

Forward

The treatise entitled “No Cross, No Crown,” written by William Penn (1644-1718) during his imprisonment in the Tower of London, in 1668, has justly been considered among the best productions of his pen. His education and rank in life eminently qualified him to judge of the emptiness, vanity, and sinfulness of those worldly pleasures and compliances which he here censures, and against which he produces such conclusive arguments from the Holy Scriptures. Admired and courted for his talents and accomplishments, beloved for his amiable disposition and engaging manners, with the road to honor and preferment open before him, he had all the inducements that the world could offer to pursue its gratifications. But in the vigor and freshness of youth, when all before him was bright and promising, in obedience to the will of his heavenly Father, William Penn voluntarily relinquished his prospects of earthly honor and advantage, renounced the fashions and customs of the age, and lived a serious, self-denying life, in conformity with the example of the holy men of ancient time and the precepts of our Lord and His apostles, as set forth in the Scriptures of Truth.

In consequence of this change he endured much opposition from his relations and friends, and was even banished from his father’s house. But neither these trials nor his subsequent imprisonment, could shake his constancy nor induce him to shrink from what he believed to be his religious duty. And God, whom he endeavored to serve and honor in the midst of scorn and reproach, not only supported him above the fear of man, and filled his soul with peace and contentment, but restored his place in the esteem and affections of his relatives, and made him honorable in the eyes of the world for his Christian virtues. His father loved him with increased tenderness, and with his dying breath bore testimony in favor of the religious principles which his son had adopted.

William Penn was in the twenty-fourth year of his age when he wrote “No Cross, No Crown.” It was not therefore produced by weariness of the world, or that disgust which arises from long indulgence. It was the result of a calm and deliberate survey of the world’s manners and customs, viewed with the eye of a sincere and devoted Christian. He thought, and felt, and wrote, as one sensible of the dignity and noble endowments of man, and of his high destiny as an immortal being. The solidity of the argument, the depth of Christian experience, the exalted morality and pure religion, with which the work is fraught, commend it to the serious and attentive perusal of all denominations of Christendom.

—WILLIAM EVANS & THOMAS EVANS

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Preface by William Penn

Reader, the great business of man's life is to answer the end for which he lives; and that is, to glorify God and experience His salvation. This is the decree of heaven, as old as the world. But so it is that man minds nothing less than what he should mind most, and refuses to inquire into his own being, its origin, duty and end; choosing rather to dedicate his days to gratify the pride, greed, and luxury of his heart, as if he had been born for himself, or given himself being, and so not subject to the reckoning and judgment of a superior Power. To this lamentable predicament poor man has brought himself, by his disobedience to the law of God in his heart, by doing that which he knows he should not do, and leaving undone what he knows he should do. So long as this disease continues upon man, he will make God his enemy, and make himself incapable of the love and salvation which God has manifested by His Son, Jesus Christ, to the world.

If, reader, you are such a one, my counsel to you is, to retire into yourself, and take a view of the condition of your soul; for Christ has given you light with which to do it. Search carefully and thoroughly; your life hangs upon it; your soul is at stake. Your life is but once to be lived; if you abuse it, the loss is irreparable; the world is not price enough to ransom you. Will you then, for such a world as this, ignore the time of your visitation and lose your soul? Oh do not provoke God to reject you. Do you know what it is to be rejected? It is Tophet; it is hell, the eternal anguish of the damned.

Oh Reader! As one knowing the terrors of the Lord, I persuade you to be serious, diligent, and fervent about your own salvation! As one knowing the comfort, peace, joy and pleasure of the ways of righteousness, I exhort and invite you to embrace the reproofs and convictions of Christ's light and Spirit in your own conscience, and bear the judgment of your sin. The fire burns only the stubble; the wind blows only the chaff. Yield your body, soul, and spirit to Him who makes all things new—a new heavens and new earth, new love, new joy, new peace, new works, a new life and conduct. Men have grown corrupt and drossy by sin, and they must be saved through fire, which purges it away. For this reason the Word of God is compared to a fire, and the Day of salvation to an oven; and Christ Himself to a refiner of gold, and a purifier of silver.

Come, reader, hearken to me a while; I seek your salvation; that is my design. A Refiner has come near you, His grace has appeared to you, a grace which shows you the world's lusts, and teaches you to deny them. Receive His leaven, and it will change you. Receive His medicine, and it will cure you. He is as infallible as He is free. A touch of His garment did it of old, and will do it still, for His virtue is the same, and cannot be exhausted. In Him the fulness dwells; blessed be God for His sufficiency. He laid help upon Him that He might be mighty to save all that come to God through Him. Do so, and He will change you; yes "He will change your vile body like unto His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."¹ What then must we do to be witnesses of His power

and love? This is the crown; but where is the cross? Where is the bitter cup and bloody baptism? Come, reader, be like Him. For this transcendent joy, lift up your head above the world; then your salvation will draw near indeed.

Christ's cross is Christ's way to Christ's crown. This is the subject of the following discourse—first written during my confinement in the tower of London in the year 1668, now reprinted with great enlargement of matter and testimonies—that you may be won to Christ; or if won already, brought nearer to Him. It is a path which God, in His everlasting kindness, guided my feet into in the flower of my youth, when about twenty-two years of age. He took me by the hand, and led me out of the pleasures, vanities and hopes of the world. I have tasted of Christ's judgments and of His mercies, and of the world's frowns and reproaches. I rejoice in my experience, and dedicate it to your service in Christ. To my country and to the world of Christians I leave it. May God, if He please, make it effectual to them all, and turn their hearts from that envy, hatred and bitterness they have one against another about worldly things—sacrificing humanity and charity to ambition and covetousness, because of which they fill the earth with trouble and oppression. And may they receive the Spirit of Christ into their hearts, the fruits of which are love, peace, joy, temperance and patience, brotherly kindness and charity, and so in body, soul and spirit make a triple league against the world, the flesh, and the devil, the only common enemies of mankind. Thus, having conquered their enemies by the power of the cross of Jesus, and through a life of self-denial, they may at last attain to the eternal rest and kingdom of God.

So desires and so prays your fervent Christian friend,

—WILLIAM PENN.

Chapter I

A Crossless Christianity

Though the knowledge and obedience of the doctrine of the cross of Christ be of infinite importance to the souls of men—being the only door to true Christianity, and the path which the ancients ever trod to blessedness—yet, with extreme affliction let me say, it is so little understood, so much neglected, and what is worse, so bitterly contradicted, by the vanity, superstition, and intemperance of professed Christians. Indeed, such is the state of things in this day, that we must either renounce a belief in what the Lord Jesus has told us, that “whosoever does not take up His daily cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple;” or, admitting it for truth, conclude that the generality of Christians do miserably deceive

1 Philippians 3:21

themselves in the great business of Christianity, and disappoint their own salvation.

For, let us be ever so tender and charitable in the survey of those nations that claim an interest in the holy name of Christ, if we will be just too, we must acknowledge that after all the gracious advantages of light which these latter ages of the world have received—by the coming, life, doctrine, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, with the gifts of His Holy Spirit; to which we can add, the writings, labors and martyrdom of His dear followers in all times—there seems very little left of Christianity but the name. And lamentably, the name Christian, being now usurped by the old heathen nature and life, makes so many of the professors of it but true heathens in disguise. For though they do not worship the same idols, yet they worship Christ with the same heart; and they can never do otherwise, while they live in the same lusts. The unmortified Christian and the heathen are of the same religion.

For though they have different objects to which they direct their prayers, still the adoration in both is but forced and ceremonious, and the deity they truly worship is the god of this world, the great lord of lusts; to him they bow with all the powers of soul and sense. What shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we wear? And how shall we pass away our time? Which way may we gather wealth, increase power, enlarge our territories, and dignify and perpetuate our names and families in the earth? This base sensuality is comprised by the beloved apostle John in these words: “The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, which are not of the Father, but of the world that lies in wickedness.”¹

It is a mournful reflection, but a truth which will not be denied, that these worldly lusts fill up a great part of the study, care, and conduct of Christendom. And, what aggravates the misery is that these things grow with time. For as the world is older, it is worse. The examples of former lewd ages, and their miserable conclusions, have not deterred, but rather excited ours. Indeed, the people of this day, seem improvers of the old stock of impiety, and have carried it so much farther than former examples, that instead of advancing in virtue, they have scandalously fallen below the life of heathens. Their high-mindedness, lasciviousness, uncleanness, drunkenness, swearing, lying, envy, backbiting, cruelty, treachery, covetousness, injustice and oppression, are so common and committed with such invention and excess, that they have stumbled and embittered infidels and made them scorn that holy religion to which their good example should have won their affections.

This miserable defection from primitive times, when the glory of Christianity was the purity of its professors, I cannot but call the second and worst part of the tragedy which came upon the blessed Savior of mankind. For the Jews, from the power of ignorance and their prejudice against the unworldly way of His appearance, would not acknowledge Him when He came, and so for two or three years persecuted and finally crucified Him in one day. But the false Christians’ cruelty lasts much longer. They have first, with Judas, professed Him, and then, for these many ages, most basely betrayed, persecuted, and

¹ 1 John 2:16-5:19

crucified Him by a perpetual apostasy in conduct from the self-denial and holiness of His doctrine; their lives showing the falseness of their faith. These are they that the author of the epistle to the Hebrews tells us, “crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to open shame.”² Their defiled hearts, John, in his revelation, calls, “the streets of Sodom and Egypt spiritually so-called,”³ where he beheld the Lord Jesus crucified long after He had ascended. As Christ said of old, that a man’s enemies are those of his own house; so Christ’s enemies now are chiefly those of His own profession. Indeed, these spit upon Him, nail and pierce Him, crown Him with thorns, and give Him gall and vinegar to drink. Nor is this hard to apprehend; for they that live in the same evil nature and seed that the Jews did, who crucified Him outwardly, must necessarily crucify Him inwardly. They that reject the grace now in their own hearts, are one in stock and generation with the hard-hearted Jews who resisted the grace that then appeared in and by Christ.

Sin is of one nature all the world over; for though a liar is not a drunkard, nor a swearer a whoremonger, nor are either properly a murderer, yet they are all of one church, all branches of the one wicked root, all of one family. They have but one father, the devil, as Christ said to the professing Jews, the visible church of that age. He slighted their pretensions to Abraham and Moses, and plainly told them, “He that committed sin, was the servant of sin.”⁴ They did the devil’s works, and therefore were the devil’s children. This argument will always hold upon the same reasons, and therefore is good still. “His servants you are,” says Paul, “whom you obey.”⁵ And John says to the church of old, “Let no man deceive you, he that commits sin is of the devil.”⁶ Was Judas a better Christian for crying, “Hail, master!” and kissing Christ? By no means! These words were the signal of his treachery, the token given by which the bloody Jews should know and take Him. He called Him Master, but betrayed Him. He kissed, but sold Him to be killed. This is the substance of the false Christian’s religion. If a man ask them, “Is Christ your Lord?” They will cry, “God forbid anything else! Yes, He is our Lord!” “Very well, but do you keep His commandments?” “No, how should we?” “How then are you His disciples?” “It is impossible,” they say, “What! Would you have us keep His commandments? No man can!” But is it impossible to do that, without which Christ has made it impossible to be a Christian? Is Christ unreasonable? Does He reap where He has not sown, or require where He has not enabled? Thus it is, that, with Judas, they call Him Master, but take part with the evil of the world to betray Him. They kiss and embrace Him, as far as their profession goes; and then sell Him to gratify the passions they most indulge.

Let no man deceive his own soul; grapes are not gathered of thorns, nor figs of thistles; a wolf is not a sheep, nor is a vulture a dove. Whatever form, people, or church you are of, this is the truth of God to

2 Hebrews 6:6

3 Revelation 11:8

4 John 8:34

5 Romans 6:16

6 1 John 3:8

mankind: they who have the form of godliness, but by their unmortified lives deny its power, make up the false church, not the true. And though this church may call herself the Lamb's bride, or the church of Christ, she is that mystery or mysterious Babylon, who is fitly called by the Holy Spirit, "the mother of harlots, and all abominations."⁷ She has degenerated from Christian chastity and purity, into all the enormities of heathen Babylon—a sumptuous city of old time, much noted as the seat of the kings of Babylon, and at that time a place of the greatest pride and luxury. As she was then, so mystical Babylon is now, the great enemy of God's true people.

True it is that they who are born of the flesh, hate and persecute those who are born of the Spirit, the circumcised in heart. These cannot acknowledge nor worship God according to Babylon's inventions, methods, and prescriptions, nor receive for doctrine her vain traditions, any more than they can comply with her corrupt fashions and customs in their conduct. And because they cannot conform, apostate Babylon quickly turns persecutor. It is not enough that she herself declines from ancient purity; others must do so too. She will give those no rest who will not partake with her in her degeneracy, or receive her mark. Are any wiser than she, than the so-called mother church? No, no, nor can any make war with the beast she rides upon—those worldly powers that protect her and vow to maintain her against the cries of her dissenters. Apostasy and superstition are ever proud and impatient of dissent. All must conform or perish. Therefore the slain witnesses, and the blood of the souls under the altar, are found within the walls of this mystical Babylon, this great city of false Christians, and are charged upon her by the Holy Spirit in the book of Revelation.

