppressed with heavy bondage. Nor is it wonderful, that to many on their sick and dying beds, God and eternity appear so strange, dark, and dreadful; since their minds are so set upon outward things, and they have so little accustomed themselves to become properly acquainted with God and eternity. O the lamentable blindness of the human race!

But blessed and truly wise are they who solely exercise themselves, with all their hearts, in the one thing needful; and without stopping short with others, seek so to live here as if they were alone with God in the world. This is the shortest and easiest way to attain to a thorough, genuine, and habitual holiness and peace of mind. But in order that, while writing this, and perceiving the lamentable neglect of this beautiful exercise in others, I may not forget myself, and act as foolishly as they, I will now turn to my own soul, and give myself some additional mementos, how I desire to walk with the Lord, by his grace, in future. Yet still I should be glad, if every reader regarded and used them as if they concerned him, and were intended for himself alone; in acting thus, it would certainly be well with us all.

II. Counsel for the Soul

Therefore bid eternally farewell, O my soul, and you that read this, to the vanities of this world, which in a little while, shall vanish like a dream.

All that the world can offer you is not worthy of a single look.

What does the rich man (Luke 16:19) now possess of his pomp and pleasures? And what would it avail you, supposing you had enjoyed thirty or forty years of worldly gratification and splendor?

Vanity of vanities! You seek in vain outside of you, that which you need; it is inwardly, in your heart, that the true good, and your glory and felicity may be found.

Close your heart and senses against all that is and occurs out of you: they are all foreign matters that do not concern you.

Do not pay much attention to external things, nor let that be a hindrance to you, which cannot assist you on your journey to eternity.

Pass through everything unmoved, like a stranger and pilgrim, whose heart, thoughts, and whole citizenship is in heaven.

Seek to become inwardly a little innocent child, that finds fault with nothing, and lets all the world act and speak of it, even in its presence, as they please, without regarding it, or letting itself be troubled by it.

Cherish true collectedness, by the teaching of the Spirit, and accustom yourself to live and dwell within yourself, even as you are by nature inclined to live and move out of yourself.

Let your constant employment be to abide with yourself, and so to walk with the Lord in the secret of your spirit, as if you were alone with him in the world.

To this end, your Savior Jesus came and sojourned in the flesh, that he might help you out again, and lead you home to God, and to communion with him.

But he possessed nothing here of his own; he only passed through; even as he proceeded forth from the Father, and came into this world, so he also hastened to leave the world and go to his Father. (John 16:28) Follow him in this respect.

By his blood he has again reconciled you, who were under the curse, to God, opened his paternal heart to you, and now he stands at your heart, and beseeches you in a thousand different ways, to be reconciled unto God, (2 Cor. 5:20) and receive this best friend into your heart.

The Savior seeks you and your friendship so cordially and sincerely, that he died for you, to the end that, whether waking or sleeping, you might live in intimate communion with him. (1 Thess. 5:10)

Therefore apprehend this truth in simple faith; and regard God as the confidential and secret friend of your soul, whose delights are with the children of men, and who is willing to converse with you in spirit, and to have fellowship with you.

The eyes of your God are upon you; he thinks incessantly of you; therefore let the inmost thoughts of your heart be also directed towards him, and do not wander in the senses and among created things.

Remember that all your treasure and your best friend is with you internally, and will gladly hold converse with you; therefore why would you run out, and leave him alone?

Ah, who would not willingly forget every creature for the sake of such a God!

Let it seem to you as if you were traveling in the company of a kind and beloved friend, through a foreign land, and a desert wilderness.

From cordial love to this intimate friend of your soul, do all, suffer all, and assent to all that befalls you in this world, be it little or much.

Deny yourself, for his love's sake, and die to every lust of the flesh and sense—to your excessive, busy, and self-complacent reason, and also to secret attachment and false delight in anything out of God.

Let no lust or sin be so dear to you, and nothing be fixed so firmly in your heart, as that you would not, for the Lord's sake, immediately and willingly part with it.

If others be rich and renowned, honored and learned, live in pleasure, ease, and joy—if one places his gratification and comfort in this thing, and another in that, yet let God alone be enough for you.

That which is to others a transitory good, and a needy creature, shall the immutably all-sufficient God be to you in your heart.

For the sake of his love, deny your own will, your self-love, and self-complacency in all things; in short, deny yourself wherever you find yourself.

And O how much of this *self* will you find, when you have accustomed yourself to remain near yourself, and near your God!

Do not pay much attention to your body; it is of no value; the food of worms; it is corrupt, full of evil motions and desires which often obscure and obstruct the spirit.

You must regard your body in such a manner, and act as reservedly towards it, as a master towards his servant.

Govern your body wisely; and do not, under pretense of necessity, give it more than is proper.

He that is tender of his body, and seeks so many things for its convenience, will never be truly collected and spiritually minded.

Do not make much to do, when any inconvenience and suffering or disappointment happens to you.

Seek with God's grace, to endure all outward and inward sufferings with serenity, patience, and meekness from love to your Savior.

Yea, embrace the cross, and every species of adversity, and cordially love it; for nothing is more profitable to you than dying to self, and being detached from everything in order to approach near unto God.

Continually dying in such a manner to the world and yourself, and thus living with God in secret, is the true imitation of Christ. In this consists the sum and substance of christianity.

This ought to be your sole-important, your only and daily business here on earth—this the sole aim, which you ought to have continually in view in all things, and to which everything else should tend.

Exercise yourself in this chief concern, with simplicity and without making any great circuit and preparation.

Receive and use everything that may assist you in this, whatever it may be, with humility and gratitude.

But do not entangle yourself in anything, attach yourself to nothing, stop not at anything except the accomplishment of this chief concern.

Let Martha trouble herself about many things; this one thing alone is needful, and continually so, which can alone avail and solace in time of trouble and death, when all besides, however seemingly important, will be taken from you. Therefore make all things tend directly to this one thing.

What you know, hear, or see of what is godly, bring immediately from the head into the heart, that is, seek to make it useful to yourself alone, while endeavoring to exercise yourself in it, or to be otherwise awakened and strengthened by it; but not merely for the sake of knowing it and of talking to others about it.

Whatever may befall you in the world, whether inwardly or outwardly, receive it all with simplicity as from the Lord, without regarding the instrument or the circumstances attending it; only seek, in and by all things, to advance yourself in the main thing—that is, in the knowledge and mortification of yourself, and in fellowship with God.

Do not make much ado about your piety, your self-denial, your inward feelings or experience. Let your secret remain between you and your God.

Let it suffice you that God knows what is in you; for it is generally too much for us to know the good that is within us, which often no longer continues good when we are able to see it in ourselves.

He that lives in silent attention to his heart, in secret with God, dies a thousand deaths, and often enjoys unspeakable delight and blessedness, without making much noise about it.

Do not seek to be seen and known by others.

Strive to live in this world, as much as your station and vocation permit, as a pilgrim or a stranger, of whom little is known, heard, or spoken, and who likewise desires to know and bear nothing but his God alone, and speaks with none so gladly as with his God.

Be afraid when you are known and praised; but on the contrary, rejoice, when you are forgotten and despised; for by this, the road to much danger and distraction is blocked up, and you gain so much more time and opportunity to abide in yourself, and to walk alone with God.

Seek only to stand well inwardly with God; it is then of little consequence how it fares with you in other respects, or what others think or speak of you.

Do not unnecessarily associate much with the men of this world, but when you are and must be with them, strive to keep yourself inwardly so as if you were with God alone.

Be familiar with very few, and only with such as you have found to be serviceable in strengthening, exciting, and promoting your progress in the principal thing, lest under the appearance of good, you be allured outward from God and your interior, and your little precious time be stolen from you by your friends.

Associate only with God and yourself.

Break your will gladly, in order to follow what another thinks right, when it is not contrary to God. Ah, how much more easy, peaceful, and profitable it is to obey, than to command!

If your state and vocation do not require it, do not stop to observe or judge the life and conduct of others.

He that seeks to rectify and amend all that is wrong in the world, only involves himself in much disturbance and distraction, and is often of no service either to himself or others. "Take heed to yourself."

O how peaceably may a soul live, that has no need to look much at others, and to think of them!

Nevertheless, love all men, be kind to all, and do good to all, according to your outward and inward circumstances and ability; but continue at the same time, in holy fear and inward abstraction, lest you fall into mental dissipation, and be entangled in a multiplicity of affairs.

Love, in particular, all the pious, and esteem them all, even the very meanest of them, in all sincerity, better than yourself.

Love truth, and that which is good, and thank God for it wherever you find it; do not however stop at others, but strive yourself to be good also.

Love those likewise, who do not walk in all things as you do; let everyone go his own way; what is that to you? *Follow Jesus.*

Think no ill of your brother, judge not, be not hasty, put the best construction upon everything.

If you can amend his obvious faults, do it with meekness and with holy fear, and immediately return with humility to yourself in your own heart.

Let this alone, O soul, be such a serious and important matter to you, as to make you apply yourself to it with all your heart.

Exercise yourself in it from morning till night, and inwardly let it seem to you as if you had nothing else to do in the world.

Allow nothing irrelevant and unnecessary to arrest your progress. He that seeks to "keep his heart with all diligence," and follow Jesus in constant self-denial, finds so much to do and to suffer, that he has no time left to meddle with other matters.

What you have else to do outwardly, perform it, as much as possible, without desire, care, or anxiety.

Do everything solely in order to accomplish, with humility, the Lord's will; for in this way, you do it to the Lord, and it will not prejudice you in the one thing needful.

Do not let your attention be directed with too much ardor, or more than is necessary, to your external employment, that your work be done in a tranquil frame; and at the same time keep your heart, and continue with the Lord.

Ah, how vain and insignificant is everything besides, that is done in the world without God! And what comfort or advantage will you have of all your labor in the hour of death?

Yea, what shall console you in all the troubles of this life, if you do not always and in all things, strive to have God for your friend?

Soon must you depart hence, and be no more seen.

Of all that you have and see in this world, you can take nothing with you out of it; all men will forsake you and you must part with all men; you will then have to do with God alone.

Exercise yourself therefore, from henceforth, in this one thing: in forsaking all that you must then forsake.

Act and walk with God from henceforth, as if alone with him.

O happy he, that thus lives in calm seclusion with his God, and solely seeks to become acquainted with him, and with eternity! To him, death will not come as a thief in the night, neither need he fear to stand before God.

For as here he lived to the Lord, so shall he also die to the Lord; and as his life here was hid with Christ in God, so when Christ his life shall appear, he also shall appear with him in glory. (Col. 3:3-4)

III. The Example of Christ

He that contemplates with a devout and tranquil mind, the life and conduct of Jesus Christ, from the manger to his death on the cross, will find impressed and expressed in it the steps which we are to follow, in a very lively and perfect manner. We will now briefly notice them.

He, the Savior Jesus, who might without sin, have lived in this world in honor, wealth, joy, and pleasures, refused to do so, in order that he might give us an example; but chose rather reproach, poverty, and affliction. He left Herod and the Pharisees in possession of their state, dignity, wealth, and conveniences, and lived the most of his time, with his lowly and despised parents in Nazareth, a very despicable and

miserable place, as an insignificant tradesman, so entirely hidden and quiet, that it was almost unknown to the world, that an individual resided at Nazareth, whose name was Jesus. He could have shone in everything; he was not lacking in understanding, wisdom, gifts, and divine power. He could have written the most excellent works upon every spiritual and natural science which all the world would have admired, and by which, many thousands, as it appears to us, would have been converted. But it was not intended that he should shine, neither would he. Even in his public life, he sought as much as possible to keep his miracles, his divine dignity and glory concealed, and fled wherever or whenever he was praised and honored.

He regarded his life here on earth, as a passage through it. "I am come into the world," said he, "again I leave the world, and go to the Father." (John 16:28) His sole concern was to be about his Father's work, without troubling himself about other matters, for which he did not come into the world. And even as during the short space of his public life, he frequently tore himself from the people, to pray in secret, and often passed whole nights in solitude and in prayer to God, so it is easy to suppose, that in his long concealed life at Nazareth, this was no less his dearest, and most constant, and chief employment. David and Peter tell us, that the Savior exercised himself continually in walking before God, and inwardly rejoicing in him, his heavenly Father.

Thus they introduce him, as saying, "I have set the Lord always before me; he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices, etc." (Acts 2:25-26) And his Father did not leave him alone, because he made it his business to direct his eyes to him, and always to do that which was pleasing in his sight, while constantly resigning his will to the will of his Father, and voluntarily and joyfully taking the most painful sorrows upon himself, from love to it.

He left likewise, the Scribes and Pharisees to dispute about their particular opinions, and to drag along, under the burden of their outward devotions and human ordinances, teaching them on the contrary, by word and conduct, the one thing needful, of which they still destitute. And even as he did not mix in the useless controversies of the learned of that day, neither did he interfere in other things for which he was not sent.

"Who made me a judge and a divider?" (Luke 12:14) was his answer, when they sought to draw him into other matters, yet he went about, doing good to all. (Acts 10:38)

He loved those that were simple, poor, and despised; and associated with them gladly, when they had a desire after God; he was also impartial in his love. The Samaritan woman was as dear to him as Nicodemus, who was learned in the law; and not less so, those, who at the same time, were not yet become his followers. (Luke 9:49-50) He even rebuked his disciples, for being wroth against those who acted improperly, (Luke 5:54) nor would he condemn the greatest public sinner. (John 8:11) The one work for which he came, he meditated upon, and practiced day and night, with unwearied diligence; of this his heart and mind was so full, that what he saw or heard of outward things, served only to lead him

to those that were spiritual; so that he immediately took occasion to speak from them. (John 4:10)

His doctrine corresponded with his life. It was, that we should watch and pray always, and without ceasing; that we should follow him by self-denial, and taking up our daily cross, without troubling ourselves much about others. One thing alone was needful; besides which, it would avail a man nothing, if he gained the whole world.

May Jesus Christ, the true Shepherd of our souls, who has redeemed us from the earth, and purchased us with his precious blood, but also in having suffered for us, has left us an example that we should follow his steps, so work upon us, by his Spirit, that the same mind may be in us, which was in him—that is, to empty ourselves by thorough mortification, from all love to self, and to the creature, that we may pass the few days of our pilgrimage in true abstinence from all transitory enjoyment, become dead to sin, estranged from the world and ourselves, but become acquainted and familiar with him and a peaceful eternity; and that we may follow him blindly, as strangers and pilgrims, and calmly go forwards with him, through the wilderness of this world, till we reach our true and eternal home!