The children of Babylon are reduced so entirely under the dominion of darkness, by means of their continued disobedience to the manifestation of the divine light in their souls, that they forget what man once was, or what they should now be. They do not recognize true and pure Christianity when they meet it, though they pride themselves in professing it. Their views about salvation are so carnal and false, that they call good evil, and evil good. They make a devil a Christian, and a saint a devil. And though the unrighteous indulgence of their lives is a source of lamentation (as it is of destruction to themselves), yet the false notion that they may be children of God while in a state of disobedience to His holy commandments, is, of all other deceptions, the most deadly to their eternal condition. Alas, they believe they are disciples of Jesus even though they revolt from His cross. They flatter themselves members of His true church which is without spot or wrinkle, notwithstanding their lives are full of spots and wrinkles. For they are at peace in sin, and under security in their transgression.

Their vain hope silences their inward convictions and buries all tender motions to repentance, so that their mistake about their duty to God is as mischievous as their rebellion against Him. Thus they walk on precipices and flatter themselves till the grave swallows them up, and the judgment of the great God breaks their lethargy and undeceives their poor, wretched souls with the anguish of the wicked as the

⁷ Revelation 17:5

reward of their work.

This has been, is, and will be the doom of all worldly Christians—an end so dreadful, that compassion alone would be sufficient to excite me to dissuade all against the world’s superstition and lusts, and to invite the professors of Christianity to the knowledge and obedience of the daily cross of Christ as the only way given by Him, and appointed unto us to blessedness. By this daily cross, those who now do but usurp the name may have the thing itself; and by its power they may be made partakers of the resurrection that is in Christ Jesus unto newness of life. For they that are truly in Christ, that is, redeemed by Him and engrafted in Him, are new creatures. They have received a new will, such as does the will of God, not their own. They pray in truth, and do not mock God when they say, “Your will be done in earth as it is in heaven.”⁸ They have new affections, such as are set on things above, and make Christ their eternal treasure. They have new faith, such as overcomes the snares and temptations of the world’s spirit in themselves, or as it appears through others. And they have new works, not of superstitious contrivance, or of human invention, but the pure fruits of the Spirit of Christ working in them—such as love, joy, peace, meekness, long-suffering, temperance, brotherly kindness, faith, patience, gentleness and goodness, against which there is no law.

They who do not have this Spirit of Christ, and walk not in it, the apostle Paul has told us, “are none of His;”⁹ but the wrath of God, and the condemnation of the law, will lie upon them. There is indeed “no condemnation to them that are in Christ, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”¹⁰ But by this same doctrine, they who do *not* walk according to that Holy Spirit are not in Christ. These have no inheritance in Him, nor a just claim to salvation by Him; and consequently there is condemnation to such.

An Inward Reprover and Savior

The religion of the wicked is a lie: “There is no peace,” says the prophet, “to the wicked.”¹¹ Indeed there can be none, for they are reprovèd in their own consciences and condemnèd in their own hearts for all their disobedience. Go where they will, rebukes go with them, and oftentimes terrors too. It is an offended God who pricks them, and by His light “sets their sins in order before them.”¹² Sometimes they strive to appease Him by their outward devotion and worship, but in vain; for the true worship of God is the doing of His will, which will they transgress. Sometimes they fly to sports and company to drown the Reprover’s voice and blunt His arrows, to chase away troubled thoughts and secure themselves out of

8 Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2

9 Roman 8:9

10 Romans 8:1

11 Isaiah 48:22; Isaiah 57:21

12 Ps. 50:21

the reach of the Disquieter of their pleasures. But the Almighty, sooner or later, is sure to overtake them. There is no flying from His justice for those who reject the terms of His mercy. Indeed their Accuser is always with them, they can no more be rid of Him than of themselves. He is in the midst of them, and will stick close to them. That Spirit which bears witness with the spirits of the just will bear witness against theirs. Yes, their own hearts will abundantly condemn them; and “if our heart condemns us,” says the apostle John, “God is greater, and knows all things;”¹³ that is, there is no escaping the judgments of God if a man is not able to escape the condemnation of himself.

In that Day, proud and luxurious Christians shall learn that God is no respecter of persons; that all sects, denominations, and names shall be swallowed up in these two kinds: sheep and goats, just and unjust. Indeed, the very righteous must be tried, which made a holy man cry out, “If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”¹⁴ If their thoughts, words and works must stand the test, and come under scrutiny before the impartial Judge of heaven and earth, how then should the ungodly be exempted? No, we are told by Him that cannot lie that many shall then cry, “Lord, Lord!” They shall set forth their profession, and recount the works they have done in His name, and yet be rejected with this awful sentence; “Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity, I know you not.”¹⁵ As if He had said, ‘Be gone, you evil-doers; for though you have professed Me, I do not know you. Go hence, and go to the gods whom you have served; your beloved lusts, which you have worshipped, and the evil world that you have so much coveted and adored. Let them save you now, if they can, from the wrath to come upon you, which is the wages of the deeds you have done.’ Here is the end of their work who build upon the sand; the breath of the Judge will blow it down, and woeful will be its fall.

But to the righteous the sentence is changed, and the Judge smiles. He casts the eye of love upon His own sheep and invites them with a, “Come, you blessed of My Father, who through patient continuance in well-doing, have long waited for immortality. You have been the true companions of My tribulations and cross, and with unwearied faithfulness, in obedience to My holy will, have valiantly endured to the end, looking unto Me, the Author of your precious faith, for the recompense of reward, which I have promised to them that love Me and faint not. O enter into the joy of your Lord, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

O Christendom! My soul most fervently prays, that after all your lofty professions of Christ and His meek and holy religion, your unsuitable and unchrist-like life may not cast you off at that great tribunal of the world, and you lose this great salvation at last. Hear me once, I beseech you: Can Christ be your Lord and you not obey Him? Or, can you be His servant and yet not truly serve Him? Be not deceived, such as you sow, that you shall reap. He is not your Savior while you reject His grace in your heart by which He

13 1 John 3:20

14 1 Peter 4:18

15 Luke 13:24-27

would save you. Come now, what has He saved you from? Has He saved you from your sinful lusts, your worldly affections and vain conversations? If not, then He is not your Savior. For though He be offered a Savior to all, yet He is actually a Savior to those only who are saved by Him; and none are saved by Him who still live in those evils by which they are lost to God, and from which He came to save them.

It is from sin that Christ is come to save man, and from death and wrath as the wages of it. But those who are not saved—that is, truly delivered by the power of Christ in their souls from the power that sin has had over them—can never be saved from the death and wrath which are the certain wages of the sin they live in. So far as people obtain victory over the evil and fleshly lusts to which they have been addicted, that far they are truly saved, and are witnesses of the redemption that comes by Jesus Christ. Indeed His name shows His work; “And you shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.”¹⁶ “Behold,” said John of Christ, “the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!”¹⁷ Behold Him, whom God has given as a Light to the people, and for salvation to as many as receive His light and grace in their hearts, and take up their daily cross and follow Him—such as would rather deny themselves the pleasure of fulfilling their lusts, than sin against the knowledge He has given them of His will, or do that which they know they ought not to do.

Chapter II

A Great Apostasy

By all which has been said, O Christendom, and by the lamp that the Lord has lit in you (if you would use it), it should evidently appear: First, how great your backsliding has been; for instead of the temple of the Lord, you have become a cage of unclean birds; and instead of a house of prayer, you are a den of thieves, a synagogue of Satan, and the dwelling of every defiled spirit. And second, that under all this manifest defection, you have nevertheless valued your corrupt self based upon your profession of Christianity, and fearfully deluded yourself with the hopes of salvation. The first makes your disease dangerous, but the last makes it almost incurable.

Nevertheless there is mercy with the God of compassion, that He may be feared. He takes no delight in the eternal death of poor sinners and backsliders, but desires that all should come to the knowledge and obedience of the truth, and be saved. Thus He has sent forth His Son as a propitiation, and given Him as a Savior to take away the sins of the whole world, that those who believe and follow Him, may feel the

¹⁶ Matthew 1:21

¹⁷ John 1:29

righteousness of God in the remission of their sins and the blotting out of their transgressions forever. Behold the remedy! An infallible cure, one of God's appointing! A precious antidote indeed that never failed! A universal medicine which no malady could ever escape!

But you will say, what is Christ, and where is He to be found? How is He received and applied, in order to work this mighty cure? I will tell you then: First, He is the great spiritual Light of the world who "enlightens every one that comes into the world."¹ As such, He manifests to men their deeds of darkness and wickedness, and reproveth them for committing them. Secondly, He is not far away from you, as the apostle Paul said of God to the Athenians. And Christ Himself says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with Me."² What door can this be, but that of the heart of man?

But alas, like the inn of old, you have been full of other guests. Your affections have entertained other lovers; there has been no room for your Savior in your soul. Therefore salvation has not yet come into your house, though it has come to your door, and you have often been offered it, and have professed it long. But if He still calls, if He still knocks, that is, if His light yet shines and reproveth you, then there is hope that your day is not over, and that repentance is not hidden from your eyes. Yes, His love is toward you still, and His holy invitation continues in order to save you.

Therefore, O Christendom, believe, receive, and apply Him rightly! This is of absolute necessity, that your soul may live forever with Him. He told the Jews, "If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins; and where I go, you cannot come."³ Because they believed Him not, they did not receive Him, nor any benefit by Him. But they that believed Him, received Him: "And as many as received Him," His own beloved disciple tells us, "to them He gave power to become the sons of God; which are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."⁴ That is, these are not children of God according to the fashions, prescriptions and traditions of men. These are not His church and people after the will of flesh and blood, or the inventions of carnal men unacquainted with the regeneration and power of the Holy Spirit. No, these are born of God, according to His will, and the working and sanctification of His Spirit and Word of life in them. Such as these are well acquainted with the right application of Christ, for He is indeed made unto them propitiation, reconciliation, salvation, righteousness, redemption and justification.

So I say to you, unless you believe that He who stands at the door of your heart and knocks, and sets your sins in order before you, and calls you to repentance, is the Savior of the world, you too will die in your sins; and where He has gone, you will never come. For if you do not believe in Him, it is impossible that

1 John 1:9

2 Revelation 3:20

3 John 8:21,24

4 John 1:12-13

He will do you good or effect your salvation. Christ works not *against* faith, but by it. It is said of old, that He did not do many mighty works in some places because the people did not believe in Him. If you truly believe in Him, your ear will be attentive to His voice in you, and the door of your heart will open to His knocks. You will yield to the discoveries of His light, and the teachings of His grace will be very dear to you.

It is the nature of true faith to beget a holy fear of offending God, a deep reverence for His precepts, and a most tender regard to the inward testimony of His Spirit as that by which His children, in all ages, have safely been led to glory. For as they that truly believe, receive Christ in all His offers to the soul, so those who thus receive Him, receive power to become the sons of God; that is, they receive an inward power and ability to do whatever He requires: strength to mortify their lusts, to control their affections, resist evil motions, deny themselves, and overcome the world in its most enticing appearances. This is the life of the blessed cross of Christ, which is the subject of the following discourse; and this is what you, O man, must take up, if you intend to be a disciple of Jesus. For you cannot truly receive Christ, or believe in Him, while you reject His cross. Receiving Christ is the means appointed of God unto salvation, and so bearing your daily cross after Him is the true testimony of having received Him, and the great token of discipleship. “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”⁵

This, Christendom, is what you have so much lacked, and the lack of it has proved the cause of your miserable declension from pure Christianity. Consider this well, for it is your duty, and will be of great use to your restoration. As the proper knowledge of a disease guides the physician to make a right and safe judgment in the application of his medicine, so it will much enlighten you in the way of your recovery to know and weigh the first cause of this spiritual fault and malady which has befallen you. To do this, a general view of the primitive state of Christianity, and the work of those who first labored in Christ’s vineyard, will be needful.

Primitive Christianity

The work of apostleship, we are told by a principal laborer in it, was, “to turn people from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.”⁶ That is, instead of yielding to the temptations and motions of Satan, who is the prince of darkness or wickedness (the one word being a metaphor for the other) by whose power their understandings were obscured and their souls held in the service of sin, they should turn their minds to the appearance of Christ, the Light and Savior of the world. By His light He shines in their souls and thereby gives them a sight of their sins. He uncovers every temptation and motion in them unto evil, and reproveth them whenever they give way thereto, that so they might become the children

5 Matthew 16:24

6 Acts 26:18

of light, and walk in the path of righteousness. For this blessed work of reformation, Christ endued His apostles with His Spirit and power, that men might no longer sleep in a security of sin and ignorance of God, but awaken to righteousness, and receive life from the Lord Jesus Christ. These then were enabled to leave off sinning, deny themselves the pleasures of wickedness, and by true repentance turn their hearts to God in well-doing, in which they found peace. And truly, God so blessed the faithful labors of these poor tradesmen (His great ambassadors to mankind), that, in a few years, many thousands who had lived without God in the world—without a sense or fear of Him, in lawlessness and as strangers to the work of His Spirit in their hearts, being captivated by fleshly lusts—were inwardly struck and quickened by the Word of life, and made sensible of the coming and power of the Lord Jesus Christ as a Judge and Lawgiver in their souls. By His holy light and Spirit, the hidden things of darkness were brought to light and condemned, and pure repentance from those dead works was begotten in them that they might serve the living God in newness of Spirit.