Yea, Lord Jesus, turn us, your lost and wandering sheep, to you again, and we shall return unto you! Amen.

Short Instructions Concerning How to Seek God and the Light of His Countenance.

They looked unto him and were enlightened, and their faces were not ashamed.

Ps. 34:5.

O man, even you that reads this, stand still awhile, and seriously consider the noble end for which you were created, and for which God has placed you in this world! You were not created for time and the creature, but for God and eternity, and to employ yourself with God and eternity. And you are in the world to the end that you may again seek God and his beatifying countenance, from which you have turned yourself away by sin, and have become attached to the creature; in order that you may become thoroughly sanctified and enlightened, and that God may have joy, delight, peace, and pleasure in you, and you in God.

In this alone lies your temporal and eternal salvation and well-being, which nothing out of God can give you. The outward objects of this world can scarcely satisfy your outward man, during the short period of your toilsome life. But inwardly, you have a hunger, which cannot be appeased, and a mind that cannot

be satisfied, except by an all-sufficient and infinitely lovely object, which is God alone,

If therefore, O soul! you possess a sincere desire again to seek and find your God and his countenance, take heed that you do not begin it in an improper manner.

God is a spirit, and near your spirit; hence you have no need to run here and there, or distract yourself with a multitude and variety of exercises, much less with reasonings and reflections, which only serve to confuse you. This would rather be the way to remove you still further from God, and to make you more unfit for the knowledge of him and his truth.

Seek only to become conformed to God in your mind; you may then infallibly and easily find him and become acquainted with him. Even as he, who wishes to behold and enjoy the sun, must place himself in its light—so must you become like unto God, in order to enjoy real communion with him. This eternal and inaccessible light is only seen in its own light. (Ps. 36:9) God is a spiritual, eternal, unlimited, simple, meek, serene, and exalted Being; now the more you inwardly attain these qualities, the nearer you approach unto God and become capable of his manifestation and communication.

God is a secluded and spiritual Being, estranged from this outward world, the senses, and reason. Therefore if you will find him and see his face, you must likewise keep yourself with your spirit, love, affection, and the desires of your heart, as much as possible separate and estranged from the world and all that is in the world. Do not voluntarily admit any created object into you, nor fix your love and affections on any creature out of you. Avoid all unnecessary diversion and exertion of your senses and reason. Regard your sensible and rational part as if it were another person, and continue in spirit with your desires and affections directed towards God within you. Make yourself very familiar with him in the secret recesses of your spirit, and be unmindful of what occurs outwardly.

God dwells in himself, in eternity. He is ever the same; with him there is neither past nor future, but an eternal now. Therefore, if you will draw near to him and have fellowship with him, avoid all unnecessary reflections on the past or the future, all your reasonings, cares, and searchings; and like an innocent infant, abide with your mind and sense in the present moment with the Lord, and let him care for you and guide you.

God is a universal, undivided, and unlimited Being, and cannot be comprehended by reason. He is neither this nor that particular thing, but one and all.¹ Hence, in order to know God, and to approach near to him, you must gently divest yourself of all peculiarity, all your particular limited childish images and thoughts of God, take your reason captive under the simplicity of faith, and enter with your spirit into an unlimited universality and serene extension of mind, without particular object and reflection, especially

¹ Let it not be supposed that this is anything else than sound reason. The meaning is, that the particular excellencies of a creature may be divided, measured, limited, and comprehended; but God is an extremely simple Being. He is not any particular perfection, but all good, and all perfection, in indivisible, incomprehensible unity.

at the time of prayer.

God is simplicity and purity itself; on which account no one can find or see him, who is not of a clean and pure heart. (Matt. 5:8) Therefore seek likewise to become pure and simple in all things. Be upright and sincere in all things and everywhere, in your actions, speech, thoughts, and desires. Let the single eye of your mind look straight to God, and have him for its object in all things, without any impure secondary motive or self-seeking, remote from all blatant or refined hypocrisy, dissimulation, or formality.

Let all your thoughts and actions be such as dare be seen by the radiant sun of the Divine presence; and if anything false or impure arise within you against your will, lay it open, with sincerity and tranquillity, before the Divine presence, and it will disappear.

God is a meek and friendly Being; “He is love; and he that abides in love, abides in God, and God in him.” (1 John 4:16) Be therefore also meek, friendly, and kind in your whole conduct and deportment. Let the wrathful and discordant powers of your nature be softened by the Spirit of the love of Jesus, the obduracy of your temper be calmed, and your obstinate self-will be bent and rendered pliable; and as often as anything of an opposite nature springs up in you, immerse yourself immediately in the sweet element of meekness and love.

God is a placid Being, and dwells in a serene eternity. Therefore your mind must become like a clear and silent streamlet, in which the glory of God can reflect and portray itself. Hence you must avoid all disturbance, confusion, and irritation, inwardly and outwardly. There is nothing in the world deserves being troubled about: even your past faults must only humble, but not disturb you. “God is in his holy temple, let all that is within you keep silence before him!” (Hab. 2:20) Be silent with your lips, silent with your desires and thoughts, silent as it respects your own activity. O how profitable and precious is a meek and quiet spirit in the sight of God! (1 Peter 3:4)

God is a happy, contented, and delightful Being. Seek therefore to acquire an ever joyful and peaceful spirit; avoid all anxious cares, vexation, murmuring, and melancholy, which obscure the mind, and make you unfit for converse with God; turn yourself meekly away from these things, when you are conscious of anything of the kind in you.

Let your heart be estranged from, and closed against all the world and every creature, but entirely familiar with and open to God. Keep a very strict eye upon yourself, your evil lusts, self-love, and self-will; but towards God, be truly free, childlike, affectionate, and confidential. Regard him as the friend of your heart, and think nothing but what is purely good of him. Though everything without fall into confusion, and though your body be in pain and suffering, and your soul in barrenness and distress; yet let your spirit be unmoved by it all, placid and serene, elevated above the accidents of all things, and delighted in and with its God inwardly, and with his good pleasure outwardly.

If you endeavor to exercise yourself in this manner, your mind will gradually become more conformed

unto God, and also more and more capable of substantially finding this all-sufficient and most amiable Good, and of beholding his beatifying countenance.

In reference to which, I would add the following important remarks.

First. That because external objects and occupations, particularly as long as we are not well versed and established in this exercise, occasion much distraction, and hinder the mind in it more or less, and put it out of the proper frame; it is highly useful and necessary, now and then during the day, to appropriate a short time, specially and purposely, for the wholly divesting ourselves of all visible objects and reflections, for recollecting ourselves in the presence of God, and for entering into the requisite state of mind, by the assistance of his grace; everyone according as his state and outward circumstances will permit.

Secondly. We must above all things believe and be firmly persuaded, that all depends upon the mercy of God, and not upon our willing or running. (Rom. 9:16) Therefore we must not expect to find and see God by our own diligence, much less by our own efforts and mental exertions. Our activity in approaching to God must be a wholly inward, gentle, calm, and peaceful act or inclination of our will, our love, and our heart; in which it principally depends upon the divine influence and the secret attraction of the love of God, to which we must simply attend and follow, and before which, all our own activity must cease and be silent. When we perceive that the Lord will elevate or collect, calm or tranquillize us, or that a profound feeling of satisfaction, a filial reverence for his presence, or anything of the kind is felt in the center of the soul; we must fearlessly resign ourselves to his operation, and continue passive in his hands, in all simplicity and abstraction.

You will then in time experience, that you have not only an outward man, a body, senses, and reason, which belong to this life, and the objects of time; but also an inward man, a noble spirit, that has its root and foundation in eternity; and such powers of spirit, which (independent of all that is, and happens in the world) are capable of enjoying and beholding God and eternal things, in a substantial manner, to their complete and real delight and repose.

Your love, your heart, the fiery desire of your soul, would then at length, (and this is the very end for which we are created and redeemed,) when emptied of all things, imbibe and possess the Supreme Good, the infinite Deity, in its boundless capacity. With all the powers of your love collected into one, you would embrace this Eternal love, this exalted Being, in the most tender and cordial manner, as an innocent child its kind mother, and press him to your heart with the purest familiarity, and be blissfully embraced by him in return. You would be enabled to shut yourself up, as it were, with this intimate friend of your soul, in your inmost closet, in the center of your heart, far, far from any creature. In this sweet solitude, through the blissful proximity of this all-sufficient Being, you would also become in some measure all-sufficient; that is, you would be so perfectly satisfied, delighted, and contented with your God, that for all the glory, riches, and pleasures of heaven and earth, you would not cast a look outwards, nor esteem them worthy of an inclination of your love; but in secret you would burn like a seraph, in the

purest love of your God; and under the influence of this gentle flame of love, become wholly kind, meek, and amiable, yea love itself.

Your pure understanding, the eye of your mind, would be turned inwards and away from every other object, and enlightened, strengthened, and elevated in spirit, by the light of eternal wisdom, in order that it may stand like a cherub, with downcast visage, and contemplate the face of God, Wisdom itself, the mirror without spot. In this light you would know light, even truth; and this very glory of the Lord would in return reflect itself in your clear and serene center. (2 Cor. 3:18) Your formless, naked countenance, and the uncovered countenance of your God, would meet, salute, and embrace each other, with the most affectionate regards. You would fix your simplified eye, like a little innocent infant, upon the countenance of God, steadfastly and joyfully; and he in return, like a faithful and affectionate parent, would keep his eye directed to you, by which you would be thoroughly sanctified, and transformed into the same image, from glory to glory.

Your mind, or intellectual capacity, abstracted from all creature joy, solace, and delight, would be filled with the purest and most inward joy, and the profoundest peace. All your delight, joy, and bliss would be in God, and God in return, would have his joy and good pleasure in you. He would rest and dwell in you, as in his serene throne of peace; and your spirit, that had so long gone astray, like an outcast orphan in a foreign land, would also again sweetly repose in its true rest and home, and lie down in the lap of God, in undisturbed peace, and hide itself in the stillness of eternity. In this boundless kingdom of peace, you would live untouched and undisturbed by the tempests of the affections, and be secluded from all perturbing joy, grief, fear, and hope, which might assail your spirit from without.

And thus you would become a clear heaven of the ever blessed triune God, in which he dwelt, and which he filled with his light, love, and every divine virtue, and in which he would glorify himself in time and in eternity.

Therefore act no longer such a foolish part, O you noble creature and image of the eternal God, as to make your kingly (I will not say divine) spirit and its noble powers, so shamefully the slaves of the base, beggarly, and worthless creature and vanity, by the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. For God has sent his Son in order to redeem you from such bondage, and to exalt your spirit again to the glorious liberty of the children of God. Remember, that as it respects your superior part, you are a child of eternity; God himself is your Father and your home; there must you live and dwell. The world must be to you a land of banishment, and your body a prison and purgatory. O lift up therefore, the everlasting doors of your mental powers above nature, sense, and reason, that the King of Glory, the God of Hosts may enter into you!

On Inward Prayer.

Inward or spiritual prayer is an approach of the soul to God, in the name of Jesus, and an abiding in his presence.

In order to properly understand this approach and put it into practice, it is especially necessary, as an irreversible basis of the whole matter, that through grace we possess, cherish, and exercise a deep impression of the immediate proximity of the presence of our God, and reflect how near he has approached unto us, in his lovingkindness towards man, in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ; and that this very approach of God unto us, is the foundation and procuring cause of our approach to him.

God is essentially present with us, in a manner which is incomprehensible to us. He fills heaven and earth; in him we live, and move, and have our being. He is also near our most secret thoughts, inclinations, desires, and intentions; all our inmost soul lies open in his presence.

But God, as a Spirit, is more especially near to our spirits, and to the most secret recesses of the heart. This spirit of ours does not belong to this world, nor to temporal objects; it was created for God alone, therefore capable of enjoying true fellowship with him. It may, and it ought to be the temple and sacred residence of the Deity. Its occupation is, to contemplate, love, and enjoy this beneficent Being and to repose in him; for this end it was created; for this it possesses capacity. God, as a Spirit, is near our spirits, and can only be sought and found there.

This lovely and adorable Being, is not only present with us as God, but also as our God in Christ Jesus, as God with us, as our Redeemer, Savior, and our soul's true friend, who cares for us, who remembers us in love, who by his drawing, attracts us to himself, who is willing to dwell in us, and abide with us eternally, irrespective of our unworthiness and wretchedness, if we will only open and surrender our hearts to him. This is a great, evangelical, and fundamental truth, which we ought deeply to impress upon our mind, and never allow ourselves to be deprived of it, because it includes in it the entire foundation of our redemption and salvation. This I will now briefly demonstrate.

Fallen man, as it respects his inward part, lies bound in darkness and the infernal gulf. These he bears about with him during life, and these he finds at death, when dying out of Christ. God, and his kingdom of love, are during this state, at a distance from him, and strongly barred against him.

God, in his blissful eternity, had compassion upon him; which compassion, in his lovingkindness, he made known, in the incarnation, sufferings, and death of his Son. When Jesus Christ, our dear Redeemer, shed his blood for us, the springs of the tender mercy of God towards man were opened; so that God is now unspeakably near our hearts, in the name of his Son Jesus. By his death, the veil has been rent, not only in the temple at Jerusalem, but the way to an eternity of peace and blessedness is now opened up;

so that the kindness, grace, love, and fellowship of God stand open in the hearts of the vilest sinners, if they will only come to him; yea, this near friend of man is even beforehand with us. He stands at the door of our hearts, and knocks in various ways; waits for us, and desires nothing more, than that the sinner should turn unto him and live. His message to us now is, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” and (in Hebrews 10:19-20) “Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus—let us draw near.”

Now in this approaching or drawing near, true spiritual prayer consists. I do not here allude to the first approach of a repenting sinner to God, at his primary conversion, in which he turns, in a general way, to God and devotes himself to him, with the sincere determination to live henceforward alone unto him, who died for him, and rose again. This preliminary happy step, I necessarily presuppose, and do not speak of it here, but I refer to the persevering continuance of that approach, in a soul devoted to God.