Consequently, these lived no longer unto themselves, nor were they carried away by their former lusts which had seduced them from the true fear of God. Instead, the law of the Spirit of life (by which they overcame the law of sin and death) was their delight, and therein they meditated day and night. Their regard towards God was no longer derived from the precepts of men, but from the knowledge they had received by His own work and impressions in their souls. They had forsaken their old masters—the world, the flesh and the devil—and delivered themselves up to the holy guidance of the grace of Christ, which taught them to “deny ungodliness and the world’s lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present life.”⁷ This is the cross of Christ indeed: and here is the victory it gives to those that take it up. By this cross they died daily to the old life they had lived, and by a holy watchfulness against the secret motions of evil in their hearts, they crushed sin in its conception, yes, even in its temptations. So that, as the apostle John advises, they “kept themselves, that the evil one touched them not.”⁸

The light, which Satan cannot endure, and with which Christ had enlightened them, uncovered their adversary in all his approaches and assaults upon the mind, and the power they received through their obedience to the manifestations of that blessed light enabled them to resist and vanquish him in all his stratagems. So it was that, where once nothing was examined, now nothing went unexamined. Every thought must come to judgment, and the rise and tendency of it must be well approved before they allowed it any room in their minds. There was no fear of entertaining enemies for friends while this strict guard was kept upon the very gateway of the soul. The old heavens and earth, that is, the old earthly manner of living, and the old carnal or shadowy worship, passed away quickly, and every day all things became new. “He was no more a Jew who was one outwardly, nor was circumcision that which was in the flesh; but he was a Jew who was one inwardly; and circumcision was of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of man, but of God.”⁹

7 Titus 2:11

8 1 John 5:18

The glory of the cross shined so conspicuously through self-denial in the lives of those who daily bore it, that it filled the heathen with astonishment, and in a small time so shook their altars, discredited their oracles, struck the multitude, invaded the court, and overcame their armies, that it led priests, magistrates and generals in triumph after it as trophies of its power and victory.

While this integrity dwelt with Christians, mighty was the presence, and invincible the power that attended them. It quenched fire, daunted lions, turned the edge of the sword, out-faced instruments of cruelty, convicted judges, and converted executioners. The ways their enemies sought to destroy them only increased them; and by the deep wisdom of God, those who in all their designs endeavored to extinguish the truth were made great promoters of it. Among the faithful not a vain thought, nor an idle word, nor an unseemly action was permitted; no, not even an immodest look. There was no courtly dress, flashy apparel, flattering addresses, or personal honors; much less could those lewd immoralities and scandalous vices now in vogue with Christians find either example or place among them. Their great care was not how to sport away their precious time, but how to redeem it, that they might have enough to “work out their great salvation with fear and trembling;”¹⁰ not with balls and masquerades, with play-houses, dancing, feasting and gaming, no, no! To “make their heavenly calling and election sure”¹¹ was much dearer to them than the poor and trifling joys of mortality.

Having, with Moses, “seen Him that is invisible,”¹² and found that His lovingkindness was better than life, and the peace of His Spirit more than the favor of princes, so they feared not Caesar’s wrath, and chose rather to sustain the afflictions of Christ’s true pilgrims than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. Yes, they esteemed His reproaches of more value than the perishing treasures of the earth. And if the tribulations of Christianity were more desirable to them than the comforts of the world, and the reproaches of the one more enticing than all the honors of the other, then there was surely no temptation in the world that could shake the integrity of Christendom.

The Great Apostasy

By this short view of what Christendom was, you may see, O Christendom, what you are not, and what you ought to be.

But how is it, that from a people so meek, merciful, self-denying, suffering, temperate, holy, just and good, and so like Christ whose name she bore, we find a Christendom now that is superstitious, idolatrous,

9 Romans 2:28-29

10 Philippians 2:12

11 2 Peter 1:10

12 Hebrews 11:27

persecuting, proud, passionate, envious, malicious, selfish, drunken, lascivious, unclean, lying, swearing, cursing, covetous, oppressing, defrauding—with all other abominations known in the earth, and that to an excess justly scandalous to the worst of heathen ages, surpassing them more in evil than in time: I say, how came about this lamentable defection? I offer this as the undoubted reason of this degeneracy, namely: *the disregard in your mind to the light of Christ shining in you, which first showed you your sins, reprov'd them, and taught and enabled you to deny and resist them.* For it is certain that, whatever measure of fear towards God and abstinence from unrighteousness you witness, was not taught by the precepts of men, but by that light and grace which reveals the most secret thoughts and purposes of your heart, searches your most inward parts, sets your sins in order before you and reprov's you for them, not permitting one unfruitful thought, word, or work of darkness to go unjudged. So then, when you began to disregard this light and grace, to be careless about the holy watchfulness that was once set up in your heart, and did not keep watch there as formerly for God's glory and your own peace, then the restless enemy of man's good quickly took advantage of this slackness, and often surprised you with temptations, whose suitableness to your own inclinations made his conquest over you not difficult.

Yes, you neglected to take up Christ's holy yoke, and to bear your daily cross. You were careless with your affections, and kept no check upon your actions, forgetting to keep accounts in your own conscience by Christ your light, the great Bishop of your soul and Judge of your works. In this way, your holy fear decayed and your love waxed cold; and so vanity abounded and duty became burdensome.

Then up came formality, instead of the power of godliness; and superstition, in the place of Christ's working. And though Christ's business was to draw off the minds of His disciples from an outward temple with its carnal rites and services, to the inward and spiritual worship of God (suitable to the nature of divinity), yet a worldly, human, pompous worship is brought in again, and a worldly priesthood, temple and altar are reestablished. Now the "sons of God once more saw that the daughters of men were fair,"¹³ that is, the pure eye grew dim which repentance had opened, and which saw no beauty outside of Christ; and the eye of lust was opened again by the god of the world. And then those worldly pleasures—that make such as love them forget God, though they were once despised for the sake of Christ—began to recover their old beauty and interest in your affections; and liking them, they came to be the pursuit, care, and pleasure of your life.

True, there still remained the exterior forms of worship, and a nominal and verbal reverence to God and Christ. But this is all that survived; for the offense of the holy cross ceased, the power of godliness was denied, self-denial was lost, and though you became fruitful in the invention of ceremonious ornaments, you remained barren in the blessed fruits of the Spirit. And alas, a thousand shells cannot make one kernel, nor can many dead corpses make one living man.

13 Genesis 6:2

Thus religion fell from experience to tradition, and worship from power to form, from life to letter. Instead of putting up lively and powerful requests to God, animated by a deep sense of need and the assistance of the Holy Spirit (by whom the ancients prayed, wrestled and prevailed with God); behold, a prescribed repetition, a dull and insipid formality, made up of bowing and kneeling, special garments and furniture, perfumes, voices and music—a performance fitter for the reception of some earthly prince, than for the heavenly worship of the only true and immortal God, who is an eternal and invisible spirit.

As your heart grew carnal, your religion did so too; and not liking it as it was, you fashioned it to your liking. No doubt you forgot the words of the holy prophet, “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,”¹⁴ and the saying of James, “You ask and receive not,” and why? “because you ask amiss,” that is, with a heart that is not right, but insincere, and unmortified, not in the faith that purifies the soul, and so can never receive what is asked. Thus it may now be said in truth, that the condition of many is made worse by their religion, for they are tempted to think themselves the better for it, though they are not.

By this view that is given of your fall from primitive Christianity, and the true cause of it— namely, a neglect of the daily cross of Christ—I trust the way of your recovery may be easily seen. At the door by which you went out, you must come in. As all was lost through neglecting and letting fall the daily cross, so taking up and enduring the daily cross will be your means of recovery. This is the way by which sinners and apostates become the disciples of Jesus. “Whosoever,” says Christ, “will come after Me and be My disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his daily cross, and follow Me.” Nothing short of this will do. As it is sufficient, so is it indispensable. There is no crown but by the cross; no life eternal but through death. And it is only just that those evil and barbarous affections that crucified Christ afresh, should now, by His holy cross, be crucified in you. Blood requires blood; His cross is the death of the sin that caused His death; and He is the death of death, according to that passage, “O death! I will be your death!”¹⁵

Chapter III

The Daily Cross

Therefore, O Christendom, the daily cross being both then and now the only way to glory, it will be to the great advantage to your soul to most seriously consider:

¹⁴ Proverbs 15:8

¹⁵ Hosea 13:14, Vulgate

First, What the cross of Christ is.

Secondly, Where the cross of Christ is to be taken up.

Thirdly, How and after what manner it is to be borne.

Fourthly, What is the great work and business of the cross.

As to the first—What is the cross of Christ? The cross of Christ is a figure of speech, borrowed from the outward tree, or wooden cross, on which Christ submitted to the will of God, in permitting Him to suffer death at the hands of evil men. The mystical or daily cross is that divine grace and power which crucifies the carnal wills of men, contradicts their corrupt affections, and constantly opposes the inordinate and fleshly appetites of their minds. This power may be justly termed the instrument of man's holy dying to the world and being made conformable to the will of God. Nothing else can mortify sin, or make it easy for us to submit to the divine will in things otherwise very contrary to our own.

“The preaching of the cross” in primitive times was fitly called by Paul (that famous and skillful apostle in spiritual things) “the power of God,”¹ though to them that perish, it was then, as now, foolishness. That is, to those who were truly weary and heavy laden and in need of a deliverer, to whom sin was burdensome and odious, the preaching of the cross (by which sin was to be mortified) was the power of God, or the preaching of the divine power by which they were made disciples of Christ and children of God. And this power wrought so mightily upon them that no proud or licentious mockers could put them out of love with it. But to those who walked in the broad way, in the full latitude of their lusts, and dedicated their time and care to the pleasure of their corrupt appetites, to whom all yokes and bridles were and are intolerable, to these the preaching of the cross was and is foolishness.

Where does this cross appear, and where must it be taken up? I answer, within; that is, in the heart and soul—for where the sin is, there the cross must be. All evil comes from within. Christ taught, “From within, out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evils come from within, and defile the man.”² The heart of man is the seat of sin, and where he is defiled, there he must be sanctified; where sin lives, there it must die, it must be crucified. Custom in evil has made it natural for men to do evil; and as the soul rules the body, so this corrupt nature sways the whole man. But still, it is all from within.

Experience teaches every son and daughter of Adam the truth of this. The enemy's temptations are ever directed to the heart or mind, which is within: if they take not, the soul sins not; but if they are

1 1 Corinthians 1:18

2 Mark 7:21-23

embraced, then lust (or inordinate desire) is immediately conceived, and as the apostle says, “when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin; and when sin is finished (that is, acted) it brings forth death.”³ Here is both the cause and the effect, the genealogy of sin, its rise and its end.

In all this, the heart of evil man is the devil’s mint, his work-house, the place of his residence, where he exercises his power and art. Therefore the redemption of the soul is aptly called “the destruction of the works of the devil,”⁴ and “the bringing in of everlasting righteousness.”⁵ When the Jews would have defamed Christ’s miracle of casting out devils by a blasphemous imputation of it to the power of Beelzebub, Christ says, “No man can enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, till he first bind the strong man.”⁶ This both shows us the contrariety between Beelzebub and the power by which Christ dispossessed him, and it teaches us that the souls of the wicked are the devil’s “house,” and that his goods, his evil works, can never be destroyed until he that wrought them, and keeps the house, is bound. All this makes it easy to know where the cross must be taken up, by which alone the strong man can be bound, his goods spoiled, and his temptations resisted—that is, within, in the heart of man.

In the next place, how, and in what manner, is the cross to be daily borne? The way, like the cross, is spiritual. *It is an inward submission of the soul to the will of God as it is manifested by the light of Christ in the consciences of men*, though it be contrary to their own inclinations. For example; when evil presents, that which reveals the evil does also instruct not to yield to it, and if a man complies with its counsel, it gives him power to escape it. But they that look and gaze upon the temptation, at last fall in with it and are overcome by it; the consequence of which is guilt and judgment.

Therefore, as the cross of Christ is that Spirit and power in men (though not of men, but of God) which crosses and reproveth the fleshly lusts and affections, *so the way of taking up the cross is an entire resignation of soul to the discoveries and requirings of it, without consulting worldly pleasure, or carnal ease or interest* (for these are captivated in a moment). Thus the soul must continually watch against every appearance of evil, and, by the obedience of faith (in true love to, and confidence in God) cheerfully offer up to the death of the cross that evil nature in themselves which, not enduring the heat of the siege, and being impatient in the hour of temptation, would, by its near relation to the tempter, easily betray their souls into his hands.

This may show to everyone’s experience how hard it is to be a true disciple of Jesus! The way is narrow indeed, and the gate very strait, where not a word, no, not a thought must slip the watch, or escape judgment. Such circumspection, such caution, such patience, such constancy, such holy fear and trembling, give an easy interpretation to that hard saying, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” For

3 James 1:15

4 1 John 3:8

5 Daniel 9:24

6 Matthew 12:29

those who are captivated with fleshly lusts and affections cannot bear the cross; and those that cannot endure the cross, must never have the crown. To reign, it is necessary first to suffer.

Chapter IV

Denying Lawful Self

Fourthly, what is the great work and business of the cross respecting man? It is of such great importance that this be truly, plainly and thoroughly answered, that all that went before seems only to serve as a preface to it. Miscarrying in this is no less than a misguidance of the soul about its way to blessedness. I shall therefore pursue the question, with God's help, and the best knowledge He has given me, in the experience of several years' discipleship.

The great work and business of the cross of Christ, in man, is self-denial—a word little understood, but of much depth in itself, and of sore contradiction to the world. The Son of God has gone before us, and, by the bitter cup He drank and the baptism He suffered, has left us an example that we should follow in His steps. This made Him put that hard question to the wife of Zebedee and her two sons, upon her soliciting that one might sit at His right and the other at His left hand in His kingdom: “Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink, and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?” It seems their faith was strong; they answered, “We are able.” Upon which He replied, “You shall indeed drink of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with;”¹ but their reward He left to His Father.

What was the cup He drank, and the baptism He suffered? I answer; they were the denial and offering up of Himself by the eternal Spirit to the will of God, undergoing the tribulations of His life, and the agonies of His death upon the cross, for man's salvation.

Now, what is *our* cup and cross that we must drink and suffer? They are the denying and offering up of ourselves, by the same Spirit, to do or suffer the will of God for His service and glory. This is the true life and obedience of the cross of Jesus—narrow still, but previous to Christ it was an unbeaten way. For Christ came in the greatness of His love and strength when there was none to help, not one to open the seals, to give knowledge, or to direct the course of poor man's recovery. And though clothed with the weaknesses of a mortal man, being inwardly fortified by the almightiness of an immortal God, He travelled through all the straits and difficulties of humanity; and, as the first of all others, trod the untrodden path to blessedness.

¹ Matthew 20:20-23

O come let us follow Him, the most unwearied, the most victorious Captain of our salvation, to whom all the great Alexanders and mighty Caesars cannot be compared. For these were all great princes of their kind, and conquerors too, but on very differing principles. Christ made Himself of no reputation to save mankind; but these thoroughly ruined people in order to augment their name. They vanquished others, not themselves; but Christ conquered self, the very power that vanquished them. They advanced their empire by rapine and blood; but He by suffering and persuasion. They prevailed through force, but Christ never made use of compulsion. Misery and slavery followed all their victories, but Christ brought freedom and felicity to those He overcame. In all they did, they sought to please themselves; in all He did, He aimed to please His Father, who is God of gods, King of kings, and Lord of lords. Rightly then is He called the most excellent prince and conqueror. And it is this most perfect pattern of self-denial we must follow, if ever we will come to glory.

The Lawful Self

To do this, let us consider self-denial in its true distinction and extent. There is a lawful and an unlawful self, and both must be denied for the sake of Him who, in submission to the will of God, counted nothing dear that He might save us. And though scarcely any part of the world has progressed as far as to need a lesson in the denial of lawful self (since every day they most greedily sacrifice to the pleasures of unlawful self), yet I shall at least touch upon it, as this may possibly meet with some who are so far advanced in this spiritual warfare, as to receive benefit from it.

The lawful self, which we are to deny, is that convenience, ease, enjoyment and plenty which, in itself, is so far from being evil that it may be considered the bounty and blessing of God towards us: things such as husbands, wives, children, houses, land, reputation, liberty, and life itself. These are God's favors, which we may enjoy with lawful pleasure, and justly improve as our honest interest. But when God requires them, at what time soever, or if He is pleased to try our affections by making us part with them; I say, when they are brought in competition with Him, they must not be preferred, but denied.

Christ Himself descended from the glory of His Father, and willingly made Himself of no reputation among men in order that He might bring us to God. Thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, He humbled Himself to the poor form of a servant; yes, to the ignominious death of the Cross, and so delivered to us an example of pure humility, and entire submission to the will of our heavenly Father.

This doctrine He teaches us in these words: "He that loves father or mother, son or daughter, more than Me, is not worthy of Me." Again, "Whosoever of you that forsakes not all that he has, cannot be My disciple." He plainly told the rich young man that if he would have eternal life, he must sell all and follow Him: a doctrine which was sad to him, as it also is to those like him who, notwithstanding all their high pretenses to religion, love their possessions more than Christ. Still, this doctrine of self-denial stands as

the condition to eternal happiness: “He that will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.”

This made those honest fishermen quit their lawful trades and follow Him when He called them; and caused others who waited for the consolation of Israel to offer up their estates, reputations, liberties, and lives also, to the displeasure and fury of their kindred and the government they lived under, for the spiritual advantage that accrued to them by their faithful adherence to His holy doctrine.

It is true, many sought to excuse themselves from following Him, as is seen in the parable of the wedding feast. Some had bought land, some had married wives, and others had bought yokes of oxen and said they could not come. Alas, an immoderate love of the world hindered them. Instead of acting as their servants, these lawful enjoyments became their idols; they worshipped them more than God, and would not renounce them to come to God. This is recorded to their reproach, and we may herein see the power of self upon the worldly man, and the danger that comes to him by the abuse of lawful things. What! Your wife dearer to you than your Savior? Your land and oxen preferred before your soul’s salvation? O beware, that your comforts prove not snares first, and then curses. To over-rate them is to provoke Him that gave them to take them away again. Come instead to follow Him that gives eternal life to the soul.

Woe to them that have their hearts in their earthly possessions! For when they are gone, their heaven stays here. It is the sin of the greatest part of the world that they adhere to their worldly treasures, and how lamentable to behold their affections soiled and entangled with their conveniences and accommodations in it. The true self-denying man is a pilgrim; but the selfish man is an inhabitant of the world. The one uses the world as men do ships, to transport themselves or their supplies in a journey towards home; the other looks no further (whatever he claims) than to be settled in fulness and ease here, and he likes it so well that, if he could, he would never exchange it. No, he will not trouble himself to think of the other world till he is sure he must live no longer in this. Then alas, it will prove too late! Not to Abraham’s bosom, but to the rich man he must go; the story is as true as it is sad.

On the other hand, it is not for nothing that the disciples of Jesus deny themselves; and indeed, Christ Himself had the eternal joy in His eye. “For the joy that was set before Him,” says the author to the Hebrews, “He endured the cross;”² that is, He denied Himself and bore the reproaches and death of the wicked, despising the shame, the dishonor, and the derision of the world. This made Him not afraid nor shrink, and He has set down on the right hand of the throne of God. To the encouragement and great consolation of His disciples, when Peter asked Him what they should have who had forsaken all to follow Him; He answered, “Verily I say unto you, you who have followed Me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel,”³ who were then in apostasy from the life and power of godliness. This was the lot of His

² Hebrews 12:2

disciples, the more immediate companions of His tribulations, and the first messengers of His kingdom. But that which follows is to all: “And everyone that has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.”⁴ It is this recompense of reward, this eternal crown of righteousness, which, in every age, has raised in the souls of the just a holy neglect, yes, a contempt of the world.

The Example of the Ancients

This is no new doctrine; it is as old as Abraham. In several most remarkable instances, his life was made up of self-denial. First, in quitting his own land, where we may well suppose him to have been settled in the midst of plenty, or at least sufficiency. And why did he leave it? Because God called him. This should be reason enough; but such is the world’s degeneracy that, in reality, it is not. Indeed, the same act, upon the same incentive in any man now, though praised in Abraham, would be mocked and derided. Alas, how apt are people to commend what they do not understand. And how they admire in their ancestors the very same acts which they despise in the faithful disciples of their own times.

But Abraham obeyed, and the consequence was that God gave him a mighty land. This was the first reward of his obedience; the next was a son in his old age, past the time of his wife’s bearing children. Yet God soon called for his darling, their only child, the joy of their age, the son of a miracle, and the one upon whom the fulfilling of the promise made to Abraham depended. God called for this son, bringing a trial which one would think might very well overturn his faith, and shake his integrity, or at least bring about this dispute in himself: “This command is unreasonable and cruel; it must be the tempter’s, it cannot be God’s. For, would God give me a son to make a sacrifice of him? Should a father be the butcher of his only child? That He should require me to offer up the son of His own promise, by whom His covenant is to be performed, is absurd.” Thus might Abraham have naturally argued, in order to withstand the voice of God and indulge his great affections to his beloved Isaac. But good old Abraham, who knew the voice that had promised him a son, had not forgotten it when it called to him again. He disputed not, though it looked strange, and though he no doubt felt a measure of surprise and horror as a man. He had learned to believe that God who gave him a child by a miracle could work another to preserve or restore him. His affections could not outbalance his duty, much less overcome his faith.

To the voice of the Almighty Abraham bowed, built an altar, bound his only son upon it, kindled the fire, and stretched forth his hand to take the knife; but the angel stopped the stroke. “Hold, Abraham, your integrity is proved.” And what followed? A ram served for the sacrifice, and Isaac was his again. This shows how little will serve where all is resigned, and how low a sacrifice contents the Almighty where the

3 Matthew 19:28 KJV

4 Matthew 19:28-29

heart is approved. It is not the sacrifice that recommends the heart, but the heart that gives the sacrifice acceptance.

God often touches our greatest comforts, and calls for that which we most love and are least willing to part with. He does not always take them utterly away, but He proves the soul's integrity, cautions us from excesses, and in order that we may remember Him (the Author of all blessings we possess) teaches us to live loose to the world. I speak my experience: the way to keep our enjoyments is to resign them. And though this be hard, it is sweet to see them returned, as Isaac was to his father, with more love and blessing than before. O foolish world! O worldly Christians! Not only strangers, but enemies to this excellent faith! And while you are so, you can never know the reward of it.

Job's self-denial was also very remarkable. For when the messengers of his afflictions came thick upon him with one doleful story after another, until he was left almost as naked as when he was born, the first thing he did was fall to the ground and worship that power, and kiss that hand, that stripped him. He was so far from murmuring, he concluded his losses of estate and children with these words: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return: the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."⁵ O the deep faith, patience, and contentment of this excellent man! One would have thought that this repeated news of ruin had been enough to overset his confidence in God, but it did not; his faith stayed him. And he tells us why—"I know (says he) that my Redeemer lives."⁶ And it is manifest that His Redeemer indeed did live, for He had redeemed him from the world. His heart was not in his worldly comforts; his hope lived above the joys of time and the troubles of mortality. He was not tempted by the one, nor shaken by the other; but firmly fixed, "that after my skin has been struck off from my flesh, yet I shall see God."⁷ Thus the heart of Job was both submitted to, and comforted in, the will of God.

Moses is the next great example in the sacred story for remarkable self-denial, before the times of Christ's appearance in the flesh. He had been saved, when an infant, by an extraordinary Providence, and it seems by what followed, for an extraordinary service. Pharaoh's daughter, whose compassion was the means of his preservation (when the king decreed the slaughter of the Hebrew males), took him for her son, and gave him the education of her father's court. His own graceful presence and extraordinary abilities, joined with her love to him and desire for her father to promote him, must have rendered him, if not capable of succession to the throne, at least of being a chief minister of affairs under that wealthy and powerful prince. For Egypt was then what Athens and Rome were afterward, the most famous center for learning, arts and glory.

But Moses was ordained for other work, and guided by a better star, a higher principle. No sooner had he

5 Job 1:21

6 Job 19:25

7 Job 19:26 LitV Translation

come to an age of discretion, than the impiety of Egypt and the oppressions of his brethren there, grew a burden too heavy for him to bear. And though so wise and good a man could not have been lacking in generous and grateful sentiments because of the kindness of the king's daughter to him, yet he had also "seen that God who is invisible,"⁸ and did not dare to live in the ease and plenty of Pharaoh's house while his poor brethren were required to make brick without straw. And so, with the fear of the Almighty taking deep hold of his heart, he nobly refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and chose rather a life of affliction with the despised and oppressed Israelites, and to be the companion of their temptations and jeopardies, "than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;"⁹ esteeming the reproaches of Christ (which he suffered for making that unworldly choice) greater riches than all the treasures of that kingdom.

Nor was he so foolish as they thought; for he had reason on his side. It is said, "He had an eye to the recompense of reward;"¹⁰ so he did but refuse a lesser benefit for a greater. In this his wisdom transcended that of the Egyptians; for they made the present world their choice (which is as uncertain as the weather) and so lost that world which has no end. Moses looked deeper, weighed the enjoyments of this life in the scales of eternity, and found they had no weight there. He governed himself, not by the immediate possession, but by the nature and duration of the reward. His faith corrected his affections, and taught him to sacrifice the pleasures of self to the hope he had of a future, more excellent recompense.

Isaiah was no inconsiderable instance of this same blessed self-denial; who, from a courtier, became a prophet, and left the worldly interests of the one for the faith, patience, and sufferings of the other. His choice did not only lose him the favor of men, but their wickedness (enraged by his integrity to God in his fervent and bold reproofs of them) made a martyr of him in the end; for they barbarously sawed him asunder in the reign of king Manasseh. Thus died that excellent man, commonly called, the Evangelical Prophet.

I shall add one example more, from the fidelity of Daniel. This was a holy and wise young man, who, when his external advantages came into competition with his duty to Almighty God, relinquished them all. Instead of being solicitous how to secure himself, as one minding nothing less, he was, to the utmost hazard of himself, most careful how to preserve the honor of God by fidelity to His will. And though at first it exposed him to ruin, yet, (as a great encouragement to all who keep a clear conscience in an evil time), his faithfulness to his Creator at last advanced him greatly in the world; and the God of Daniel was made famous and fearful through his perseverance, even in the eyes of heathen kings.

What shall I say of all the rest, who, counting nothing dear that they might do the will of God, abandoned their worldly comforts and exposed their ease and safety (as often as the heavenly vision called them) to the wrath and malice of degenerate princes, and an apostate church? More especially Jeremiah, Ezekiel

8 Hebrews 11:27

9 Hebrews 11:25

10 Hebrews 11:26

and Micah, who, after they had denied themselves, in obedience to the divine voice, sealed up their testimony with their blood.

Thus was self-denial the practice and glory of the ancients, who were predecessors to the coming of Christ in the flesh. And shall we hope for heaven without it now, when our Savior himself was made the most excellent example of it? And that, not as some would eagerly have it, namely, “He suffered for us, so that we need not suffer;” but rather, He suffered for us, that we might deny ourselves and so be the true followers of His blessed example.