Those, who are in reality drawn by him, and devoted to him, cannot possibly rest satisfied with the general dedication of themselves, which they made at their first awakening; and although they acknowledge this first conversion, when it has been genuine, as an eternal memorial of the infinite mercy of God, yet they cannot be contented with it, but observe, in process of time, a latent inclination, by which they are more completely drawn away from all other things, and led and exhorted to set their affections upon God. They perceive that something noble, entire, and complete is required of them—their hearts tell them from God, that he desires to have them solely and wholly for himself. In some, this feeling is found to be distinct and powerful; in others, weak, obscure, and general, according as the state of mind is settled or confused. Happy is the individual that recognizes within him this divine and holy calling, and surrenders himself to it, childlike, and unconditionally!

This latent inclination above alluded to, arises from the immediate proximity of God to us in the name of Jesus. For God, who is love itself, touches our spirits with his love, as a magnet attracts iron. He draws us to himself, and hence it is, that our spirits feel such an impulse and tendency, that they cannot rest satisfied with anything short of God. If we pay due attention to this, and continue inwardly collected, removing every obstacle out of the way of the spirit, by the exercise of self-denial, and follow this impulse, by committing ourselves entirely into the hands of God, this principle, like an impelling power, will lead the soul to God by love, even as a stream flows towards the ocean, and as a stone, pendant in the air, sinks down to the earth, which is its center of attraction. The exercise of inward prayer is the abiding by this fundamental inclination, and by this means, approaching and committing ourselves to God in Christ Jesus, while denying and forsaking everything besides.

Our spirits then become the temples in which the glory of God, as in the Holiest of Holies, is near unto us. The altar is the name of Jesus; the sacrifice, our heart, our will, our all. The love of God which inflames our desires after him, by means of his secret operation, is the eternal fire, the flames of which are truth and sincerity. As much of the world, of corruption, and of self remain in us, so much moisture is there

still in the wood and the offering, which is gradually dried up by the flame. This flame is that which I previously called an affectionate fundamental inclination; it manifests itself in the souls of beginners, and of those who walk through the gloomy paths of suffering and contrition, by profound sighs and groans. If the soul is obedient, it manifests itself by a gentle “Abba Father!” or by something else of a familiar nature, that ascends like a grateful odor; at length it forms the basis of an abiding peace, by which the heart and mind are kept in Christ Jesus. As long as much moisture remains, the fire burns fiercely, and occasions much smoke. Afterwards, it burns clearer and less intensely, until it becomes an inwardly calm, and delightful divine heat.

I close with the beautiful words of David, Ps. 65:4, where he thus eulogizes inward prayer: “Blessed is the man, whom you choose, and cause to approach unto you, that he may dwell in your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, even of your holy temple!”

The Excellent Way of True Love

God is love, and he that dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him. 1 John 4:16.

I. The Exercise of Love.

Nothing is more beautiful, pure, delightful, powerful, and perfect, than love, for “God is love.” There is no better way in which God can gain possession of the human heart, than by love, nor can man please God by anything better than love; for “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” That which man could not, and which cannot be accomplished by the strictness of the law and all the fear of punishment, is all easily fulfilled where God commends his love to man in Christ Jesus—where he proclaims to him forgiveness of his sins, redemption, and eternal salvation, and allures him by these motives to repentance, and to love him in return.

Now as the tender compassions of the love of God are again opened to lost man, in the sweet name of Jesus Immanuel, and to this hour stand wide open to the poor sinner in his soul, whether he be conscious of it or not; eternal love is therefore constantly occupied in the center of our souls, in offering and recommending itself to us, and in insinuating itself, and seeking admission into us, in a thousand different ways, for our eternal felicity. Every good thought and desire that arise in the human heart; all grief and sorrow for sin, all reproof and admonition, incitement to prayer and to true godliness, entire resignation to God, and the like, are the pure effects of this long-suffering love of God. If the vilest sinner could perceive the

thousandth part of it, he would feel instantaneously compelled to resign himself to this love.

O Love, manifest to sinners that you are love, and they shall all love you and follow you!

Now if an individual is willing to be led to repentance by the goodness and love of God, let him henceforward believe without hesitation that he cannot please God better and more easily by any work or exercise, than by love.

Let him only duly tend and cherish the hidden spark of the love of God in his heart, by a cordial remembrance of God, by a filial turning to God, and by simply occupying himself with God and his perfections.

Let him exercise himself in love. From love to God let him give up all that is most dear to him, and resign himself, in faith, to this pure love.

Let him rejoice whenever a good opportunity presents itself of doing, denying, or suffering anything for the love and glory of God.

Let him accustom himself to do everything from love to God, to receive in love, everything that occurs to him, as from the hand of God, and to endure, in love, all he has to suffer for the Lord's sake. Everything must be sacrificed to love, by love.

By love the bitterest sufferings become sweet, the most adverse occurrences beneficial, and the smallest works great and god-like.

Do not suppose that, by this, a sensible and refreshing love is meant; possessing love and feeling it, do not always go together.

Real and constant love consists in an inward estimation of God; in knowing and acknowledging him by faith, to be supremely, yea, solely lovely; and therefore we willingly offer up and resign ourselves, and all that is in our power, to God, and to his service and glory.

This love, which the Holy Ghost sheds abroad in our hearts, may exist even in the midst of barrenness, darkness, and the deepest processes of purification, which are nothing else than the blessed effects of the pure love of God.

II. Complete Resignation to Love.

Truly, when a sinner can attain to the art of pure love, so that by an entire abandonment and renunciation of himself, he resigns himself in sincerity to God, and leaves him at full liberty to make of him what

he pleases, both in time and eternity, not esteeming nor regarding his own prejudice or advantage, but simply God, and that he alone may be glorified, loved, and pleased over such a one, wrath and hell have no more power; but his sins, were they ever so great, pass away and are sooner consumed than a handful of flax in a burning furnace; yea, this love makes him holy and god-like.

Now it is true, that we are by nature wholly rooted in sinful self-love, and so bent by it upon ourselves, that we can neither see, nor love, nor trust in God; but the Son of God himself must shed abroad this love in our hearts, by his Holy Spirit; (Rom. 5:5) and he is also willing to do so, having, in his incarnation, taken our sins upon himself, and through the medium of this pure love, again fully reconciled us to God.

It is in thus serving God with such a selfless love, that true religion, properly speaking, consists; while it is much to be lamented, that even pious people grope about so long, and some even their whole lives, in anxious attention to and solicitude for themselves, without an entire renunciation of their own interest, or committing themselves to God, and seeking after pure love in the heart and countenance of Jesus Christ. O let us love him, for he has first loved us! (1 John 4:19)

“O infinite Love! O adorable Trinity! Father, source of love, Son, the lovely light, and Holy Spirit, the living flame, and holy ardor of love! O God, who are pure and perfect love, you are a burning and consuming fire, which must consume all that cannot consist with pure love! O destroy in us, by your adorable flame, all that is contrary to your holiness! Begin, continue, and perfect here in our souls, the great work of purification and sanctification, without which, no man can see your face!

“Grant us, O Lord! a little of your sensible and ardent love, to awaken us out of our insensibility and deadly sleep, and give us a degree of dread of your fearful judgments, that we may quickly forsake the paths of error!

“Pour into our hearts a drop of your powerful love, which can transmute hell into paradise. Yea, O Lord! do speedily kindle this fire on earth, which you did come to kindle, and did so much desire that it should burn again; that the kingdom of your love may be eternally established, and that we may be in you, in unity of heart, soul, word, and action, one spirit with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, blessed forever! Amen.”

III. On Brotherly Love.

From love to God we derive love towards the brethren, yea, even love to all men. The former as well as the latter is not a subject which can be taught, or learnt, or self-produced; both are a fruit and property of the new birth from God, by which we escape from the element of wrath and darkness, and are translated into the kingdom of the Son of love, and become more and more pervaded by the sweet and delightful

powers of love, which emanate from the heart of God.

In the old birth, there may be a soft tenderness, sensual flattery, and self-loving complacency towards those that please us and behave kindly towards us; but corrupt nature and self-love is everywhere concealed under it, and the individual continues, notwithstanding all the appearance of love, a child of wrath at the bottom, who in reality, loves nothing but himself, and both God and his neighbor only in reference to himself.

Hence arises that latent and continual restlessness, irritation, suspicion, vexation, and a thousand other harsh powers, which disturb and distress the poor heart; first one person and then another being unable to act so as to please its self-will and haughtiness. In such a state, all terms of peace, points of union, and the most solemn obligations are nothing but air-built castles. If we are not born of love, we cannot love as we ought. Among the proud, there is always contention. (Prov. 13:10)

Therefore we must ardently long to be delivered from all such inherent wretchedness, and to be made partakers of the meek and gentle love of Jesus, seeing that this eternally loving good is so unspeakably near us, and willingly inclines, by the Spirit of his love, to him that thus belongs and pants after love. We must filially resign ourselves to his secret drawing, unremittingly plunge all our selfishness, all haughty, harsh, and distrustful feelings towards God and our neighbor, into the love of Christ, and not grow weary of this humble hungering and waiting, till Love bestows herself upon us, and pervades us with her divine influences.

Now the more we let ourselves be led by the secret attraction of divine love, into this state of heartfelt devotedness to God and learn to abide in it, in love and simplicity—the more we shall imbibe, like an infant at the breast, the pure, innocent, and tender life of love; so that our inmost soul is more and more satiated with delight, and the whole man becomes pliant, amiable, full of, and overflowing with love.

We then experience that true brotherly love is an unconstrained, unaffected, informal state and work of God, a free motion of the new creature. In this abyss and element of love, one individual may then find, embrace, bless, and enjoy another very intimately, to the glory of God. And because we are baptized in and by this Spirit of the love of Christ to one body, (1 Cor. 12:13) and have drunk into one spirit, we enjoy substantial communion with each other, (Phil. 1:19) as well when absent, as when met together in the name of Jesus.

And even as this pure brotherly love arises from the love of God, and in a state of placid fervor of heart so it does not stand in the way of the love of God, but rather promotes it. It does not allure us to that which is carnal and to unstable sensuality, but collects and calms the mind, and strengthens us in the intention to be wholly for God.

In short, where love is born in the heart, there it manifests its fruits, that they are of the right sort, and

her whole deportment and behavior towards her neighbor becomes a living exposition of that, which the Spirit of God, by the apostle Paul, commends of her, (1 Cor. 12) and which we here subjoin.

“Love suffers long.” Nature seeks to effect everything instantaneously or gives it up entirely. If the man does not see an immediate amendment in the mind of another, he rejects him entirely. If another cannot immediately apprehend his views and follow his admonitions, he casts him off. But real love suffers long; she looks on awhile; she does not disoblige her neighbor; she can labor long, endure long, amend long, wait long, try long, and try again, love long, and love again.

She is kind; so that her obliging and amiable deportment, her words and works of love, rejoice and benefit everyone, and openly show how she devotes herself, and all that is in her power for the use and enjoyment of others.

Love is not envious, but is willing that others as well as herself, should be, have, enjoy, and be capable of doing something, whether it be in temporal or spiritual things, and rejoices at it, as cordially as if she herself had performed it or had to enjoy it.

Love is not rash in judging of others, nor forward, cross, or spiteful in the company of others, but openhearted and modest; what she does is done heartily, from a modest and upright intention.

She is not puffed up; she does not proudly pass over others, she prefers serving and being subject to others. She does not wish her actions to be seen, nor to receive many thanks for them. The reason and motive why she loves, is love. She is her own reward and crown. Love therefore always thinks others do too much for her, but that she herself has hitherto done little or nothing. (Matt. 25:27)

She does not behave herself unseemly, by a harsh demeanor, when others do not act according to her mind. Love is like a little child—she is soon pleased. She is far from putting others to the blush by an improper behavior, reproaches, or the like; but condescends and adapts herself to the feeblest, the most wretched, and the poorest individuals, without being ashamed of them.

She seeks not her own, as nature always does, even in her best things. Real love regards neither her own advantage and convenience, nor the approbation of others—she puts all to the stake. If she can only give, gratify, please, and be serviceable to another, she forgets herself. She is delighted, if he whom she loves, is pleased, and esteems his temporal or spiritual happiness as her own.

She is not easily provoked, although she may be often improperly treated, vexed, excited, and even the worst construction put upon her love and her good actions. If another have fire, she has water enough in her meek fountain to extinguish it, by a modest and friendly deportment, by silence, and by doing good. Nor is she excited to anger by the evil she sees in others, but to compassion.

She thinks no ill. She is not suspicious, she draws no evil and malicious inferences, nor misinterprets the

conduct of another, but rather excuses him, and explains all for the best, in simplicity of heart, as much as she is able. She takes an account of the wrong she does to others, and the good they do to her; but does not regard the good she does to others, and the evil others do to her; that is all as nothing to her. She has forgiven and forgotten it unasked.

She rejoices not in iniquity, when others stumble, that she may appear the more pious. She sees it not willingly, but with grief, when any wrong or injury is done to another. And should one who is adverse to her, or who had previously censured her, stumble and disgrace himself, she does not rejoice at it from secret revenge, but is heartily grieved at it.

She rejoices in the truth, whenever it prospers, whether in reference to herself or to others. When she sees many children walking in the truth, when the virtue, piety, and uprightness of others is known and commended, she rejoices over it with others, even though she herself should be forgotten and less esteemed on account of it. She loves truth when she finds it, even were it in her adversaries.

She bears all things. Nature hides her own evil, and is fond of talking of the faults of her neighbor, but divine love only sees that which is good in others, and bides their misery and weaknesses. She excuses such characters as much as possible, both to herself and to others, in all simplicity. She speaks unwillingly of their failings afterwards, except when it must be done for the improvement of others; that which is good, is her proper object; hence it is said, she believes all things; because she is good, faithful, and sincere herself, she gladly believes the best of others. If she hear good news of her neighbor, she does not seek out many doubts and scruples, as corrupt reason does. She does not easily believe evil of others. In such a case, she requires full certainty. But because she loves, and wishes that which is good, and that which may glorify God, she therefore also willingly believes it.