Leave All for Him

Whoever you are, therefore, that desire to do the will of God, but faint because of the opposition of worldly considerations; remember I tell you, in the name of Christ, that he who prefers father or mother, sister or brother, wife or child, house or land, reputation, honor, office, liberty or life, before the testimony of the light of Jesus in his own conscience, shall be rejected of Him, in the solemn and general examination of the world, when all shall be judged and receive according to the deeds done (not the profession made) in this life. It is the doctrine of Jesus that if your right hand offends you, you must cut it off; and if your right eye offends you, you must pluck it out; that is, if the most dear, the most useful and tender comforts you enjoy, stand in your soul’s way, interrupting your obedience to the voice of God and your conformity to His holy will revealed in your soul, you are engaged, under the penalty of damnation, to part with them.

The way of God is a way of faith, which is as dark to natural sense as it is mortal to self. The children of obedience, with holy Paul, count all things dross and dung that they may win Christ, and know and walk in this narrow way. Speculation will not do, nor can refined notions enter it. Only the obedient will eat the good of this land. “They that will to do My Father’s will,” says the blessed Jesus, “shall know of My doctrine;”¹¹ then He will instruct. There is no room in the heart for instruction where the lawful self is lord and not servant. For self cannot receive it; and that which should receive it is oppressed by self, with fears and doubts: “What will my father or mother say? How will my husband treat me? Or, what will the magistrates do with me? For though I feel a most powerful persuasion, and a clear conviction upon my soul of this or that thing, yet considering how unpopular it is, what enemies it has, and how strange I shall seem to some, I hope God will pity my weakness if I sink. I am but flesh and blood; it may be that hereafter He will better enable me; and there is time enough.” Thus speaks the selfish, fearful man.

Deliberating is always the worst, for the soul loses in consultation; but the manifestation of light brings power with it. Whenever God seeks to convince people, He also empowers them upon their submission.

¹¹ John 7:17

He requires nothing without ability to perform it; for that would be mocking, not saving men. It is enough for you to do what God shows to be your duty, provided you consent to the light and Spirit by which He gives you that knowledge. They that lack power, are those who do not receive Christ in His convictions upon the soul, and such will always lack it. But such as do receive Him, receive power also (like those of old) to become the children of God, through the pure obedience of faith.

Therefore, let me beseech you by the love and mercy of God, by the life and death of Christ, by the power of His Spirit and the hope of immortality, you whose hearts are established in your temporal comforts and are lovers of self more than of these heavenly things; let the time past suffice for such things! Do not think it enough to be clear of certain gross impieties which others are found in, while your inordinate love of lawful things defiles your enjoyment of them, and draws your heart from the fear, love, obedience, and self-denial of a true disciple of Jesus. Turn about then, and hearken to the still voice in your conscience; it tells you of your sins, and of your misery in them. It gives a living discovery of the vanity of the world, and opens to your soul some prospect of eternity, and the comforts of the righteous who are at rest. If you adhere to this, it will divorce you from sin and self. You will soon find that the power of its charms exceeds that of the wealth, honor, and the beauty of the world, and, will finally give you that tranquility which the storms of time can never shipwreck or disorder. Here all your enjoyments are blessed. Though they be small, yet they are great because of that presence which is within them.

Even in this world the righteous have the better part, for they use the world without rebuke, and do not abuse it. They see and bless the hand that feeds and clothes and preserves them. Beholding Him in all His gifts, they do not adore them, but Him. Indeed, the sweetness of His blessing is an advantage which such have over those who see Him not. In their increase they are not lifted up, nor in their adversities are they cast down; for they are moderated in the one, and comforted in the other, by His divine presence.

In short, heaven is the throne, and earth is but the footstool, of that man who has self under foot. Those who know this station will not easily be moved. They learn to number their days that they may not be surprised at their dissolution. They learn to “redeem their time, because the days are evil;”¹² remembering that they are but stewards, and must deliver up their accounts to an impartial Judge. Therefore, not to self, but to Him they live, and in Him they die, and are blessed with them that die in the Lord. Thus I conclude my discourse of the right use of lawful self.

Chapter V

Denying Unlawful Self

¹² Ephesians 5:16

I now come to unlawful self, which, more or less, is the immediate concern of the greater part of mankind. This unlawful self is twofold. First, that which relates to religious worship: Second, that which concerns moral and civil conduct in the world. They are both of infinite consequence to be considered by us. I shall be as brief as I may with ease to my conscience and no injury to the matter at hand.

That unlawful self in religion, which ought to be mortified by the cross of Christ, is man's invention and performance of the worship to God, which is not truly so, either in its institution or performance. In this great error, many of those who attribute to themselves the name of Christians take the lead, being most exterior, pompous and superstitious in their worship. These not only err exceedingly by a spiritual unpreparedness in the way of their performing worship to God Almighty (who is an eternal spirit), but the worship itself is composed of what is utterly inconsistent with the very form and practice of Christ's doctrine and the apostolic example. The worship of the apostles was plain and spiritual; the worship of today is gaudy and worldly. Christ's worship was inward, in the soul; the world's worship is outward and bodily. The true worship was suited to the nature of God, who is a spirit; but man's invented worship is accommodated to the carnal part. Instead of excluding flesh and blood, behold there is now a worship calculated to gratify flesh, as though the goal were not to present God with a worship pleasing to Him, but to make one pleasing to man.

This is a worship dressed with stately buildings and imagery, rich furniture and garments, polished voices and music, costly lamps, wax candles and perfumes, and all acted with the most pleasing variety to the external senses that art can invent or cost procure. They act as though the world were to turn Jew or Egyptian again, or that God was an old man, and Christ a little boy, to be treated with a kind of religious masquerade—for so they picture Him in their temples, and too many in their minds. Such a carnal worship may very well suit this idea of God, for when men can think Him such a one as themselves, it is no wonder they address Him and entertain Him in a way that would be most pleasing from others to themselves.

But what said the Almighty to such a sensual people of old, upon the like occasion? "You thought I was such a one as yourself, but I will reprove you, and set your sins in order before you. Now consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. But to him that orders his conduct aright, I will show the salvation of God."¹ The worship acceptable to Him is, "To do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God."² He that searches the heart and tries the thoughts of man, and sets his sins in order before him, who is the God of the spirits of all flesh, looks not to the external fabric, but the internal frame of the soul, and the inclination of the heart. Nor can it be soberly thought, that He who is "clothed with divine honor and majesty, who covers Himself with light as with a garment, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, who lays the beams of His chambers in the deep, who makes

1 Ps. 50:21-23

2 Micah 6:8

the clouds His chariots, who walks upon the wings of the wind, who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flaming fire, and who laid the foundation of the earth, that it should not be moved forever,”³ can be adequately worshipped by those human inventions which are the refuge of a people who have apostatized from the primitive power and spirituality of Christian worship.

An Inward Temple

Christ drew off His disciples from the glory and worship of the outward temple, and instituted a more inward and spiritual worship, in which He instructed His followers. “You shall neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem,” says Christ to the Samaritan woman, “worship the Father. God is a spirit, and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”⁴ It is as if He had said, ‘For the sake of the weakness of the people, God condescended, in times past, to limit Himself to an outward time, place, temple and service, in and by which He would be worshipped; but this was during men’s ignorance of His omnipresence, when they considered not what God is, nor where He is. I am come to reveal Him to as many as receive Me. God is a spirit, and He will be worshipped in spirit and in truth.’

People must be acquainted with Him as a spirit, considering and worshiping Him as such. It is not the bodily worship, nor the ceremonial services in use among you now that will serve or give acceptance with this God who is a spirit. You must obey His Spirit that strives with you to gather you out of the evil of the world, so that bowing to His instructions and commands in your own souls, you may know what it is to worship Him as a spirit. Then you will understand, that it is not going to this mountain, nor to Jerusalem, but doing the will of God and keeping His commandments. Commune with your own heart and do not sin; take up your cross, meditate on His holy law, and follow the example of Him whom the Father has sent.

Stephen, that bold and constant martyr of Jesus, told the Jews when a prisoner at their bar, “Solomon built God a house, however the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands; as says the prophet, heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool, where is the house you will build Me, says the Lord, or what is the place of My rest? Has not My hand made all these things?”⁵ Behold, here is a total overthrow to all worldly temples and their ceremonious accessories! The martyr follows up his blow upon those apostate Jews, who were the pompous, ceremonious, worldly worshippers of that time: “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.”⁶ It is as if He had told them, ‘Neither your outward temple, rites and shadowy services, nor

3 Ps. 104:1-5

4 John 4:24

5 Acts 7:47-50

6 Acts 7:51

your pretensions to succession in nature from Abraham, and, by religion, from Moses are of any import; for you are resistors of the Spirit and opposers of His instructions. You will not bow to His counsel, nor are your hearts right towards God. You are the successors of your fathers' iniquity! And, though you are verbal admirers of the prophets, you are not the successors of their faith and life.'

The prophet Isaiah carries it a little farther than what is cited by Stephen. For, after having declared what is not God's house (the place where His glory dwells), these words immediately follow: "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word."⁷ Behold, O carnal and superstitious man, the true worshipper, and the place of God's rest! This is the house and temple of Him whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain—a house which self cannot build, nor the art or power of man prepare or consecrate.

Paul, that great apostle of the Gentiles, twice expressly uses the word temple to refer to man, and not to a building of man's hand and art. In his first epistle to the church at Corinth he writes, "Know you not that you are the temples of the Holy Spirit, which is in you, which you have from God?"⁸ And again, he tells the same people, in his second epistle, "For you are the temple of the living God, as God has said;" and then cites God's words by the prophet, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."⁹ This is the evangelical temple, the Christian church, whose ornaments are not the embroideries and furnitures of worldly art and wealth, but the graces of the Spirit—meekness, love, faith, patience, self-denial, and charity. Here it is that the eternal Wisdom—"who was with God from everlasting, before the hills were brought forth, or the mountains laid"—chooses to dwell, "rejoicing (He says) in the habitable part of His earth, and My delight is with the sons of men;"¹⁰ not in houses built of wood and stone. This living house is more glorious than Solomon's dead house, which was but a figure; even as Solomon was a figure of Christ, who builds us up as a holy temple to God. It was promised of old, that "the glory of the latter house should transcend the glory of the former;"¹¹ which indeed may be applied to this. For the prophet spoke not of one outward temple or house excelling another in outward luster; for where is the benefit of that? But the promise was that the divine glory, the beauty of holiness in the Gospel-house or church, made up of renewed believers, should exceed the outward glory of Solomon's temple, which, in comparison of the latter days, was but as flesh to spirit, fading resemblances compared to the eternal substance.

Christians do indeed have meeting places, yet not in the Jewish or heathen way, but rather plain, void of pomp and ceremony, suiting the simplicity of their blessed Lord's life and doctrine. For God's presence

7 Isaiah 66:2

8 1 Corinthians 6:19

9 2 Corinthians 6:16

10 Proverbs 8:31

11 Haggai 2:9

is not with the house, but with them that are in it, who *are* the Gospel-church, and not the house. O that such as call themselves Christians knew a real sanctity in themselves by the washing of God's regenerating grace, instead of that imaginary sanctity ascribed to places! Then they would know what the church is, and where it is that God appears in this gospel day. Yes, this made the prophet David say, "The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold."¹² What is the glory that is within the true church, and that gold which makes up her inward glory? Tell me, O superstitious man! Is it your stately temples, altars, carpets, tables, tapestries, vestments, organs, voices, candles, lamps, censers, plates and jewels, with the same furniture found in your worldly temples? No such thing! These are nothing in comparison with the divine adornment of the King of heaven's daughter, the blessed and redeemed church of Christ. O miserable apostasy! O wretched substitute for the loss of the apostolic life, the spiritual glory of the primitive church.

The False Crosses of Men

Yet some of these admirers of external pomp and glory want to be thought lovers of the cross, and so have made themselves many. But alas! what hope is there of reconciling this to Christianity? For while these pretend to worship God with their outward crosses, they most dangerously err from the true cross of Christ and that holy abnegation of self which was of His blessed appointment. Indeed such crosses seem to stand in the way of the true one, for instead of mortifying their wills by it, they have both made it and do use it according to their wills; so that these decorative crosses have become an emblem of those who do nothing but what they wish. Yet by this they desire to be thought the disciples of Him who never did His own will, but only the will of His heavenly Father.

These outward crosses are such as flesh and blood can easily carry, for flesh and blood invented them. They are therefore not the cross of Christ, which is the power of God to crucify flesh and blood. Thousands of them have no more virtue than a crumb. They are poor, empty shadows, carried about as charms, though they cannot repel a single evil. Indeed, men sin with them upon their backs; and though they display them over their heart, alas, their beloved lusts lie there too without the least disquiet. They are as silent as the mock-gods of Baal, having no life or power in them. And how could they? For their substance is earthly, and their image and workmanship are but the inventions and labors of worldly artists. They are yokes without restraint, and crosses that never crucify. A whole cartload of them would leave a man as unmortified as it found him. Men may sooner knock their brains out with them than their sins; and this, I fear, is already known in the very conscience of those who use them and adore them.

Nor is a reclusive life (the boasted righteousness of some who lock themselves up in monasteries and convents) much more commendable, or one bit nearer to the nature of the true cross; for though this

¹² Ps. 45:13

is not unlawful, it is unnatural, and true religion does not teach it. The true Christian convent and monastery are within, where the soul is en-cloistered from sin. And this religious house the true followers of Christ carry about with them, not exempting themselves from interactions with the world, though they keep themselves from its evils.