She hopes all things, and does not readily cast away the hope of the amendment of others; in this hope she prays and labors, as much as she is able. Though she sees the evil before her, yet still she hopes and thinks the individual is already sorry for it, and that he may have already repented of it, or will still do so. God can restore him again. He may still become better than she is. She hopes, where nothing is to be hoped for.

She endures all things; although she be ridiculed and oppressed for her bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, and always loving, yet she endures it all. And whatever trials and sufferings may be imposed upon her in her labor of love, even from those whom she loves, yet she is not weary in her faithfulness and patience, even though the trial should be of long continuance. She endures unto the end. Yea, she is invincible in suffering, and finally is victorious over everything. For love never fails or falls away; for where should she fall, since she is already in the deepest abyss of humility, beneath all? A man may have much of what is good, but if he have not love, it avails nothing, he falls away again. Nay, much of what is good must fall away from the pious, that the best—that is, pure love, may fill its place.

This love never fades, it endures forever; it is pure gold, it is the life of God in the soul, which is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Now he that abides in love, abides in God, and God in him, so that he can never fall away. Amen.

Important Rules of conduct

Addressed to a Society of Christians living together.

The blessing of Jesus, the Savior, be with you, that your hearts may be filled with grace and heavenly peace, both here and hereafter, to the glory of his name! Amen.

Attend with feelings of simplicity, devotion, and good will, and not merely from habit, to the exhortation which will now be addressed to you, in the Lord's name, and from heartfelt affection. But let each one also examine himself by it, and not esteem it lightly.

1. Remember that your house and your hearts ought to be a habitation of the Lord Most High. The Lord Jesus himself will be your superintendent and patron, and his holy angels your companions; judge therefore yourselves, with what devotion, serenity, simplicity, and sincerity, you ought to conduct yourselves, both inwardly and outwardly, in the sacred presence of the Lord, if you desire that he should abide with you and in you, and if you wish to continue to participate in his divine favor and blessing, both as it respects body and soul.

2. Your calling is sincerely to forsake the world and its spirit—to die continually to your corrupt nature and all the life of self, and to converse night and day with God in your hearts, in the exercise of true prayer. How holy and blessed is your vocation! Give yourselves up to it cordially, and with great fidelity. This is your aim, be this also your constant employment!

3. Do not pray merely at certain times, but wherever you are. And whenever you come together, strive to keep yourselves in a frame of fervent desire towards God, and in his presence; just as if each of you were alone in the house with God, yet without much external show and gesture. And when anyone wishes to converse with another, be it either when at work, or on other occasions, let him previously think in his own mind, "My brother or sister is praying, I ought not to disturb him or her," in order that all unnecessary conversation, even on spiritual things, may be as much as possible avoided.

4. Again—pray much and speak little. O let me particularly recommend to you that sacred, gentle, and peaceful silence, which God and all his saints love so much! The spirit of loquacity is the bane of all

religious society; the extinction of devotion, occasions confusion of mind, is an abuse of time, and a denial of the divine presence. Love, obedience, or necessity, must influence the tongue to speak, else it should continue silent. Even in spiritual things, edify one another more by a holy walk, than by a multitude of words. God dwells only in peaceful souls, and the tongue must be at peace also. Behold the fruit of sacred silence! It gives time, strength, collectedness, prayer, liberty, wisdom, the society of God, and a blessed and peaceful state of mind.

5. Love one another in sincerity, as the children of God, and believe that you are beloved by each other, though nothing of that love, or even the reverse be manifested. Let everyone be concerned for his brother, in unfeigned kindness, attention, and subjection, as though he did it to the Lord, in all sincerity. Bear one another's burdens, both of body and soul, as if they were your own. Be ever ready to serve each other gladly and in artless humility, and to wash each other's feet, so to speak, or in the meanest and most laborious offices.

6. Remember the important words of Jesus, "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Therefore under the consciousness of his own unworthiness, ought no one to expect the like from others; and in accordance with this sentiment, we ought never to believe that any creature shows us too little kindness, or wrongs us too much. Let everyone really think respecting himself, that he is the most unfaithful, the most miserable, the most unsuitable, and the meanest of all; and hence he ought reasonably to desire to be little thought of and forgotten by all the rest. Be ready to give way to each other in all things. Let each one humble himself beneath the other for the Lord's sake; by this means, fervor and peace of heart will be obtained and preserved.

7. Avoid all suspicion. Give no ear amongst you to the accuser of the brethren, and allow no wrath or bitterness to harbor in your breasts. Put the best construction upon everything that may appear offensive to yourselves or to others. Look only at that which is good in others, in order that you may love it, thank God for it, and imitate it. But do not remark their weaknesses, or if you observe them, commend them to God in prayer, and forget them again immediately, unless it be your office to remember them. If anyone be overtaken in a fault or crime against his brother, let him immediately go and confess his guilt in unfeigned humility. Satan, by this means, will be trodden down under your feet, mutual love confirmed, and the favor of God be doubly redirected towards you.

8. Seek nothing more than the moderate supply of your bodily needs, and beware of the subtle deceitfulness of riches. What have we to do with the world's poisonous trash? Are we not redeemed from the earth, and called to eternity? O love and exercise that estimable virtue of the inward and outward poverty of Jesus, who cares for us! Love, for the Lord's sake, that which is little, mean, contemptible, disagreeable, and burdensome in everything, in order that you may inwardly live unhindered in communion with God, and externally rejoice in the society of each other.

9. Flee from all selfishness, as the greatest bane of fellowship. Let no one desire anything, which he would

not as willingly grant his brother, even more readily than himself; for we are called to deny ourselves. Let none of you possess anything, whether great or small, be it what it may, which he would not immediately part with, and give to his brother. If we do not thus divest ourselves of everything which we regard as our own, we are still idolaters, and no true servants of God, and must continue destitute of a noble, pure, and peaceful liberty of spirit, and of an unobstructed approach unto God.

10. Let every individual of you believe that the place of your present habitation, your state and occupation, is that in which God has placed you, and in which he at present wishes you to continue to serve him, and is the best adapted for your advancement in true holiness, which you must not forsake, nor even desire to forsake, without a clear knowledge of the divine will. This will compose your minds, and divest you of a thousand unnecessary scruples of injurious reflection and distraction of thought, with which the tempter might otherwise torment you. This will cause you to regard with other eyes, not only your residence, station, and occupation, but also all your difficulties, disappointments, and whatever else you may meet with, receiving all as from the Lord's hand, and bearing it so much the more joyfully. This will also tend greatly to promote love and peace amongst you.

11. But let everyone of you well consider, and through grace be deeply impressed with the object for which God has led you individually to this habitation, which is, that you may serve him in it, and be exercised in sanctification. You are not placed there, that you may live quietly and at ease, according to the flesh and self-will, and serve God according to your own fancy and ideas; but that you may crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts—that you may deliver up your carnal nature, sensuality, reason, self-will, and self-love to judgment and to death, and thus walk directly contrary to yourselves, and love God in purity and fervency. It is for this reason, that the Lord has brought you into this house, that you may strive after it in union of heart and soul, and that you may assist each other in prayer and in holy life; for when two or three are met together in Jesus's name, there he is in the midst of them. Let everyone pay attention, how he exercises himself in this particular; nor by any means forget it when God purposes to exercise you in it; but rather eagerly seize every object and opportunity, which the kind hand of God presents to you, to lay open, attack, and destroy the above mentioned, and any other symptom of your natural depravity. Welcome the hour, when God sends you a dear friend to assist you in overcoming your adversary. Love such a one very cordially. He that does not thus seriously resolve to venture his own life, does not deserve the name of a christian, and will neither live there nor elsewhere, peaceably, but perplex both himself and others.

12. Beware of a dissipated mind and disposition. In such a state, you will be attacked by a thousand combined and opposite temptations. Scarcely speak nor determine on anything, as long as your mind is thus distracted, if you wish to avoid committing faults and creating disturbance; for you are then in a false light and in the confusion of nature. Live retired in the center of your hearts with God as innocent children, who though unable to reason, possess much love and affection; and as such, suck the breasts of divine love. You will then find everything good and well as it comes, regardless what others do or say. Thus you

will become all meekness, and kindness towards each other. In filial confidence towards your heavenly Father, you will then be of good courage, and experience that his commandments are not difficult.

May God himself grant you grace, wisdom, and strength in all things, in order that it may with truth be said of you, “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity; for there the Lord commands the blessing, even life forevermore.” Amen.

On Faith and Justification

Many possess the word of truth, who have not the truth of the word.

Faith is an inward conviction of the truth of things invisible and future relating to us. He that believes from his heart that there is a living and omniscient God in heaven, and that his word is truth, is possessed of saving faith.

“Very well,” will many a one say, “if that be all, all is right with me, for this I have believed from my youth up.” But do you really believe it from the heart? This believing from the heart, is the work of the Holy Spirit. Evidence and show me your faith by your works. “What works?” some may say; “Faith saves us, and not works.” True, but faith and works belong together, and tread in each others steps; otherwise we do not really believe that which we say, or think we believe. For instance, if I say to a person severely wounded, “My friend, your wound is dangerous, go instantly to a physician!” How do I know that he has believed my warning? By his really going to the physician, and placing himself under his care. Say to one perishing with hunger, “See, there is a rich man yonder, who readily gives to all who ask him.” How are you to know that he believes you? When he in reality hastens to the rich man and supplicates relief. If one tells us that our neighbor’s house is in flames, and bids us run to extinguish them—when we sit still at the news, without going to the place, it is evident we do not believe it; for if we did we should immediately hasten to save whatever we could.

“What a work the people make,” says the world, “what trouble they give themselves, as if they could merit heaven by their piety!” Yes, my friend! did you believe, you would also hasten to save your soul, for you are that sorely-wounded, poverty-stricken man, and the dwelling of your soul is already in flames!

Faith is consequently the foundation and mainspring of all good works and holy deeds. (Heb. 11)

But justifying faith can never be that faith, by which I merely believe I am justified. Justifying faith consists in this, that a poor and humbled sinner, believing that he can find forgiveness, help, and

salvation in Christ alone, comes to him, hungering and thirsting, (John 6:35) accepts him as offered in the gospel, (John 1:12) and to this end, commits and gives himself up to him with this faith, justification is inseparably connected, but God gives the assurance of his forgiveness, in a greater or less degree, earlier or later, as it pleases him, and is useful to the soul. It is however not only necessary to believe once, but *without intermission*; we must be grounded in the faith, must be kept in the faith, through many changes, crosses, and trials; and thus our justification will become more confirmed and more glorious. (1 Peter 1:6-7; 2 Peter 1:10)

Justification, according to Scripture and experience, is properly fourfold; which being seldom sufficiently distinguished, is the cause of so much misunderstanding and controversy.

The first has taken place externally, and is nevertheless the foundation of all the rest—namely, when Christ as our surety, stood before the stern tribunal of the insulted Majesty of heaven, during his sufferings in Gethsemane and on the cross; and by virtue of his merits and perfect atonement, was absolved and justified in our stead, at the bar of that tribunal. Christ himself speaks of this justification (Isaiah 1:8). “He is near, that justifies me,” and in Isaiah 53:8 it is written, “He was taken from judgment;” and Paul says, (1 Tim. 3:16) “Christ is justified in the spirit.” See also Rom. 6:10-7.

Now as Adam fell not for himself alone, but being the great progenitor of the human race, our common head, so all his descendants fell with him. Thus Christ stood likewise not for himself alone; he was our general representative, the plant of renown, the man Zemach,¹ the patriarchal head of all the redeemed; and even as he arose justified, all of them were justified with him. He our Mediator and surety being justified, so are we also.

And this is so certain and so true, that all true believers can say, “If one died and was justified for all, then were all dead, and all justified. God has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2 Cor. 5:19 etc.)

By virtue of this justification of Christ in our stead, God overlooks the season of ignorance, (Acts 17:30 etc.) but now commands all men everywhere to repent and offers unto every man, through the resurrection of Christ, faith and justification.² He beseeches and invites men by his messengers outwardly, and by his Spirit inwardly; saying, “Be reconciled unto God!” “Repent and believe, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”

Adore, admire, and stand amazed at this abyss of divine love, O my soul! Thus has God loved me, before an atom of my being existed!

1 “Whose name is the branch.”

2 See Marginal Reading

What grace! He gave his Son for me! I behold him who knew no sin, standing at the bar of divine justice, for my crimes, and for my debts, which he took upon him as his own, and paying the forfeit of all my sins, and those of the whole world. I behold him on the cross, blotting out the hand-writing that was against me. I behold him, after having entered with his own blood, into the holy place, return with a full and valid discharge, and with eternal redemption, while at the same time he offers me his grace and salvation. Then come, my soul, while you may, and love him who first loved you, and has made known unto you this great mystery of his will, into which even angels desire to look!

The second justification takes place in the heart and conscience of a humble, heavy laden sinner, who comes to Christ with an ardent desire for mercy; while that which has been accomplished externally and for him, is appropriated to him by the Holy Spirit; namely, that for the sake of Christ, all his sins are forgiven him, a clean heart, a better hope and a freedom of access unto God are granted him.

When a female, miserably poor, and arrested for debt, becomes the wife of some rich man, all her debts become his, and she stands acquitted at the bar of judgment. The possessions of her husband now belong to her; but from that moment, her heart, her will, nay all that she is and has, belongs no more to herself, but to her husband. In this manner, a true and lively faith unites us to Christ, not merely in idea, but in reality; and thus we are justified by grace, without works. But as soon as the soul, like some poverty-stricken female, unites herself, by faith, with him, then comes to pass what is written, “He is your Lord; him only shall you serve.” (Ps. 44:11-12) He becomes ours, with all that he is; and we become his, with all we possess. (Luke 15:31) From that moment, we are in the way and in a state of salvation, and from that moment also, in the way and in a state of sanctification, (Eph. 2:10; Tit. 2:14,6,8).

This justification is the foundation and commencement of godliness in Christ Jesus, who for this very purpose died for all, “that they that live, might live no longer unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again. (2 Cor. 5:15)

Although this justification may be regarded as a judicial proceeding, yet we must be careful not to measure the works of God by any human criterion. Before a human tribunal, hypocrisy may successfully deceive, and a thief be pardoned, who may still retain as thievish a propensity as before. With God the case is otherwise. His judicial sentence is a powerful word, which creates what it pronounces; it soothes the conscience, and at the same time renews the heart. When he justifies the ungodly, he also makes him righteous.

The penitent soul has therefore a ground of confidence in itself, on which it can courageously persevere and proceed. The certain assurance of the forgiveness of sins may accompany it in a greater or less degree, earlier or later, or be entirely lacking according to the good pleasure of God. This assurance is not absolutely necessary to justification; but an inseparable fruit, and the surest proof of justification is, that sincerity of heart in Christ, that hatred of all acknowledged sin, and a heartfelt desire after and love to him that has loved us and forgiven us. If this fruit be lacking, justification is also lacking.

This justification continually maintains its place, through the whole course of godliness. It is, and remains, the groundwork from the beginning to end; for sins and imperfections continue to arise; and when the children sin through weakness, they are again reconciled to the Father, through the intercession of Christ. (1 John 2:1) A growth in sanctification discovers also more and more of the corruptions of the flesh and spirit, of self-love, self-conceit, secret reliance on gifts, good works, etc., and thus our inward and outward holiness itself requires justification. Our finest robes must be washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. 7:14)

The third justification, of which the Holy Scriptures speak, is chiefly that whereby we are acknowledged as righteous in the sight of others, and is nothing else than sanctification, so far as it gives testimony, by its undeniable fruits, that we are in possession of that faith, which justifies us in the sight of God. "Show me your faith by your works," says the apostle James. (2:18) Justifying faith unites us with Christ, as our head and vine, or groundwork of a new life, this must manifest or justify itself.

Sanctification and its fruits do not justify before the tribunal of the offended Majesty of heaven. Even the man after God's own heart must here pray, "Enter not into judgment with your servant; for in your sight shall no man living be justified;" (Ps. 143:2) but still they justify before the tribunal of the church. True believers follow after holiness, and gladly do good; but they are not on this account justified before God; (1 Cor. 4:4) they cannot lay it to account with God, in order to their justification, either here or hereafter; nor do they so, but forget it. (Matt. 6:27-3) But God is not therefore unjust, that he should forget it. (Heb. 6:10) Their works do not go before them, as if to open the doors of heaven, but they follow after; (Rev. 14:13) and they shall eat the fruit of their labors. (Isaiah 3:10) They that are in Christ Jesus, come not into condemnation, and are justified in Christ Jesus, according to the judicial sentence of the Divine good pleasure. (Matt. 24:34, Rom. 2:7)

But still, holiness, with its fruits, may testify with the conscience to the justification in the sight of God, received through grace. If our heart condemns us not, but absolves and attests that we possess an operative love, we may then rest satisfied and be of good courage. But this is not the highest tribunal; neither is the heart at all times infallible and impartial, either in accusing or excusing. We ought therefore still to pray with David, although our hearts may excuse us, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me." (Ps. 139: 23)

In this way a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone. (James 2:14) "He only, who does righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous. Whoever thinks otherwise deceives himself." (1 John 3:7) He who is in Christ Jesus by a true faith, evidences by his thoughts, words, and works, the foundation on which he stands. Through genuine conversion, we become engrafted into Christ; and are therefore also planted in the house of the church of God, that we may flourish in the courts of that temple, whose beauty is holiness. (Ps. 91:15; 92:5)

Yea, the holy and blameless walk of believers should also justify them in the sight of the world, as the

epistles of Christ, known and read of all men. (2 Cor. 3:2)

Alas, dear Savior! how much are you and your name dishonored by the people that call themselves by your name, and yet allow nothing to be seen in them that is worthy of your name, your spirit, and your doctrine! With all their boasting of your merits, they shamefully trample under foot your blood and merits. Can those be your people, who serve you only occasionally with their lips, and your daily enemies in their hearts? Can those be your children, who evidence by their deeds, that they do not possess your divine nature in the smallest degree? Are those the living branches of the true vine which bear nothing but wild grapes and corrupt fruit?

O no! dear Savior! He that commits sin, has never seen, has never known you. A deceitful heart boasts falsely of forgiven sin. Christ is not the minister of sin. They know you not, who thus appropriate to themselves your merits and your righteousness, while sinning and making use of them as a cloak for their sins.

The fourth justification I wish myself and others to be acquainted with, rather from experience, than from a bare description of it. It may be called the inherent and final justification at the bar of the divine good pleasure. Justification, commonly so called, and sanctification flow in this together, and attain in it their completion. The end of all the ways of God with fallen man, is incontrovertibly this, that God, through man's restoration may be again glorified and become *All In All*.

In the second and third justification and sanctification, man stands as guilty, ashamed, and utterly degraded; while on the contrary, God and free grace in Christ are highly exalted and glorified. The natural and sinful life of man (besides which he possesses nothing,) with all the corruptions of the flesh and spirit, are made manifest, denied, and slain; Christ, and the kingdom of his grace, rise in their stead. The man by degrees, with all his own attempts after piety, holiness, faithfulness, and devotion, however latent they may be, is put to shame before God; he feels he must leave the work to Christ, and the operation of his spirit within him; must give place to Christ, make room for him, and let him work and live in him. In short, he must decrease, and Christ must increase, till he can say of a truth, "Now I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." (Gal. 2:20) Christ himself is made unto him wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, not only objectively, and by appropriation, but also inherently, by virtue of his gracious indwelling.

God then again approves of his own goodness, which he has implanted in the soul—that is, what Christ has wrought in the heart by his Spirit. God pronounces good the individual's state of grace, (Rom. 8:16, Heb. 11:5) his holiness, beauty and virtues, for they are Christ's. (Rev. 2:17) His works please him, for they are wrought in God. (John 3:21) God then rests with delight in the works of his hands, as at the beginning. (Gen. 1:2)

But before this can be the case, much self-denial is necessary; and before Christ can have in all things

the preeminence, much forsaking of ourselves, to be found complete in Christ. Paul was justified and sanctified, he was in Christ, and yet he sought to press forward, (Phil. 3) he wished to be found still more complete in Christ, not having on his own righteousness, etc. In this manner, Jehovah himself at length becomes our righteousness, in the full sense of the word, (Jer. 11:6) and we are enabled to say, "In the Lord Jehovah have I righteousness and strength." (Isaiah 45:24)

Yea, Amen! You be all, and I nothing! This, O my God! is the aim of my desire; to this tend all your dealings with us men; to this lead all your ways and all your judgments! No one is good, or holy, or righteous, but you alone! The saints in heaven and all on earth are alone holy through you, and because your indwelling communicates to them something of your goodness and holiness. All our righteousness, all the goodness we can possess, flows from you, its original source, and must flow back unmingled to you again. You alone be great and exalted, O my God, and let me lie here and in eternity at your feet, and say, "To you, who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, be praise, and honor, and glory ascribed, forever and ever. Amen!"

Of this fourfold justification, many attend merely to the two first, but not in their essential connection with advancement in true holiness and union with God in Christ. Those who wish to improve upon this, at one time comfort all with the gospel, and at another require of the people a holy life, without pointing them, as they ought, to Christ, who alone can sanctify.

Many well-meaning men, who see the lamentable abuse of the doctrine of justification, (often advanced unguardedly enough) are led to deny the two first, or at least the second, and wish to have all that the Holy Scriptures say of justification, understood merely of the third and fourth. There are also not a few, who will hear nothing of the two last kinds of justification, easily pass over the second, paying regard merely to the first, and that in a very imperfect and superficial manner.

Thus do people divide and dismember Christ and his word, each one taking from it that which suits and agrees with him, while very few receive him wholly as he is offered to us in the gospel.

May this not be the case with us, but may we be of one and the same mind; cordially laying hold on Christ crucified for us, as our justification, and Christ dwelling and living in us, as our sanctification; and by faith and love abide in him to the end, that we may at length be able to say,

"We are made partakers of Christ." (Heb. 3:14)

A Sermon on the Constraining Love of Christ

Preached at Muhlheim, on the Rhur, 14th October, 1751.

“The love of Christ constrains us.” —2 Cor. 5:14.

My dear hearers,

If we are desirous of seeing a true representation of ourselves, both as to what we are by nature, and what we ought to be by grace; as well as the appearance we have presented or still present, so long as we continue dead in sins, and what manner of persons we ought to become by the communication of that life which is from God: we must turn to the thirty-seventh chapter of the prophecy of Ezekiel, where the Lord showed that man of God “a large field full of dead men’s bones, which were very dry.”

In fact, if it should please the Lord to open the eyes of our spirits, as he did those of the prophet, the wide field of this lower world, (and would to God I were not compelled also to add that of the so-called religious world) would present just the same appearance. We should see, alas! in every quarter and station, scarcely anything else but dead bones, dead hearts, dead formalists, dead words, dead works, a dead walk, and dead worship. And among this multitude of dead bones, we should find ourselves likewise, so long as we continue in our natural state.

These bones could not appear to Ezekiel more miserable, dry, and wretched, than the aspect which *our* hearts present, as long as we cleave to the earth, devoid of and estranged from the life which is from God, and destitute of the vital power of godliness. Who could have thought, while contemplating these dry bones, which the prophet beheld, that they had ever composed the beauteous frame of man! So entirely has he lost, by the fall, his original form; so completely is he become a horrible monster, that no resemblance to it is any longer visible. No one would say, that this was the noble God-man, that formerly proceeded forth from his Maker’s hands in such superlative beauty.

It is true, that fallen man still possesses species of life; but such a life, as is wont to be found in the carcasses and bones of the dead. In dead bodies it is not a natural, but an unnatural life that presents itself to our view—they live and swarm with worms and vermin; and a similar strange and unnatural life has penetrated into our hearts, which are dead to God—they swarm no less with all kinds of worldly, sinful, inordinate lusts and affections, like so many horrible vermin, snakes, and scorpions; so that we are justly become loathsome in the sight of God, of angels, and of enlightened men, in the same manner as a dead carcass is loathsome to us. Nay, I am persuaded, that if we were properly acquainted with ourselves, in this state of unnatural deformity, we should loathe nothing so much as ourselves, and abhor ourselves as much as we do a mass of putrefaction.

“Son of man,” said the Lord to the prophet, “Do you think these dry bones can live again? And he

answered, O Lord God, you know!" as though he had said, "It is impossible for me, as a son of man, to know it; I must therefore leave it to your wisdom and omnipotence." "Prophecy," said the Lord, "concerning these dry bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God unto these bones, Behold I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you; and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord." Upon which the prophet prophesied, and behold, there was a noise and a shaking, and the bones came together, and the sinews and the flesh came upon them; but there was still no breath, no soul in them. Just as little possibility, or appearance of a possibility of renovation is there to be found in fallen man, as these dry bones presented.

And who that was acquainted with us, who have felt the influence of divine grace, particularly many among us, only a short time ago, while we were in our former corrupt state and conduct, but might also have inquired, "Do you think that such dry bones, and such a loathsome dead carcass can still become a living man? Do you think that such a vain and careless sinner, or that such an abominable and rebellious brand of hell can still become a favored child of God?" O my God, what little hope or prospect of such a change could we have afforded at that period!

Nevertheless, it has been prophesied to us in the name of the Lord. The Lord sent his word and accompanied it with the power of his Spirit. A noise, a rumor, and a shaking has been excited among us in this place. The world has heard of it, and has wondered what would result from these dry bones. The prince of darkness has been astonished at it, and afraid, lest too great a number of his subjects should escape from the regions of death. The dry bones have come together, bone to his bone; and thus it is that we are here at present. The world now regards us as living characters; we have the appearance of men, that is, of christians; there has been at least a shape, a body produced. But is there a real soul, is there a breath and unrestrained vital activity in this body? As little as a man consists merely of a body, so little does true christianity consist in the mere form and appearance, in merely associating with others, in speaking as they do, or in a constrained deportment.

It is true, God be thanked! that life has also entered into us; for otherwise from where proceeds that shaking, that creeping together of the dry bones? For, by nature, there is not the smallest impulse or inclination in us to that which is good. But is it a thorough, free, and unconstrained vital feeling that pervades us, or is it only a sort of half, grovelling, miserable, existence? Such a state cannot be either pleasing or satisfactory; it must not continue thus with us.

A change, yea even a remarkable change has taken place in many of us. But my dear hearers, do we not feel, are we not conscious, that there is still something lacking, and that much is still lacking? The heart does not yet move and beat aright in the christian body; we are still incapable of loving, trusting, and cleaving to God aright, and of delighting in him and in his ways. We are willing, it is true, but unable to perform; the heart is still backward, cold, and dead, it still easily sinks powerless to the earth. The case

ought to be otherwise with us.

What labor and exertion is required to bring a lifeless corpse, or a man in a swoon, only a few feet from the place where he fell down! What efforts are necessary to move him! Alas, my dear hearers! are there not many in the same state, with respect to the work and career of godliness? How long and how painfully do they drag the body of death about with them! They abstain from some particular things, but not altogether; it requires such an effort, it costs them so much. They exercise themselves in this or that particular duty, which they acknowledge to be essential; but how must they exert and do violence to themselves to accomplish it! They would gladly be steadfast, faithful, and holy; but alas! they make little progress. Such is the case, and it cannot be otherwise, so long as we possess a christian body, which is only half alive.

Finally, a dead corpse may, though with much difficulty, be raised up and supported; but what avails it, unless life and soul enter into it? Let us not regard it as a small thing, that the goodness of God favors us with many means of grace for our awakening, encouragement, and refreshment, but humbly acknowledge them as divine and inestimable favors and benefits. Yet still, if in the use of all such means, we are not chiefly concerned to obtain the spirit, strength, and love of Christ, we may, by having the senses affected, be lifted up like a dead corpse, in the manner above-mentioned; but in a short time, the senseless mass again falls prostrate upon the ground, in all its former sluggishness and customary evil habits.

It is quite another thing with those who are in possession of spiritual life; they may be also listless, faint, and slothful, and again be awakened, quickened, and powerfully assisted in their course, by thus assembling together, and by other means of grace. But, O my dearest friends! the best supports are of no avail, for any length of time, to him who has obtained no life and soul with his godliness—they soon lose their influence over us. Those who are satisfied with merely attending and hearing, and are not concerned about the inward power of godliness, do not, and cannot long remain steadfast. The fairest corpse will soon decay, corrupt, and produce worms, unless a soul be imparted to it.