But the monastic life is an idle and unprofitable kind of self-denial, which is burdensome to others. Men and women are locked up within lest they do mischief without, learning a kind of patience by force, a self-denial against their own will, avoiding temptation rather than learning to be faithful and constant in it. It is no great feat if they do not commit the sins they are not tempted to commit; for where the eye does not view, there the heart does not crave.

The cross of Christ is of another nature. It truly overcomes the world, and leads to a life of purity in the face of allurements. Those who bear it are not thus chained up for fear they should bite; nor locked up, lest their faith be stolen away. They receive power from Christ their captain to resist evil and do that which is good in the sight of God. Indeed, they despise the world, and love its reproach above its praise. They do not offend others, but love those who offend them. What a world should we have if everybody, for fear of transgressing, should cage themselves up behind four walls? No, the perfection of the Christian life extends into every honest labor and commerce used among men. Such severity is not the effect of Christ's free spirit, but a voluntary and fleshly humility—shackles of man's own making and putting on, without prescription or reason.

Monasteries and convents are their own law-givers, and set their own rules, punishments and penance, a constrained harshness that is out of joint with the rest of the creation. For society is one of the great ends of creation, and not to be destroyed for fear of evil. It is the sin that spoils it which must be banished, by steady reproof and a conspicuous example of tried virtue. True godliness does not turn men out of society, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavors to mend it—"not hiding their candle under a bushel, but setting it upon a table, in a lampstand."

Besides, such things are selfish inventions, for by them men run away by themselves and leave the world behind to be lost. Christians should rather keep the helm, and guide the vessel to its proper port; not quietly flee the ship from the back, leaving those that remain without a pilot, to be driven by the fury of evil times upon the rocks or sands of ruin.

Taking up the cross of Jesus is a much more interior exercise. It is the circumspection and discipline of the soul, in conformity to the divine mind revealed therein. Does not the body follow the soul, and not the soul the body? Consider then, that no outward cell can shut up the soul from lust, or the mind from its infinite unrighteous imaginations. "The thoughts of man's heart are only evil, and that continually."¹³ Evil comes from within, and not from without. How then can an external application remove an internal

13 Genesis 6:5

cause? Or how can a restraint upon the body work a confinement of the mind?

Examine, O man, your foundation, what it is, and who placed you there; lest in the end it should appear that you have put an eternal cheat upon your own soul. I must confess I am jealous of the salvation of my own kind. Having found mercy with my heavenly Father, I would have none deceive themselves to perdition, especially about religion, where people are most apt to take all for granted and lose infinitely by their own flatteries and neglect.

The inward, steady righteousness of Jesus is something far different than all the contrived devotions of poor superstitious man; and to stand approved in the sight of God excels all bodily exercises in religion which result from the invention of men. The soul that is awakened and preserved by His holy power and Spirit lives unto Him in the way of His own institution, and worships Him in His own Spirit—that is, in the holy sense, life, and leadings of it—which indeed is the true gospel worship.

I mean no disregard for true Christian retirement; for I do not only acknowledge, but I admire solitude. Christ himself was an example of it. He loved and chose to frequent many mountains, gardens, seashores alone. Indeed, it is requisite to the growth of piety, and I reverence the virtue that seeks and uses it, wishing there were more of it in the world. But this should be free, and not constrained.

Chapter VI

Spiritual Worship

There are others of a more refined view and reformed practice, who dare not use, much less adore, a piece of wood or stone, or an image of silver or gold; nor will they allow that pomp in worship practiced by others, as though Christ's worship were of this world, though His kingdom is of another. Yet though these are doctrinally averse to such superstitions, they do not refrain from bowing to their own religious duties, while esteeming such things as go against the grain of their fleshly ease a cross too great to bear. For if they abstain from gross and scandalous sins, or, if the act is not committed though the thoughts of it are embraced (so that it has a full course in the mind), they think themselves safe enough, within the bounds of discipleship and the limits of Christianity. But this also falls far short of the true discipline of Christ's cross, and those who flatter themselves with taking this up, will, in the end, be deceived with a sandy foundation, and the midnight cry of the Bridegroom. For Christ said, "I say unto you, that for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account in the day of judgment."¹

¹ Matthew 12:36

It is not the performing of religious duties, but the source of the performance that God looks at. Men may, and some do, cross their own wills *in* their own wills—a voluntary omission, or commission. But, “Who has required this at your hands?”² is what the Lord said to the Jews of old, when they seemed eager to serve Him but in a way of their own contriving or inventing, and in their own time and will. These came not with a soul truly touched and prepared by the divine power of God, but with bodily worship only, which, the apostle tells us, profits little. Alas, not keeping to the cross in worship (as well as in other things) has been a great cause of the troublesome superstition that is yet in the world. For men have no more brought their worship to the light than they have their sins! Indeed, the one they have ignorantly thought a sort of excuse for the other, never considering that their religious performances should need a cross, or a defense.

A Heart Prepared for Worship

True worship can only come from a heart prepared by the Lord—a preparation which is by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. For certainly, if God’s children are to be led by this Spirit in the general course of their lives (as Paul teaches), much more should this be the case in their worship to their Creator and Redeemer. Whatever prayer is offered, or doctrine uttered, which does not come from the preparation of the Holy Spirit, is not acceptable with God, nor can it be the true evangelical worship which is in spirit and truth. For what are eloquent and passionate words to God Almighty; or the dedication of any place or time to Him? He is a spirit, to whom words, places and times, strictly considered, are improper or inadequate. Though they are the instruments of public worship, they are but bodily and visible, and cannot carry our requests any further with God, much less recommend them to the invisible Creator. Words are for the sake of the congregation, but it is the language of the soul that God hears. Nor can the soul rightly groan or speak to Almighty God, except by the assistance of His Spirit. The soul of man, however lively in other things, is dead to God until He breathes the Spirit of life into it; it cannot live to Him, much less worship Him, without it. Thus God (by the prophet Ezekiel) tells us in a vision concerning the restoration of mankind, “I will open your graves and put My Spirit in you, and you shall live.”³

Now, Christ teaching His disciples to pray is no argument against this, for the issue is not whether men can repeat His words (as is now too superstitiously and presumptuously practiced), but whether they can say them with the same heart, and under the same qualifications as His poor disciples and followers did. For both the disciples then, and all true disciples now, are not to pray their own prayers, but rather His, according as He enables them.

Now consider, if we are told not to take thought what we shall say when we come before worldly princes

² Isaiah 1:12

³ Ezekiel 37:12-14

because it shall then be given to us; and if it is then “not we who speak, but the Spirit of our heavenly Father that speaks in us,”⁴ much less can our natural ability, study, and forms of speech be acceptable in our approaches to the great Prince of princes, King of kings, and Lord of lords. It is His help that we need, and He will give it if we are truly His children. For not only the mouth of the body, but the mouth of the soul is shut until God opens it; but being opened by His Spirit, He loves to hear the language of it. Indeed, His ear is open to all such requests, and His Spirit strongly intercedes for those that offer them. But the body ought never go before the soul into prayer.

But it may be asked, how shall this preparation be obtained? I answer: by waiting patiently, yet watchfully and intently upon God. “Lord,” says the Psalmist, “You have heard the desire of the humble; You will prepare their heart; You will cause Your ear to hear.”⁵ You must not think your own thoughts, nor speak your own words, but retire from all the confused imaginations that are apt to throng and press upon the mind; this indeed is the silence of the holy cross. Think not to win the Almighty with well-composed matter cast into the most skillful phrase. No, one groan, one sigh from a wounded soul, a heart touched with true remorse, a sincere and godly sorrow, which is the work of God’s Spirit, excels and prevails with God.

Therefore, stand still in your mind and wait to feel something from God to prepare and dispose you to worship Him truly and acceptably. Thus taking up the cross, and shutting the doors and windows of the soul against everything that would interrupt your attendance upon God—no matter how pleasant the object may be in itself, or how lawful or needful it is at another season—the power of the Almighty will break in, and His Spirit will prepare the heart that it may offer up an acceptable sacrifice. It is He that reveals to the soul its true needs, and presses them upon it; and when it cries, He alone can supply them. Petitions which do not spring from such a sense and preparation are formal and fictitious; they are not true. For men pray in their own blind desires, and not in the will of God, and His ear is stopped to such things. But for the mere sighing of the poor and the crying of the needy, God has said He will arise. Yes, for the poor in spirit, the desperate souls, those that need His assistance, who are almost overwhelmed, who feel their need and cry aloud for a deliverer; who have none on earth to help, “none in heaven but Him, nor anything on the earth in comparison of Him”⁶—these He will deliver. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence, and precious shall their blood be in His sight. “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps round about those who fear Him, and delivers them.”⁷ He invites all to come and taste how good He is. Yes, “He will bless those that fear the Lord, both small and great.”⁸

4 Matthew 10:20

5 Ps. 10:17

6 Ps. 73:25

7 Ps. 34:6-7

8 Ps. 115:13

But what is all this to those who are not hungry? The healthy need no physician; the full have no need to sigh, nor the rich to cry for help. Those who are not sensible of their inward needs, and have no fears and terrors upon them, who feel no need of God's power to help them, nor the light of His countenance to comfort them—what have these to do with prayer? Their devotion is at best a mockery of the Almighty. They know not, they need not, they desire not, what they pray for. They pray that the will of God may be done, and yet constantly do their own. They ask for grace but abuse what they have. They pray for the Spirit, but resist it in themselves, and scorn it in others. They request the mercies and goodness of God, but feel no real need of them. In this inward numbness, they are as unable to praise God for what they have, as to pray for what they have not. It is written, "They shall praise the Lord that seek Him; for He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry with good things."⁹ This also is reserved for the poor and needy, and for those that fear God. "Let the [spiritually] poor and the needy praise your name: you that fear the Lord, praise Him; and you seed of Jacob, glorify Him."¹⁰ Jacob was a plain man, of an upright heart; and they that are such are his seed. And though, with him, they may be as poor as worms in their own eyes, yet they receive power to wrestle with God and prevail as he did.

Without the preparation and consecration of this power, no man is fit to come before God; or else it is a matter of less holiness and reverence to worship God under the Gospel than it was in the times of the law, when all sacrifices were sprinkled before they were offered, and the offerers were consecrated before they approached the Lord. If the touching of a dead or unclean animal made them unfit for the temple or sacrifice, or even for society with the clean until first sprinkled and sanctified, how can we think so lowly of the worship instituted by Christ in Gospel-times, believing it to allow unprepared and unsanctified offerings? Can those who daily touch (in their thoughts, words, or deeds) what is morally unclean, rightly worship the pure God without coming to the blood of Jesus that sprinkles the conscience from dead works? It is an outright contradiction! The unclean cannot acceptably worship what is holy; nor the impure worship what is perfect. There is a holy union and communion between Christ and His followers; but there is none at all between Christ and Belial, between Him and those who disobey His commandments, and spurn His blessed cross and self-denial.

And just as with sin, so too formality cannot worship God, even though the manner be of God's own ordination. This made the prophet cry out, "With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"¹¹ The royal prophet, sensible of this, calls thus upon God: "O Lord, You open my lips, and my mouth shall

9 Ps. 22:26; 107:9

10 Ps. 74:21; 22:23

11 Micah 6:6-8

show forth Your praise.”¹² He dared not open his own lips, for he knew that this could not rightly praise God: “For You do not desire sacrifice, else would I give it.” If my formal offerings would serve, you would not want them; for “You have no delight in burnt-offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”¹³ And why? Because this is God’s work, the effect of His power; and His own works shall praise Him.

God Himself speaks to the same purpose by the mouth of Isaiah, in opposition to the formalities and lip-worship of the degenerate Jews. “Thus says the Lord: ‘Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist,’ Says the Lord. ‘But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.’”¹⁴ Behold the true worshipper!—one of God’s preparing, circumcised in heart and ear, that resists not the Holy Spirit, as those lofty, professing Jews did. And seeing this was so then, even in the time of the Law (which was the dispensation of external and shadowy performances), can we expect acceptance without the preparation of the Spirit in these Gospel-days, which is the proper time for the pouring out of the Spirit? By no means! God is still what He was; and none are His true worshippers except such as worship Him in His own pure Spirit. Of these He is tender as the apple of His eye; the rest do but mock Him.

Hear what immediately follows in Isaiah, for it is the state of Christendom at this day: “He who kills a bull is as if he slays a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, as if he breaks a dog’s neck; he who offers a grain offering, as if he offers swine’s blood; he who burns incense, as if he blesses an idol. They have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations.”¹⁵ Let none now say, ‘We do not present those kinds of offerings,’ for that is not the matter. God was not offended with the offerings, but the offerers. These were the legal forms of sacrifice appointed by God, but the people not presenting them in that frame of spirit, and under that disposition of soul that was required, God declared His abhorrence, and that with great aggravation.

Elsewhere, by the same prophet, He bids them, “Bring no more futile sacrifices; incense is an abomination to Me. Your Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies, your appointed feasts My soul hates. They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear.”¹⁶ This is a most terrible denunciation of their worship. And why? Because their hearts were polluted. They loved not the Lord with their whole hearts, but broke His law, rebelled against His Spirit, and did not do what was right in His sight. The cause is

12 Ps. 51:15

13 Ps. 51:16-17

14 Isaiah 66:1-2

15 Isaiah 66:3

16 Isaiah 1:13-15

plain by the remedy He prescribes: “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean. Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good. Seek judgment; rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.”¹⁷

Upon these terms, and nothing less, He bids them come to Him, and tells them that “though their sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; and though they be as crimson, they shall be white as wool.”¹⁸ So true is that notable passage of the Psalmist: “Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul. I cried to Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. But truly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God who has not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me.”¹⁹

Waiting Upon the Lord

Much might be cited to show the displeasure of God against even His own forms of worship when performed without His Spirit, and without that necessary preparation of the heart in man which only He can work or give. More than all other penmen of sacred writ, this is most frequently and emphatically recommended to us by the example of the Psalmist. David, repeatedly calling to mind his own great slips and the cause of them, and the way by which he came to be accepted of God and to obtain strength and comfort from Him, often reminds himself to wait upon God. “Lead me in your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You do I wait all the day long.”²⁰ His soul looked to God for salvation, to be delivered from the snares and evils of the world. This shows an inward exercise, a spiritual attendance, that stood not in external forms but in an inward divine aid.