In a word, as necessary as it was that the prophet Ezekiel should prophesy a second time in the name of the Lord, and say to the wind or Spirit, “Come, O Spirit, from the four winds, and blow upon these dry bones, that they may live! on which, breath entered into them, and they became alive: even so indispensably necessary is it for us, who have felt within us the first motions of spiritual life, that it be again prophesied to us in the name of Lord, that the true spirit of christianity may enter into us, and that we may be made alive and whole. “Come, O Spirit!” ought every heart to cry, “come, and blow upon me, who am spiritually dead, that breath and life may enter into me!” Now this soul, this life and power of godliness, is nothing else than the love of Christ, which makes us living and active christians. O, it is for the possession of this love, that we ought to be solicitous!

Not only were the apostles such living, active, and holy christians, but believers generally, in the times of the apostles. If we turn our attention to these first and fervent christians, and inquire how these people

were able to do such great things, to suffer so much and to live in the manner they did, the holy apostle Paul, in the name of them all,' answers in the words of our text,

“The love of Christ constrains us.”—2 Cor. 5:14.

According to the direction given us in these divinely inspired words, let us, with the divine assistance, consider on the present occasion,

I. The love of Jesus Christ; and

II. Its divine power.

“O most blessed Savior! behold your servant will now venture to testify of your wondrous love, O look not upon my unworthiness and incapacity! Draw near to my heart, and inflame it; touch my uncircumcised lips with a burning coal from your altar, that I may not speak of your ardent love in a cold or feeble manner! Amen.”

The Love of Jesus Christ

It has not pleased the Holy Spirit to indicate more clearly, whether by the “love of Christ” in the words of our text, is meant the love wherewith Christ loves us, or that love with which the believing heart loves Christ; perhaps for this very reason, that we should take them both together. They belong in fact, most closely to each other; the one is produced by the other, and they are originally one. For how should we possess even a spark of love to Christ, unless he had first loved us? And the love wherewith we are enabled to love him, is not less his love, than that with which he has loved us, both in time and in eternity. It is Christ who makes the commencement in loving; therefore in our present meditation, we must also begin with considering his love to us.

1. Christ loves us with a love surpassing the most faithful and fervent affection of a friend.

Christ loves us with a love surpassing the most faithful and most fervent love of a friend. Friendship among men consists in the free and inward inclination of the heart, by virtue of which, the individual wishes his friend the possession of every good, and gladly procures it for him; while he seeks, on the other hand, to defend him from every injury and misfortune, and to aid and assist him in every emergency. It is with such a friendly affection, that Christ is in reality attached to us in the highest degree.

If we wish to form to ourselves an idea of the most faithful friendship, it must be such a friendship as will continue firm in the hour of need. But where among mankind do we find a friend in need? and if we are desirous of representing to ourselves this affection of the soul, in its sublimest exercise, we must suppose the case of one friend laying down his life for the other; but where is such a friend or such friendship to be

found among men? In Christ, we really possess such a friend, and in his heart, such a friendship for us. “No one,” says himself, “has greater love than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13) Ah, dearest Savior! why talk of friends? We were foes and rebels, and yet have you laid down your life for us! “Christ,” according to Paul’s expression, “died for the ungodly.” “God commends his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:6,8) It is therefore with due reflection, that I have denominated the love of Christ, a love that surpasses the most faithful and most fervent love of a friend.

O the astonishing intensity of the love of Christ! You and I, my dear friends, were fallen from the friendship, light, love, and fellowship of God, into the depths of misery, wretchedness, and hell. We were no longer friends but foes; no longer worthy of being loved, but hateful and deserving of wrath. Yet God, in his eternity, had compassion on our great and boundless misery. He let it cost him that which he held most dear. For our salvation he gave up his only begotten Son, the child of his bosom, and in his Son, the heart of his love. Neither man nor angel can comprehend or fathom this. We must believe it, we must adore it, and with Christ himself, astonished exclaim, “God so loved the world,” this miserable world! (John 3:16)

Christ’s surpassing friendship for us constrained him to leave heaven for us. Listen to the joyful and wondrous tale! it is no fable but a certain fact. Listen to this glorious gospel of the ever blessed God; not as a matter with which you are already acquainted, and which you have learnt from your youth up, from your Bible and Catechism; but listen to it as important news; listen to it this day, for once, as if you had never heard it in your life before. Christ’s surpassing friendship constrained him to leave heaven, that he might save and deliver us. And in order to do so, and that we might not be afraid at his appearing, he clothed himself in our wretched humanity and sinful form. As our God and near relative, he really took upon himself the burden of our sins and transgressions, as though they were his own. During the space of nearly thirty-four years he labored, prayed, and struggled for you, my friends, and for me. Under the most appalling sense and agonizing feeling of that divine wrath, which sin had roused, he became exceeding sorrowful, sweated great drops of blood, and experienced the torments of hell and the hiding of God’s countenance; in a word, he suffered and endured all that, which you and I, my friends, would have had eternally; yes, eternally to suffer for our sins. And all this he did from the voluntary affection of a friend, and that by the inestimable value of his blood, he might again reconcile us, and purchase us to become his friends.

Can we imagine greater love? Is not Christ a true friend in need, a real friend, even unto death? And he suffered all this, not for us generally, but for everyone of us in particular. In this view Paul regarded it: “Christ loved me,” says he, “and gave himself for me!” Ah, Paul! what is it you say? Did Christ then die for you solely? O yes, solely for me, and solely for you!—thus we ought to view the subject, in order to behold it to the most advantage; and it is thus that Christ loves everyone with a particular affection.

2. Christ loves us, and loves us voluntarily, with a most compassionate, attentive, and unwearied maternal love.

When an infant is sick, or falls down and hurts itself, and lies weeping and in pain, before its mother's eyes—instead of hating it on account of its pitiable state, she regards the poor babe with heartfelt compassion, and seeks, in every possible manner, to relieve and comfort it. Christ puts on similar bowels of maternal love towards us, fallen and sinful children, especially when we penitently feel and bewail our sins. He then regards us with feelings of the most tender compassion. Poor penitent soul! you probably do not believe that Christ loves you thus, and looks upon you in such a manner; you think you are altogether too abominable, and that having willfully plunged yourself into all this misery, he pays no more attention to you. Hear therefore, what he says on this subject in Ezekiel 16:6. “I saw you lying in your blood;” and as certainly as he sees you, so certainly will he also say to you when his hour is come, “You shall live! yea I say unto you, you shall live!” Let us only look unto him by faith, even as children that are sick, are wont to look up, with weeping eyes, at their mother.

A penitent and distressed individual often finds it impossible to believe that his weeping and lamenting are heard and answered. Be assured, my friend, the Lord hears when Ephraim complains; and says, “Is not Ephraim my dear son, is he not a pleasant child? etc.” (Jer. 31:20) If this cannot be called the expression of the most compassionate maternal affection, I know of none. We should not dare to ascribe to God such tender feelings of maternal affection, if the Lord himself had not done so. Ah, you penitent souls! could we believe it, could we see it, our hearts would likewise melt with feelings of reciprocal filial affection.

Christ loves us, and loves us voluntarily, with the most assiduous and maternal love. It is from its mother, that a child derives its natural life, and it is by her means, that it is brought into this miserable world; Christ regenerates us to an eternal world of light and joy, and imparts a life to us which is incorruptible. A mother nourishes her child from her own breasts; but Christ gives himself, his flesh and blood, to be the food of his regenerate children. This no human parent does.

A mother cleanses her child, cherishes it, carries it about, and fosters it, till it is grown up; she is constantly doing something for her child, and her maternal love causes her never to be tired of attending to it. Ah, who can reflect without shame and astonishment, how the ever-loving God is obliged to have patience with his stubborn children, to speak after the manner of men! how we weary him with our transgressions! Nay, it is impossible to say, how much he has to do in bringing up a single soul.¹ The Lord himself expresses this active, aiding, maternal love in Isaiah 46:3-4, where he says, “Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob! which are borne by me from the womb, and carried from the birth, even to hoary hairs will I carry you, etc.”

¹ Bringing down would be also a correct, but no common mode of expression.

The parent of a child preserves it from every accident, and seeks its welfare to the utmost of her ability. Christ, our ever-loving parent watches over, and protects his offspring, incomparably more attentively, lest the Evil One should touch them. Nay, not even a hair can fall from their heads, without his will. Everything that befalls these sucklings of his grace, be it little or great, inwardly or outwardly, is so guided and governed by the parental love of Christ, that all things must work together for their good.

As little as a child, born of human parents, is anxious how it may become great, so little ought a child of grace to be concerned how it may grow up, and become strong and holy. The parental love of Christ provides for all this; it is only necessary that the child remain in its mother's lap, and by prayer, faith, and love, seek nourishment and strength for its life and growth, from the breasts of divine grace. And while thus lying in the lap of love, the weakest and most needy infant need not be afraid of any danger.

This love, however, destines the children of grace to experience a variety of trials, temptations, and sufferings, for their good; and they are often left in such a state of barrenness and darkness, as to cause them with Zion to exclaim, "The Lord has forsaken me, and my God has forgotten me!" but how widely does the soul err from the truth, in such a supposition! The Lord himself asks, "Can a woman forget her child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget; yet I will not forget you. Lo, I have engraven you on my wounded hands!" O my dear hearers! this has reference both to you and me; ought we not, therefore, to commit ourselves, body and soul, to Christ's maternal love and care, both for time and eternity?

3. Christ loves us, and loves us voluntarily, with the most tender, ardent, and felicitating love of a bridegroom.

Christ loves us also, and loves us voluntarily, with the most tender, ardent, and transporting love of a bridegroom. O yes! the love of Christ really entreats the hearts of poor lost sinners; and how long must he frequently woo us, before he receives from us the desired consent! How often have not you and I shamefully spurned and rejected his proffered kindness and love; and yet he was not weary of seeking us! O how tenderly does he love, even before he is beloved! But still how infinitely more tenderly, when he has attained his object, and when he can forever betroth himself with the soul, as with his bride, and engage himself to her in righteousness! This is often succeeded by many precious and even sensible communications of his love to the soul. Christ presents her with many invaluable jewels and celestial blessings, and gives her to experience, in her measure, "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

And as Christ finds his bride so entirely destitute, and so beggarly clothed, he divests her, by his love, and by sanctified affliction, of her filthy and tattered garments, clothes her with his righteousness, sheds abroad, together with his love, his whole mind, image, and resemblance, more and more in her, so that she is arrayed in his humility, meekness, purity, simplicity, and every divine virtue. And after having thus beautified her with himself, he then rejoices over her, "even as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride," (Isaiah 62:5) "Lo, you are fair my love," says Christ, the heavenly bridegroom. (Song of Solomon 1:15-16)

“No,” replies the bride, “’tis you alone that are beautiful; for even the beauty that you see in me, is yours.” These are no empty words or vain imaginations, but mighty wonders of the love of Christ. Would to God, that we could read them, not only in the Song of Solomon, but also in our hearts by happy experience!

It is impossible, my beloved hearers, to express the profound and ardent affection, and the intense desire there is in Christ, to regain possession of our hearts, to have us again near him, and to bind and unite us eternally to himself, and himself to us. Angels and men cannot comprehend it, but will adore this mystery, with the profoundest admiration, to all eternity. The Spirit of Christ, which dwells in believers, desires us, even to jealousy; he cannot bear that a heart, which has cost him so dear, that a heart, which he loves to such a degree, should still cleave to other objects, and not remain wholly and solely devoted to him. He loves the soul, as though he loved nought besides; and she must love him in the same manner in return; for the love of Christ—the profound and ardent affection of Christ for the soul, excites in her similar ardent affection for him. The love of Christ touches the soul and attracts her to itself, and she follows this attraction. “Draw us, and we will run after you!” Her heart and her whole being, while departing from every other object, longs after and inclines to closer union with her Beloved. What tender meetings, caresses, embraces, communications, and unions then take place, may well be experienced by pure and abstracted hearts, but can never be expressed; for these are subjects that belong more to eternity than to time. In short, the love of Christ is a great mystery of godliness, and an inexhaustible source of unmingled felicity.

Now, therefore, you dear immortals, all of whom as well as myself have been created, redeemed, and called, for the purpose of loving, and of loving God, behold—and O that our eyes were really opened to see it!—behold how God loves us in Christ, and how tenderly he loves us! How ought all those to be ashamed, who seek to represent God as a tyrant and a grouch! There is no wrath in God, except against what is evil. God has not created us, in order to hate us, or to be hated by us, but solely for the purpose of loving us, and being eternally beloved by us. But alas! alas! where are the hearts that love God in return? O that there should be such a God, such a Christ, a Christ that bears such love to men, and that there should be such a love of Christ, and yet be so little known, experienced, and enjoyed, and that too by so few!

The Divine Power of Love

How often do men repeat the words, “Dear Lord! dear Savior!” but ah! how are their hearts inclined towards him? What have our hearts experienced of the power of this love of Christ? For we must not imagine to ourselves, a sort of capricious, inoperative, and injurious love of Christ, as though he could, or ought to love us, while we continue in our vicious practices, like many parents, who possess such a senseless affection for their children, that they give way to all the perversity of their wills, and allow them to plunge themselves into perdition. The grovelling and perverted mind of man would desire such a love on the part of Christ also, and such divine mercy; and that Christ should permit him, in the days

of health, to enjoy the vanities and pleasures of the world, according to all his will, and that afterwards, when he came to die, and gave God a few good words, God should be so merciful, and Christ love him so much, as to take him immediately up to heaven. No, foolish man! such a love of Christ, and such a heaven is but the result of your own imagination; with God there is nothing of the kind. Christ loves you, even against your will, far more than you love yourself. He will rather cause you pain and save you, than flatter, and let you perish.

The love of Christ is therefore no vain imagination, but a vital, active, and mighty power of God, which actually raises and restores us from our errors and corruptions, sin and death; imparts a new and real life; makes us willing, alert, and able to the performance of all that is good, and renders us truly happy. The love of Christ is the commencement, foundation, and the soul of christianity and of all real religion. He that does not possess the love of Christ, has either no godliness or piety at all, or only such a piety as is hypocritical and dead. Christ in order to save us, must not remain at a distance from us; we must experience the power of his love upon our hearts, and make room for it; otherwise, notwithstanding all our speaking and hearing of the love of Christ, we continue in a state of spiritual darkness and wretchedness.