And truly, David had great encouragement so to do, for the goodness of God invited him to it and strengthened him in it. “For,” says he, “I waited patiently upon the Lord, and He inclined unto me and heard my cry. He brought me out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock.”²¹ The Lord appeared inwardly to console David’s soul, which waited for His help, to be delivered from the temptations and afflictions that were ready to overwhelm it, and to receive security and peace. Therefore he says, “The Lord has established my going;”²² that is, fixed his mind in righteousness.

Before, every step David took bemired him, and he was scarce able to go without falling. Temptations assailed him on every side; but he waited patiently upon the Lord with his mind retired, watchful and intent

17 Isaiah 1:16-17

18 Isaiah 1:18

19 Ps. 66:16-20

20 Ps. 25:5

21 Ps. 40:1-2

22 Ps. 40:2

upon God's law and Spirit, feeling the Lord incline to him. His needy and sensible cry entered heaven and prevailed, and then came rescue and deliverance. In God's time, not David's, strength was afforded to go through his exercises and surmount all his troubles. Thus, "a new song was put into his mouth, even praises to our God."²³ Surely, this was a song of God's making and putting, and not his own.

Another time, we find him crying thus: "As the deer pants after the water-brooks, so my soul pants after you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before Him?"²⁴ This goes beyond formality, and can be tied to no outward lesson. By this we may see that true worship is an inward work, that the soul must be touched and raised in heavenly desires by the heavenly Spirit, and that the true worship is in God's presence. "When shall I come and appear?" Not in the temple, nor with outward sacrifices, but before God, in His presence. The souls of true worshippers must see God and make their appearance before Him; and for this they wait, they pant, they thirst.

O how has the greater part of Christendom degenerated from David's example! And it is no wonder, for this good man tells us, "Truly my soul silently waits upon God;"²⁵ and he charges his soul so to do; "O my soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him."²⁶ It is as if he said, 'No one else can prepare my heart, or supply my needs. My expectation is not from my own voluntary performances, or the bodily worship I can give Him—these are of no value; they can neither help me, nor please Him. But I wait upon Him for strength and power to present myself in such a way as may be most pleasing to Him; for He that prepares the sacrifice, will certainly accept it.' In two verses he repeats three times, "I wait for the Lord;" "My soul does wait;" "My soul waits for the Lord, more than those who watch for the morning."²⁷ Yes, so intently, and with such unweariedness of soul does he wait, that in one place he says, "My eyes fail, while I wait for my God."²⁸ He was not content with so many prayers, a set form of worship, or mere repetition. No, he did not leave off till he found the Lord and the comforts of His presence, which brought the answer of love and peace to his soul.

Nor was this practice unique to David, as a man more than ordinarily inspired; for he speaks of it as being the way of worship amongst the true people of God, the spiritual Israel, the circumcised in heart of his day. "Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until He has mercy upon us."²⁹ In another place he says, "Our soul waits for the Lord, He is our help and shield."³⁰ And "In the presence

23 Ps. 40:3

24 Ps. 42:1-2

25 Ps. 62:1

26 Ps. 62:5

27 Ps. 130:5-6

28 Ps. 69:3

29 Ps. 123:2

30 Ps. 33:20

of Your saints I will wait on Your name, for it is good.”³¹ This was the way of the truly godly of that day, by which they came to enjoy God and worship Him acceptably.

And from his own experience of the benefit of waiting upon God, and the saints’ practice of those times, the psalmist recommends it to others, saying, “Wait upon the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, upon the Lord.”³² Wait in faith and patience, and He will come to save you. Again, “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently upon Him.”³³ Cast yourself upon Him; be contented; and wait for Him to help you in your needs. You cannot think how near He is to help those that wait upon Him. Yet again, he bids us, “Wait upon the Lord, and keep His way.”³⁴ Behold the reason why so few profit—they are out of His way, and such can never rightly wait upon Him. But David had great reason for what he said, for with much comfort and advantage he had met the Lord in His blessed way.

The prophet Isaiah tells us that though the chastisements of the Lord wore sore upon the people for their backslidings, yet “in the way of His judgments,” that is, in the way of His rebukes and chastening, “they waited for Him, and the desire of their soul was to His name and the remembrance of Him.”³⁵ They were content to be reprov’d and disciplined, for they had sinned; and the knowledge of God in this way was very desirable to them. But, did He not come at last, and that in mercy too? Yes, He did, and they knew Him when He came—an experience the carnal world knows not. “Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him, and He will save us.”³⁶ O blessed enjoyment! O precious confidence! Here was a waiting in faith which prevailed. All worship that is not in faith is fruitless to the worshipper as well as displeasing to God; which faith is the gift of God, and the nature of it is to purify the heart, and give such as truly believe “victory over the world.”³⁷

But they go on: “We have waited for Him, we will be glad, and rejoice in His salvation.”³⁸ And the prophet adds, “Blessed are all those who wait upon God”³⁹ And why? “For those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”⁴⁰ The encouragement is great. O hear him once more! “For since the beginning of the world men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen any God besides You, who acts for the one who waits for Him.”⁴¹ Behold the inward life and joy of the righteous,

31 Ps. 52:9

32 Ps. 27:14

33 Ps. 37:7

34 Ps. 37:34

35 Isaiah 26:8

36 Isaiah 25:9

37 1 John 5:4

38 Isaiah 25:9

39 Isaiah 30:18

40 Isaiah 40:31

the true worshippers!—those whose spirits have bowed to the appearance of God’s Spirit in them, leaving and forsaking all that it appeared against, and embracing whatever it led them to.

In Jeremiah’s time, the true worshippers also waited upon God; and he assures us, “That the Lord is good to them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him.”⁴² Likewise, the prophet Hosea exhorted the church to turn and wait upon God: “Therefore turn you to your God. Observe mercy and judgment, and wait on your God continually.”⁴³ And Micah is very zealous and resolute in this good exercise, saying: “I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.”⁴⁴ So did all the children of the Spirit, who thirsted after an inward sense of Him.

It is charged upon Israel in the wilderness, as the cause of their disobedience and ingratitude to God, that they “waited not for His counsels.”⁴⁵ And we may be sure this is our duty, and is expected from us; for God requires it in Zephaniah: “Therefore wait upon Me, says the Lord, until the day that I arise.”⁴⁶ O that all who profess the name of God would so wait, not arising to worship without Him, but waiting to feel His stirrings and arisings in them to prepare and sanctify them. Christ expressly charged His disciples that they should stay in Jerusalem and wait till they had received the promise of the Father, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, in order to prepare them for preaching the glorious Gospel of Christ to the world. And though that was an extraordinary outpouring for an extraordinary work, yet the degree does not change the rule. On the contrary, if so much waiting and preparation by the Spirit was required to fit them to preach to men; some, at least, must be needful to fit us to speak to God.

I will close this great Scriptural doctrine of waiting upon the Lord with that passage in John about the pool of Bethesda. “Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.” This is a most exact representation of what is intended by all that has been said upon the subject of waiting. For as there was then an outward and legal Jerusalem, so there is now a Gospel and spiritual Jerusalem, the church of God, consisting of the faithful. The pool in Old Jerusalem, in some sort, represented that fountain which is now set open in the New Jerusalem. That pool was for those who were under bodily infirmities; this fountain is for all that are disabled in soul. There was an angel that then moved the water to render it beneficial; it is God’s angel now, the great Angel of His presence, that blesses this fountain with success. They who went in before, but did not watch the angel and take advantage of his motion,

41 Isaiah 64:4

42 Lamentations 3:25

43 Hosea 12:6

44 Micah 7:7

45 Ps. 106:13

46 Zephaniah 3:8

found no benefit from their stepping in. And those now, who do not wait for the moving of God's Angel, but by a devotion of their own forming and timing rush before God as a horse into battle, hoping for success, are sure to miscarry in their expectations.

Therefore, even as those who needed and desired to be cured then waited with all patience and intentness upon the angel's motion, so the true worshippers of God do now, who need and pray for His presence, which is the life of their souls, even as the sun is to the plants of the field. These have often tried the unprofitableness of their own work, and are now come to the true Sabbath. They dare not put up an invention of their own, or offer an unsanctified request, much less impose a bodily worship when the soul is really insensible or unprepared by the Lord. In the light of Jesus they wait to be prepared, retired, and withdrawn from all thoughts that cause the least distraction and discomposure in the mind, till they see the Angel move, and till their Beloved is pleased to awake; for they dare not call Him before His time. They fear to contrive a devotion in His absence, for they know it is not only unprofitable, but reprobable: "Who has required this at your hands?"⁴⁷—said the Lord to Israel. "He that believes makes not haste."⁴⁸

They that worship with their own resources, can do only as the Israelites did—turn their earrings into a molten image, and be cursed for their labors. And they fared no better who gathered sticks, kindled a fire, and encircled themselves about with the sparks that they had kindled; for God told them, "they should lie down in sorrow."⁴⁹ This is not only of no advantage or good to them, but also incurs a judgment from the Lord; sorrow and anguish of soul shall be their portion. Alas! flesh and blood would readily pray, but it cannot wait. It is eager to be a saint, but it cannot abide to do or suffer the will of God. With the tongue it blesses God, and with the tongue it curses men, made in His image. It calls Jesus Lord, but not by the Holy Spirit. It often names the name of Christ, yes, and bows the knee to it too, but it departs not from iniquity, which is abominable to God.

Four Things Necessary

There are four things necessary to worshipping God aright, all of which put the performance of worship beyond man's power. The first is, the sanctification of the worshipper. Secondly, the consecration of the offering, which has already been spoken to at large. Thirdly, what to pray for—which no man knows without the aid of God's Spirit; and, therefore, without that Spirit no man can truly pray. The apostle puts this beyond dispute, saying, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit helps in our weaknesses."⁵⁰

47 Isaiah 1:12

48 Isaiah 28:16

49 Isaiah 50:11

50 Romans 8:26

Men unacquainted with the work and power of the Holy Spirit are ignorant of the mind of God, and these, certainly, can never please Him with their prayers. It is not enough to merely know that we are in need; for how do we know whether our needs were not sent to us as a blessing?—disappointments to the proud, losses to the covetous, stripes to the negligent. To pray God to remove these would be to secure our own destruction, not help the salvation of our soul.

The vile world knows all things carnally, after a fleshly manner and interpretation; and too many who desire to be thought enlightened are apt to call these gifts of providence by wrong names. For instance, afflictions they call judgments, and trials (which are more precious than their beloved gold) they call miseries. On the other hand, they call preferments of the world by the name of honor, and its wealth they call happiness.

Therefore, what to keep, what to reject, what to want, is a difficulty which only God can resolve in the soul. And since God knows, far better than we, what we need, He can better tell us what to ask, than we can tell Him. This made Christ exhort His disciples to avoid long and repetitious prayers, telling them that their heavenly Father knew what they needed before they asked. He therefore gave them a pattern of prayer; not (as many have imagined) to be a text for human liturgies, which are notorious for length and repetition; but expressly to reprove and avoid such things.

Yet *how* to pray is still of greater importance than *what* to pray; not merely the request but the frame of the petitioner's spirit. The *what* may be proper, but the *how* defective. As I said, God needs not be told of our needs by us; indeed, He must tell them to us. Yet He desires to be told them from us, both that we may learn to seek Him, and that He may so meet with us. "To this man will I look," says the Lord, "even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at My word."⁵¹ He looks to the sick at heart, the wounded soul, the hungry and thirsty, the weary and heavy laden ones, such as sincerely need a helper.

But even these three are not sufficient in themselves to complete true Gospel worship, for a fourth requisite must be had, which is faith—true faith, precious faith, the faith that purifies the heart, overcomes the world, and is the victory of the saints. It is this faith which animates prayer and presses it home like the persistent widow who would not be denied, or the one to whom Christ said, "O woman, your faith is great."⁵²

Yet this faith is not in our power, for it is the gift of God, and from Him we must receive it. With one grain of it more work is done, more deliverance is wrought, and more goodness and mercy received, than by all the runnings, willings, and toilings of man, with all his religious inventions and bodily exercises. This, duly weighed, will easily show why so much worship brings so little profit to the world, as we see it does;

⁵¹ Isaiah 66:2

⁵² Matthew 15:28

for true faith has been lost. They ask, and receive not; they seek, and find not; they knock, and the door is not opened to them. The case is plain: their requests are not mixed with that purifying faith by which they should prevail, even as good Jacob wrestled with God and prevailed.

The truth is, the great majority of professors of Christianity are yet in their sins, following their hearts lusts, and living in worldly pleasures as strangers to this precious faith. The reason given by the author of Hebrews for the unprofitableness of that word preached to Israel of old, is its “not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.”⁵³ Can the minister then preach without faith? No, and much less can a man pray acceptably to Almighty God without faith, especially when we are told that, “The just shall live by faith.” For worship is the supreme act of man’s life, and whatever is necessary to inferior acts of religion, must not be lacking here.