Christ undoubtedly makes the beginning by first loving us. When, for instance, *the love of Christ urges a man to repentance*, the Spirit of love then reproves him for his unrighteousness, convinces him of the necessity of repentance and conversion, alarms him on account of his sins, and the dangerous state of his soul. There is something that seems to pursue the man, and presses itself upon him, constraining him to repent and yield himself to God, and to become another man. 'Tis true, the blinded mortal regards it, in his ignorance, as a temptation of the devil which he ought to resist, or else he looks upon it as proceeding from his own uneasy and accidental thoughts, and as something of an evil or melancholy nature; yet, although he would often gladly be rid of it, it still returns to prove that it does not proceed from the man himself. Many a one, alas! allows days and years to elapse, without perceiving that it is the saving love of Christ, which thus constrains him.

Be assured that it is the compassionate and ever-loving Jesus, who stands at your door and knocks; he entreats and begs for your heart, just as if he really stood in need of it, saying, "Give me, my son, O give me your heart! Be reconciled unto God!" Thus it is that the love of Christ constrains; and how often, and how long has he dealt thus with us! How often would he have gathered us, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but he did not come at a convenient season, and we would not! In our natural state, we are running straight to perdition; is it not love, therefore, when the Savior arrests us in our course? We wander, as it were, on the brink of hell; is not that love, when he lays hold on us and draws us back, even by the pains he makes us feel? Ah, what advantage does the all-sufficient God derive from thus following after you and me? Are we of any benefit to him? Has he any need of us? O beloved soul, if you knew the gift of God, and who it is, that with such constraining influence speaks unto you, saying, "Yield yourself to me, delay no longer!" certainly, you would no longer resist nor seek to escape from him, but would fall

at his feet that very moment, and cast yourself into the arms of his love.

Now, if the soul be fortunate enough to stand still and give ear and admission to this attracting and restoring love, so that the heart being depressed, bowed down, and broken: by true repentance, seeks for refuge in the mercy of God; it is again the love of Christ, by means of which the soul is constrained to experience such painful feelings. Her carnal nature would indeed gladly expel the subject from her mind, and live the day through as before, free, jovial, and merry; but such a burden has fallen upon his heart, as cannot be got rid of—she feels her sins, her wants, her danger, and she feels them at all times. It is the love of Christ which constrains her to feel thus, although the soul, as yet, knows nothing of this love, but is only conscious of wrath and condemnation. She has heard and acknowledges, that it is she, who, by her sins, has crucified her loving Savior. This pierces her to the heart, this gives her pain. It is necessary that she feel it a little here, that she may not feel it too severely hereafter—is not this love?

The love of Christ impresses the soul with a feeling of her lost state, in order that this loss and its attendant misery, may humble her, and constrain her to seek the love of Christ, that in it she may find alleviation and a cure. For this is the sole intention of God in bringing us into this state of distress—not in order to repel us from him, and plunge us into perdition and despair—but to induce us to seek his loving heart, and by a penitential hungering after the love of Christ, escape from all our sinfulness and its consequent misery, and cast ourselves upon the atoning blood, precious merits, and eternal grace of Christ—not, indeed, by an inefficient self-made appropriation, but by a humble longing and aspiration of the heart after the influences of the grace and love of Christ, in the manner in which it may be really experienced to the tranquillizing of the distressed heart and conscience. In such a situation, all that the soul has to do is deeply to humble herself, confess her guilt, cast away every other confidence, and desire to know nothing but the love of Christ, and his eternal mercy. And when sin and the guilt of sin, and when wrath and condemnation press with all their weight upon the mind, the individual must do nothing else than plunge himself so much the more profoundly into this open abyss of the eternal mercy and love of Christ. It is thus that we ought to let the love of Christ constrain us to repentance, and through repentance to love; it will then assuredly follow eventually, that the love of Christ will cover the multitude of sins, so that afterwards, the individual is *ashamed*, as the prophet expresses it, (Isaiah 16:63) with humble thankfulness and confusion, when the Lord thus forgives him all his sins, and repays them, as it were, solely with his love; and then it likewise happens, that they, to whom most has been forgiven, love more than others.

The love of Christ then further constrains a converted soul to depart from sin, the world, and all its vanities. The man can no longer run with the multitude as before, without feeling himself under restraint. What is the reason? Are you perhaps afraid of being punished by your parents, masters, or magistrates? O no! The individual then becomes sensible of such sins, of which no man knows or can know anything; even the smallest things, which do not come under the jurisdiction of the magistracy, or of man.

But why? Is a person subject to be despised and ridiculed, when he lives a life of vanity, and is not

under the influence of piety? By no means! The world, on the contrary, ridicules and slanders him, who no longer runs to the same excess of riot. (1 Peter 4:5) But why do you not act like the men of the world, and why do you live so retired? Were a converted person to reply to this and to state the true reason, he would be obliged to say, “The love of Christ constrains me to forsake these things; I dare not and will not follow my depraved nature any longer. The time past of my life is sufficient to have wrought the will of the Gentiles. I have long enough crucified my beloved Savior with my sins—that Savior, that Christ, who so loved me, as not only to forsake the world but even heaven for me. Ought I not, therefore, for his sake, to deny myself an odious sin, a vain and transitory worldly lust?”

Yes, the love of Christ constrains us not only to deny the obvious vices of the world, and the dead works of sin, but urges us also to the real renunciation of the love of the world, and of attachment to created things, which may still remain in the heart; to the abandonment of the false and deeply-rooted life of self; to the mortification of lustful and angry passions—to the sacrifice of our own will, our self-love, and self-complacency, in small things as well as in great, in natural as well as in spiritual things.

What gloomy and terrific ideas do we not often form of self-denial! How many weak and inexperienced souls are frequently deterred from it without a cause! “O,” say they to themselves, “what a painful life must that be, when we cannot enjoy a single happy hour more in the world! It is impossible for us to live such a life; we shall never be able to part with this or that particular object, etc.” Ah my dear friends, what erroneous ideas you are continually forming of your God!

He has no need of our self-denial, as it regards himself: but we have need of it. He is not an austere man, that makes our life and the road to heaven painful and laborious to us, nor permits us to have any enjoyment in the world; but the reason is, that we are such foolish, blind, and degenerate children, as to be ignorant of our true happiness and salvation, and call that joy and pleasure, which is in reality our destruction, torment, and hell; just as a child that is playing with a knife, weeps, and resists in its ignorance, when the mother’s careful love commands it to put the knife away.

We must not look upon the inward impulse to self-denial as something of a legal nature, but as the constraining influence of the love of Christ; he seeks in a friendly manner to persuade us, simple children, to put the dangerous instrument out of our hands; and if his friendly persuasion avail not, he sometimes lets us wound ourselves, that we may lay the dangerous knife aside. O it is love alone! Christ will gladly have our whole hearts, and by means of such mortifications, remove every obstruction out of the way, that thus he may make us partakers of his real, perfect, and eternal joy, love, and delight. Yea, the more the Lord leads a soul to deny herself, and the less he permits her, the more especial is his love towards her.

Now as we ought not to ascribe this incitement to self-denial to legality, but to the love of Christ, neither ought we to act in a legal manner in the exercise of it, but let the love of Christ constrain us to it. When the soul’s constant exclamation is, “I must do this, or perish eternally;” and when she thus falls

upon self-denial without Christ, in her own strength, ah, such a life is indeed wearisome! but this must be also known by experience. It is true, *we must*, otherwise we shall be lost; but is it not already a part of condemnation, to be always acting from compulsion, and never from a willing heart? to be always compelled, and never be able to perform? We must therefore hunger after the love of Christ; seek the willingness and the power to deny ourselves in the love Christ; and seek it until we find it; until the love of Christ constrains us voluntarily to renounce ourselves and all created things, and esteem ourselves happy in denying ourselves, and hazarding something for the love of him, who is our friend, our parent, and our bridegroom, and to live so as we may best please him.

Were I pointedly to address those who are in a state of grace, those who would so gladly deny themselves, but find to their sorrow, that they everywhere fall short, I would say “Do not think so much upon denying yourselves, upon being faithful, or upon living holy and strictly: but only seek to love, hunger after love, exercise yourselves in love. Love is always exercising self-denial, without tasting its bitterness, and almost without ever thinking of it. Think only how you may love Christ, how you may love him more cordially than ever, and do everything to gratify and satisfy his love.”

The love of Christ constrains the believer into suffering, and through suffering. This sounds strange, and yet it is true. The individual is frequently placed so wonderfully and unexpectedly in some painful situation, that he knows not how it happened; he is, as it were, pressed into it. Some particular person must just speak or act towards us in such a manner; some expression or circumstance is taken in a wrong light; things must so happen and follow each other, that we may just have a little trial, cross, or suffering. It is not necessary that such things be always great or important; the love of Christ often makes use of a trifle, and knows how to touch us with it in the most sensible part. Thus it happens with regard to the body and outward things, and thus it takes place also with reference to spiritual things, in innumerable different ways; and it is the love of Christ that does it, although we are ready to ascribe it to some other cause.

Weak and timid souls may often distress themselves much by an unbelieving anticipation of future external or internal sufferings, temptations, and I know not what kinds of trials, which may perhaps never befall them. Their language is, “If I have ever to suffer that which such a one has to endure; if I shall have to tread in this or that difficult path, I know it will be impossible for me to bear it.” Ah, my friends! Do not torment yourselves with unavailing care and sorrow. Trust in love, that it will impel you to the cross, and through the cross; I mean, be without carefulness concerning the future. Love distributes afflictions wisely; she understands it better than we. As long as we remain little weak children, she will not impose any heavy burden upon us.

But whatever we may have to suffer at the moment, we ought to receive as coming directly from the hand of the love of Christ, and not as from any particular individual. When Christ suffered, he did not regard his sufferings as proceeding from the Jews, the Pharisees, or from Pilate; but as coming directly from his Father’s hand, saying, “The cup that my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?” Therefore do not think

so much of the affliction, as of him that sends it. If the case be thus, my friend—if you believe that it is Christ himself, who sends you any particular affliction, O how precious, how estimable and lovely ought everything to be to you, that proceeds from a hand so dear! Think how much he has suffered for you; will you not therefore endure a light affliction to please him?

Think not so much of affliction, as of the love of Christ. Love him, and you will be able to endure all things. What cannot love do? What have so many thousand martyrs and numberless other holy souls endured, and were enabled to endure, solely because they were constrained to it by the love of Christ! The love of Christ imparts a growing willingness to suffer, and secretly keeps the soul as if nailed to the cross; so that frequently when the individual is in painful situations, he would not descend from the cross, to let nature breathe, even were he left at liberty to do so.

The love of Christ must constrain us to sanctification. How repulsive and impracticable do many persons regard their sanctification. To live so strict as the Scripture directs—to become so meek, so devout, so humble, so pure, so blameless, and so holy, they think is impossible, and they cannot, by any means, endure or attain to it. True, my friends, when the severe reproofs of Moses in the conscience impel you to it, it is impossible; and when you constrain and force yourselves to it, it is unattainable; but it may be attained and that very easily, when we let the love of Christ constrain us to sanctification.

Ah, what anxiety do many exemplify, and what pains they take to become holy by their own efforts! O my dear friends! all you have to do is to love Christ, and to unite yourselves with him, by faith, love and prayer, as the branch is united to the vine. Does the branch find it difficult to bear sweet grapes? Is it necessary to compel it to do so by commanding, threatening, and rough usage? O no! the whole process takes place very quietly, easily, and naturally; the branch merely abides in the vine and imbibes its noble sap, and then it flourishes and bears fruit without any further trouble. It is thus, that we ought also to act. “Abide in me,” says Christ, and you shall bear much fruit.” We have only to love him, to remain inwardly secluded in his love, and, as barren branches in ourselves, let the pure and divine influence and power of the precious love of Christ penetrate our whole souls. We should then become, as though naturally, a people dear and acceptable to God, and filled with all the precious fruits of righteousness, to the praise of Jesus Christ. The virtues would then become easy and natural to us, and we should esteem ourselves happy in being able to live to Christ, according to all his good pleasure.

And really if it were possible, (which it is not,) that we could become holy by our own efforts, yet all would be only an imperfect, lifeless, and worthless phantom, proceeding from the will and power of man, and in which we only regarded and loved ourselves. It is the love of Christ which must impart true life, power, and value to all our godliness, works, and virtues. Paul, therefore, knows not how sufficiently to recommend this excellent way. “Though I had the tongues of men or of angels,” says he,” and have not charity or love, I should be as sounding brass,” and so on to the end of the chapter, which you will find in his first epistle to the Corinthians, and which you may read at home.

The love of Christ constrains to all diligence, watchfulness, and activity in every good work and during the whole course of godliness. Many a one, who slumbers securely in the deadly sleep of sin, may be terrified and awakened by fear and chastisement; strong emotions and the most serious resolutions may be produced in a man by the judgments of God, by illness, fear of death, the decease of near relatives, or by other reproofs of conscience, so that one would think something really good would result from it; but how soon it passes away, when unaccompanied by the heart-renewing grace and love of Christ! Distress, and death, and hell may constrain as they will; yet if the love of Christ does not constrain at the same time, the man falls asleep again.

The external means of grace may also be of service in awakening and encouraging slothful and sleepy souls; but if we wish to be effectually and permanently awakened by the means of grace which God puts into our hands, we must remain near our hearts, and pay attention to the cooperating love of Christ, which inwardly awakens, animates and seeks to let its influence be felt in the deepest recesses of the heart. Although love knows no anxious and distracting care, yet it is equally remote from slothfulness and drowsiness. Its possessor is ever anxious, the day through, to be trying to do something to please his Beloved.

And here I must also allude to outward slothfulness and heaviness. There are many who complain of being so easily overpowered by sleep, when alone and towards night. It must be allowed that this has its natural causes with some, who are weak and fatigued by labor, in which cases, the individual must have patience with himself; but I fear, that with many, it is love that is lacking. I have witnessed how many have been overtaken by sleep in the evening, when anything good was read or spoken of, but who immediately roused themselves, when any favorite topic of another kind was introduced. How shameful! Ah, if we had but a little more love for Christ, we should not be so slothful!

The love of Christ constrains to good works. The learned dispute in all manner of ways about good works and their merits—whether, and how far they are necessary to salvation, and the like. A soul that loves Christ, interferes not with such controversies; love, as is natural to it, constrains incessantly to every good work towards God, towards the brethren, towards our neighbors, and even towards our enemies. Love cannot act otherwise; she seeks to do everyone good, and to devote herself to all.

She has always enough—she is rich, she is kind, she is bountiful; and if she has no money or anything else to give, she has still a heart, which she gives in sympathy, compassion, and in rendering every possible assistance.

In a word, love is always doing good, almost without thinking of it; she performs a thousand good works, without asking whether she ought to do them or not, and the merit of good works never occurs to her. Even when she has done much she thinks she has hitherto done nothing, and that she will now begin. Thus it is that the love of Christ constrains.

The love of Christ constrains to a continual progress in sanctification and godliness. Those controversies are also completely unnecessary, which are carried on about perfection—whether the commands of God can be kept—whether such a particular state be attainable, and the like. My God! People dispute about perfection, and ought reasonably first to inquire, if they have taken one step towards it. Methinks they only betray their lifeless and loveless hearts by disputes of this nature.

Love knows no bounds; she invariably seeks to advance further, to be more faithful, pious, and acceptable in the sight of God. She does not long inquire whether the thing be practicable or not, she essays it in good earnest; she must necessarily follow her impulse and her constraining influence. The apostle Paul was doubtless, further advanced than any of us, yet what does he say in the third chapter to the Philippians? “Forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth towards those that are before, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” And if it were to be said to him, “Why, Paul, are you not pious enough? You are certainly no longer afraid of hell!” “Ah,” he would reply, “it is not hell nor heaven that constrains me, but it is the love of Christ that thus constrains me.”

The love of Christ enters voluntarily into all our concerns. She will and must have her hand, not only in the greatest, but even in the smallest things. All that we do, in reference to our natural life, however great and important it may appear, is in itself worthless folly and not worthy the attention of a heaven-born spirit; but by love, all these trifles may become truly great, and a means of serving God. He that picks up a bit of straw from the ground, from love to Christ, performs a great work.

There are many who complain heavily that their outward and necessary occupations cause them so much distraction, hindrance, and detriment. What is the reason, my dear friends? It is, perhaps, because you perform what is incumbent upon you, merely as if it were a worldly affair. When you are sitting in your chamber, or at church, or meeting, or are able to read, or do something good, you think you are serving God; but when engaged in the field, or the kitchen, or elsewhere, wherever your avocations lead you, you imagine you are serving the world. Ah how lamentable, if this were the case! We should then be obliged to spend the greatest part of our time in the worthless service of the world. Do all that you have to do, as a service rendered to the love of Christ, and then it will be no longer detrimental to you.

When the love of the world, care, or unbelief, or any other of the powers of nature, constrains us to business, and is our leading motive in it, the mind must naturally become more and more darkened and distracted; but if the love of Christ constrains us to the work, and if we let ourselves be restrained by it in our affairs, so that we perform them in a childlike manner, solely to his love and glory, they are then no longer a hindrance, but become a real service rendered unto God. It is this, that the Holy Spirit means, when it is said in Colossians 3:17, “Whatsoever”—observe how everything is included—“whatsoever you do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

The love of Christ will gladly keep us all the day near itself and within its influence, urge us on our

way, and by its constraining power, preserve us from wandering either to the right hand or the left. O if we would but carefully abide within its precincts! Persons often make to themselves a variety of good maxims, rules, and regulations for their conduct, which I do not entirely reject. I know that order and discipline is requisite to keep untoward nature in restraint, otherwise she would run wild; it is only to be lamented, that all these good rules and maxims are so soon broken through. There is no better rule, regulation, or precept, than the love of Christ, which is inwardly so near us.

The love of Christ will lead us like a mother leads her child. A child that walks in leading strings is carefully held and guided; for though it goes at liberty and without constraint, yet if it were on the point of running into the mire, or if danger were apprehended, it would immediately feel that it was held by something from behind. The love of Christ seeks to lead us in the same manner, in order that we may be “drawn in the cords of love.” (Hos. 11:4) When, through ignorance, we may be ready to fall into something improper or dangerous, we should perceive, like a child in leading-strings, that something held and restrained us, namely, the love of Christ.

The love of Christ must and will constrain us to prayer. Praying without the heart, and from the mere constraint of habit, is no prayer. Praying, when danger and distress of soul, and when a feeling of sin and necessity constrains, is a very good prayer; but when the love of Christ constrains us to pray, that is the noblest and most excellent prayer. We often complain that we know not how to pray, that we have not a due desire for it, and that the time when we are engaged in it appears long, etc. But this proceeds from the lack of love to Christ. Let us give way to love, and love will constrain us to pray. We are glad to be alone a little with true friends; and if we love Christ and love him cordially, we shall be willingly alone with him, nor will the time spent in his society easily appear long to us. If we love Christ, we shall always have something to say to him; and if we have nothing to say to him, yet still we have something to love, and that is praying. O it is an excellent prayer, to love and be silent in the presence of God!

Yes, my dear friends, we cannot believe what an excellent teacher of prayer the love of Christ is, which awakens in the heart of the pardoned soul such innumerable and inexpressible sighs— that it were only more carefully cherished! It causes many a tender aspiration to ascend from the bottom of the heart, frequently, involuntarily and almost unconsciously. Though the lips be silent, yet the heart exclaims in sincerity at one time, “O my God! O my Lord Jesus!” and at another, “I am forever yours! My God, and my all!” And a single one of these heartfelt exclamations is of more value in the sight of the Most High, and really includes in it more than a long prayer of another description, which is said from a book, or which proceeds from the understanding alone; and the reason is, because it is the language of truth. We are ready to say, “Tell me, friend, from what book have you learnt these beautiful aspirations? I should like to procure such a prayer-book for myself.” “The love of Christ,” replies the soul, “is my prayer-book; the love of Christ constrains me to utter these exclamations.”

The love of Christ is not only the most excellent teacher of prayer, but is also prayer itself. Love is like a

continual fire, that descends from heaven upon the altar of the soul, in the temple of the heart, where the sweet incense of silent, spiritual devotion gently and delightfully ascends from the inward sanctuary, in a thousand acts of praise, and love, and offering, of elevation and humiliation, and of veneration, adoration, and admiration of the ever-blessed God; where a single one of such inward acts of faith and love includes in it more life, peace, delight, and blessedness than all the world can afford. This the soul does not produce of herself, nor is she able to produce it; what does then? The love of Christ constrains her.

The love of Christ constrains the soul, in one word, more and more, by a blissful attraction, to complete and eternal union with the Beloved. She has drank of the water of love which Christ has given her, and this will gradually become in her a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life. She feels that there is no more happiness for her here below in anything that is created and temporal. Everything becomes so strange to her and so worthless in her sight. All that is within her longs after Christ and eternity; and Christ, the divine center of attraction, cannot long leave her here in sorrow—he draws her, and finally takes her to himself. “Father, I will, that where I am, they may be also whom you have given me, that they may behold my glory.” (John 17:24)

See, my friends, this blessedness, of which we have now imperfectly spoken, is laid up for you, and offered you in Christ; yea, it is for you, and for the weakest and most wretched among you. O my dear hearers, love God, who thus loves you, and will eternally love you! Surrender yourselves unconditionally to the constraining and attracting influence of this beatifying love of God. Set no bounds to this love, it leads further than the human understanding can reach; and there are greater wonders and blessings to be experienced and enjoyed in it, during the present life, than the tongue of men or angels can express.

O the lamentable blindness and ignorance of the generality of mankind, in being so cold towards God, and so warm in the pursuit of other objects, and in letting the love of the world, sin, and vanity have more influence over the heart than the love of Christ! The love of the world need only give the hint, and the man is immediately on the alert; while the love of Christ constrains so long, and yet people do not follow it nor resign themselves to it. O how many an unhappy worldling allows himself to be constrained by the sinful love of the world, and driven from one sin, vice, and vanity to another! He is like a slave, who is so constrained by his hard master, that he is almost unable to forsake his old habits; Satan and the love of the world govern and constrain him, and will drive him into hell itself, if he do not consider in time, and let himself be constrained to repentance by the love of Christ.

Let us therefore, my friends, examine what it is that we love. What has the greatest weight with us? On what object do we think first in the morning and most frequently during the day? For by this we may ascertain where our treasure lies. Are we beginning to let the love of Christ take possession of our hearts; or are we still in our lifeless and loveless state of nature, without Christ and his love? O indescribably unhappy state! O dreadfully dangerous condition! If we are not in love, we are in wrath, in the horrible kingdom of darkness, where the wrath of God is impending over us, and where, held merely by life's

slender thread, we hang over the bottomless abyss. O the eternal misery of dying in such a state!

O you immortal souls! You are now listening to the love of Christ, but who knows how long? It is now proclaimed, recommended, and offered by Christ himself to our hearts. Yes, Jesus loves you, all of you, however sinful you may be, and who must confess that you have been hitherto slaves of sin and Satan; you need not perish; Christ will gladly save you; he entreats you; ah, give yourselves up to him!

If your misery and danger, if the wrath of God, the fear of death, and the dreadful judgment-day, together with your own eternal woe and perdition cannot constrain and affect you, let the love of Christ now do so. Let me set before your eyes the suffering Savior. See him lying in his bloody sweat and dreadful agony of soul, as though upon the ground before you, weeping, and beseeching you. Behold him hanging on the fatal tree, in the greatest anguish of soul and body, with his arms extended to receive returning sinners! See, he shows you his bleeding wounds, and commends his grace and love to you! As sure as these words are addressed to you, so sure is the compassionate love of Christ busy with your hearts, and urging itself upon you. O submit yourselves to it! Do so *now*, that you may not eventually too late behold him, whom you have pierced with your sins. Lay hold on love, lest wrath lay hold on you—lay hold on love, while it is yet at hand!

But let us, who through grace, are become recipients of a spark of this love of Christ, esteem it highly; it is an invaluable pearl; and small as this pearl may be, yet it is of more value than the whole world: however small the spark is, it may still become a glowing heat, a flame of the Lord, when carefully cherished and attended to. Preserve it cautiously by a truly circumspect walk; avoid all unnecessary interaction, friendship, and entanglement with the men of this world, and every other occasion of temptation. In such circumstances, we ought to conduct ourselves like one who walks against the wind with a lighted taper, or who passes through a forest with a precious jewel; for the enemies of our souls, who watch for our treasure, are everywhere in ambush; we must therefore be constantly upon our guard, and pray, from the hymn we have just now sung,

*O make us watchful, night and day,
To guard with care love's precious prize;
Lest to those hellish hosts it fall a prey,
Which, from the pit, with might against us rise!*

We are apt to think this is a needless caution, and that we shall take good care of ourselves; but ah!—we are not sufficiently acquainted with the enemy's devices and our own weakness in the hour of temptation. We have no need to adduce the example of Peter as a warning to us—we have sufficient painful experience of it near at hand. Let us then beware of all levity, dissipation, and the unbelieving suggestions of our carnal reason. I am well aware that the love of Christ constrains us to all that has now been recommended, and instructs us in it according to our need; but we are, alas, not always in a right

state to listen to it. We ought, therefore, to remain near our hearts, where love carries on its work, in a tranquil, devotional, and collected frame of mind.

Now therefore, one word more of encouragement to us all, and with that I will conclude. Let us listen to and accept this glorious gospel of the ever-blessed God, which has been at this time announced to us, though in weakness, yet in the name of the Lord. Christ loves us, and will continue to love us; he will impart to us the power of his love, and along with it everything that is good in time and eternity. Christ loves us, he loves all of us; what then are we doing; why should we despond; why are we still asleep?

Christ loves you, you *youthful souls*, who in your blooming years are seeking something to love. Ah, how would I grieve, how would the Savior grieve, if you allowed yourselves to be captivated by a false and deceitful love! Would it not be forever to be lamented, if you should be seduced, defiled, and disgraced by the vain love of this world? By the love of such things, as have nothing really charming, nothing truly delightful in them, which so soon, so very soon wither away, cause disgust, and vanish like smoke? Christ loves you, are you conscious of it? Do you reflect upon it? It is for him alone that your hearts have been given you; for him alone has the noble inclination to love been so deeply implanted in your hearts. O, if you rightly knew what it is to be found in Christ and his love, you would certainly become enamored of and captivated by his incomparable beauty!

Christ loves you, you *penitent, distressed, and fearful hearts*, and you know it not, you believe it not. Christ loves you of a truth; will you then continue in your despondency? Ought not this joyful message to inspirit you? If you cannot yet fully believe it, make the attempt for once; venture, like Queen Esther, who said, "If I perish, I perish." She approached the king with fear, and when she thought it was all over with her the gracious scepter was extended to her and the king embraced her. Come then you fearful souls, and you shall experience that your lot will not fall out less favorably than hers.

Christ loves us—all who, with myself, are *partakers of the heavenly calling*. Ought we not therefore to awake out of sleep, to lift up the eyes of our hearts, to love Christ in return, and to walk in his ways with the utmost alacrity? What an honor people esteem it when they are beloved by a king or a prince, or by the noble or the great, though it be with a love that imparts to its object nothing substantial or permanent! And, lo, Christ, the Son of God, loves us as his bride! Ought we then to let the worthless follies of this world occupy our attention? Ought we not to let his love constrain us to detach our hearts from every worthless idol and rival, and devote them eternally to his divine love? In the heart of Jesus, I behold nothing but love towards us; O what a shame, what a pity, that anything else should be seen in our hearts but the love of Christ!

In future, however, it must be otherwise with us. Shall we then conclude, by once more renewing our covenant of love with Christ, now in his presence? Are we willing to bind and resign ourselves anew to the fairest among ten thousand, in sincere and mutual love, and with an unfeigned and, God grant, an irreversible assent and consent? Shall we do so? Is it the mature determination of our hearts? Come

then, and let us give the hand of our hearts to Jesus, who is present with us, and say in the spirit of true devotion,

*Yea and amen with my whole heart,
Lord, I devote myself anew;
Willing with all, for you, to part,
And swear to be forever true!
Your lovely name will I confess,
Whate'er a scoffing world may say;
And trust your covenant faithfulness,
To own me in the last great day.*