This may lessen the amazement in any as to why Christ so often scolded His disciples with the words, “O you of little faith!” And yet, He tells us that one grain of it, though as little as a mustard seed, if true and right, is able to remove mountains. It is as if He had said, “There is no trial or temptation so powerful that faith cannot overcome. Therefore those who are captivated by sin and temptations, and remain unsupplied in their spiritual needs, must lack this powerful faith.’ So necessary was it of old, that Christ could not do many mighty works where the people did not believe Him, though His power wrought wonders in other places where faith had opened the way. Indeed, it is hard to say whether it was the power by faith, or faith by the power, which wrought the miracle.

“Do you believe,” the Lord said, “that I am able to open your eyes?” “Yes, Lord,”⁵⁴ said the blind men, and so they saw. To the ruler Christ said, “Do no fear, only believe.”⁵⁵ He did, and his dead daughter recovered her life. To another He said, “All things are possible to him who believes.” “I do believe,” cried the man, “help my unbelief!”⁵⁶ So the evil spirit was driven away, and the child recovered. He said to one “Go, your faith has made you whole;”⁵⁷ and to another, “Your faith has saved you; your sins are forgiven you.”⁵⁸ And to His disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done. And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”⁵⁹ This one passage convicts Christendom of great infidelity; for she prays, and receives not.

Some in this faithless generation would excuse their lack of faith by declaring it impossible to acquire the

53 Hebrews 4:2

54 Matthew 9:28

55 Luke 8:50

56 Mark 9:23-24

57 Matthew 9:22

58 Luke 7:50

59 Matthew 21:21-22

faith they lack. But Christ's answer to the infidelity of that age will best confute the disbelief of this. "The things that are impossible with men, are possible with God."⁶⁰ It is not impossible with God to give true faith, though, it is certain that "without it, it is impossible to please God."⁶¹ And if, without this precious faith it is impossible to please God, it must certainly be impossible to worship or pray.

But some may say: What is this faith that is so necessary to worship, which gives acceptance with God and returns benefit to men? I say, it is a holy abandonment to God and confidence in Him, manifest by a real obedience to His holy requirings, which affords sure evidence to the soul of things not seen, and a general sense and taste of the substance of things that are hoped for. As this faith is the gift of God, so it purifies the hearts of all who receive it.⁶² The apostle Paul bears witness that it dwells only in a pure conscience,⁶³ and in one place couples a pure heart together with an unfeigned faith.⁶⁴ In another place we find faith linked with a good conscience.⁶⁵ James joins faith with righteousness, and John with victory over the world, saying, "This is the victory which overcomes the world, even your faith."⁶⁶

The heirs of this faith are the true children of Abraham, though uncircumcised in the flesh; for these walk in the steps of Abraham according to the obedience of faith. This faith lives above the world, where none may come except through death to self, by the cross of Jesus, and an entire dependence upon God. Famous are the exploits of this divine gift, and time would fail to recount them all. But let it suffice to say that by it the holy ancients endured all trials, overcame all enemies, prevailed with God, displayed His truth, finished their testimony, and obtained the reward of the faithful—a crown of righteousness, which is the eternal blessedness of the just.

Chapter VII

The Sin of Pride

Having thus discharged my conscience against that sort of unlawful self which seeks to be a Christian, a believer, and a saint, while remaining a stranger to the cross of Christ and the holy exercises of it; and having briefly described the nature of true worship, and the use and role of the holy cross in order

60 Luke 18:27

61 Hebrews 11:6

62 Acts 15:9

63 1 Timothy 3:9

64 1 Timothy 1:5

65 1 Timothy 1:1,19:5

66 1 John 5:4

to render its performance pleasing to Almighty God; I shall now (if the Lord assists me) more largely prosecute that other part of unlawful self, which fills up the study, care, and conversation of the world, presented in these three capital lusts: Pride, greed, and luxury. From these three all other mischief does daily flow, as streams from their proper fountains. The mortifying of these evils makes up a great part of the work of the true cross, making way for man's much-needed reformation in humility, temperance, love, patience, heavenly-mindedness, and all other graces of the Spirit.

The care and love of all mankind are directed either to God or to themselves. Those that truly love God above all are ever humbling themselves before His commands, and loving self only in subservience to Him who is Lord of all. But those who have rejected this love to God are lovers of themselves; for all love must center in one of these two. To this inordinate self-love, the apostle rightly joins the vices of pride and high-mindedness; for no sooner had the angels declined their love, duty, and reverence to God, than they inordinately loved and valued themselves. This quickly led them to overstep their proper habitation, and aspire above the order of their creation. Yes, it was pride that brought about the sad defection and dismal fall of those who are kept in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day of God.

Pride, that pernicious evil, commonly known by its motions and sad effects in every unmortified soul, began the misery of mankind. Pride is an excess of self-love, joined with an undervaluing of others, and a desire for dominion over them; it is the most troublesome thing in the world. There are four things by which pride has made itself best known to mankind, the consequences of which have brought about a degree of misery equal to its evil. The first is an inordinate pursuit of knowledge. The second, an ambitious seeking and craving after power. The third, an extreme desire after personal respect and esteem. The last excess is that of worldly possessions and adornments. To the just and true witness of the eternal God, placed in the souls of all people, I appeal as to the truth of these things.

To the first, it is plain that an inordinate desire for knowledge introduced man's misery, and brought a universal fall from the glory of his primitive state. Adam desired to be wiser than God had made him. It was not enough to know his Creator, and to give Him that holy homage to which his being and his innocency naturally engaged and excited him; nor to have an understanding above all the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea; joined with a power to rule over all the visible creation of God. No, he must be as wise as God too. This unwarrantable pursuit, this foolish and unjust ambition, made him unworthy of the blessings he received from God. It drove him out of paradise; and instead of being lord of the whole world, Adam became the earth's most wretched vagabond.

What a sad change! Instead of being as gods, they fell below the very beasts. The lamentable consequence of this great defection has been an exchange of innocency for guilt, and of paradise for wilderness. But what is even worse, in this state Adam and Eve acquired another god, besides the only true and living God. He that enticed them to all this mischief, furnished them with a vain knowledge and a dangerous wisdom—the skill of lies and evasions, shifts, accusations and excuses. They lost their plainness and

sincerity; and from an upright heart (the image in which God had made him), man became a crooked, twisting serpent; the image of that unrighteous spirit to whose temptations he yielded up his obedience and his paradisaical happiness.

This is not limited to Adam; for all who have fallen short of the glory of God are true-born sons of his disobedience. They, like him, have eaten of what has been forbidden. They have committed the things they ought not to have done, and left undone the things they ought to have done. They have sinned against that divine light and knowledge which God has given them. They have grieved His Spirit, and the dismal sentence has indeed been executed—"In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die."¹ That is to say, 'When you do the thing which you ought not to do, you shall no more live in My favor, nor enjoy the comfort and presence of My Spirit.' This is a dying to all those innocent and holy desires and affections with which God created man; and so he becomes cold and numb, insensible of the love of God, of His Holy Spirit, power and wisdom, of the light and joy of His countenance, of the evidence of a good conscience, and of the approbation of God's Holy Spirit.

Having fallen, Adam's knowledge of God stood no more in a daily experience of the love and work of God in his soul, but in a notion of what he once knew and experienced. This being not the true and living wisdom that is from above, but a mere picture, it cannot preserve man in purity; but rather puffs up and makes people proud, high-minded, and impatient of contradiction. This was the state of the apostate Jews before Christ came, and it has been the condition of apostate Christians ever since He came. Besides a variety of bodily performances, their religion stands either in what they once knew of the work of God in themselves (a work from which they have revolted); or in a historical belief and an imaginary conception of the experiences and prophecies of such holy men and women of God as, in all ages, have deserved the name and character of His true children.

Such a knowledge of God cannot be true, and by experience we find that it ever brings forth quite contrary fruits to true wisdom. For as "the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, then gentle, and easy to be entreated,"² so the knowledge of degenerate and unmortified men is first impure. Indeed, it came by the commission of evil, and is held in an impure conscience and heart which disobey God's law, and daily do those things they ought not to do. For this they stand condemned before God's judgment seat in the souls of men, where the light of His presence searches the most hidden things of darkness, the most secret thoughts and concealed inclinations of ungodly men. Yes, this is false wisdom; and as it is impure, so it also is unpeaceable, cross, and hard to be entreated. It is forward, perverse, persecuting, and jealous that anyone should be better, and then hating and abusing those that are.

It was this pride that made Cain a murderer; it is a spiteful quality, full of envy and revenge. What? Was

1 Genesis 2:17

2 James 3:17

his religion and worship not as good as his brother's? He had all the exterior parts of worship. He offered just as Abel did, and the offering in itself might have been as good; but it seems the heart that offered it was not. So long ago did God regard the interior worship of the soul. What was the consequence of this difference? Cain's pride could not bear to be outdone by his brother. He grew wrathful, and resolved to vindicate his offering by revenging its rejection upon his brother's life. And without any regard to natural affection, or the low and early condition of mankind, he barbarously stained his hands in his brother's blood.

The religion of the apostatized Jews did no better; for having lost the inward life, power, and Spirit of the law, they were puffed up with the knowledge they had. Their claims to Abraham, Moses, and the promises of God, in that condition, served only to raise them up to a horrible pride, arrogance and cruelty. They could not bear true vision when it came to visit them, and entertained the messengers of their peace as if they had been wolves and tigers.

It is remarkable how the false prophets, the great schemers against the true ones, were ever sure to persecute them as false; and by their influence with earthly princes, or with the poor seduced multitude, made other men the instruments of their malice. So it was that one holy prophet was sawn asunder, and another stoned to death, etc. Oh how proud and obstinate are false knowledge and all who aspire after it! Indeed, this made holy Stephen cry out, "You stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ear, you resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you."³

True knowledge came down with the joy of angels, singing "peace on earth, and goodwill towards men;"⁴ and false knowledge entertained it with slander and violence. Yes, they stoned Him, and frequently sought to kill Him; and at last they wickedly accomplished it. But what was their motive? Because He cried out against their hypocrisy, their lifeless ceremonies, and the honor they sought from men. Indeed, they give the reason themselves in these words: "If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe in Him;"⁵ 'He will take away our credit with the people; they will adhere to Him, and desert us, and so we shall lose our power and reputation with the multitude.'

The truth is, He came to level their honor and overthrow their proud religious system, and by His grace to bring a people to that inward knowledge of God which they, by transgression, had long departed from. Then they would see the deceitfulness of their blind guides who, by their vain traditions, had made void the righteousness of God, and who were so far from being the true teachers and living expounders of it, that in reality they were the children of the devil—who was a proud liar and cruel murderer from the beginning.

3 Acts 7:51

4 Luke 2:14

5 John 11:48

Seeing how their pride in false knowledge had made them incapable of receiving the simplicity of the Gospel, Christ thanks His Father that He had hidden its mysteries from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. This same false wisdom swelled the minds of the Athenians to such a degree that they despised the preaching of the apostle Paul as a vain and foolish thing. But this apostle (who, more than all the rest was educated in the learning of those times), bitterly reflects upon the wisdom so much valued by Jews and Greeks, saying: “Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”⁶ And then gives a good reason for it, “That no flesh should glory in His presence.”⁷ Which is to say, God will stain the pride of men in their false knowledge, that they should have nothing to be proud of; for all will depend upon the revelation of the Spirit of God.

Indeed, the apostle goes even farther and affirms, “That the world through wisdom did not know God;”⁸ that is to say, man’s wisdom was so far from being a help, that, as men use it, it was a hindrance to the true knowledge of God. And in his first epistle to his beloved Timothy, he concludes thus: “O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust; avoiding profane and vain babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge.”⁹ This was the way of apostolic times, when divine grace gave the true knowledge of God, and was the guide of Christians.

But what has been the success of those ages that followed the apostles? Is it any better than that of the Jewish times? Alas, not one bit! Indeed, they have exceeded the Jews in their pretenses to greater knowledge, and also in their degeneracy from the true Christian life. For though they have had a more excellent Pattern than the Jews, to whom God spoke by Moses His servant—namely Christ, the beloved Son, the express image of the Father’s substance, the perfection of all meekness and humility—and though they seemed addicted to the adoration of His name, and the veneration of His blessed disciples and apostles; yet so great was their defection from the inward power and life of Christianity in the soul, that their reverence proved little more than formal and ceremonious. Notwithstanding they, like the Jews, were zealous in decorating their sepulchers, and busy in carving their images; yet, with respect to the great and weighty things of the Christian law of life—namely, love, humility, and self-denial—they were degenerate. They grew to be high-minded, proud, boasters, without natural affection, curious and controversial, ever perplexing the church with doubtful questions, filling people with disputations, strife and wrangling, drawing them into sects and divisions till they at last fell into bloodshed.

O the miserable state of these pretended Christians who, instead of Christ’s and His apostles’ doctrine of loving enemies and blessing those that curse them, teach the people (under a notion of Christian

6 1 Corinthians 1:20

7 1 Corinthians 1:29

8 1 Corinthians 1:21

9 1 Timothy 6:20

zeal) to most inhumanly butcher one another. And instead of suffering their own blood to be shed for the testimony of Jesus, they shed the blood of the witnesses of Jesus, calling them heretics. Thus that subtle serpent, or crafty evil-spirit, who tempted Adam out of innocency, and coaxed the Jews from the law of God, has beguiled the Christians by lying vanities to depart from the Christian law of holiness. Accordingly, they have become his slaves; for he rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience.

It was pride (which is always followed by superstition and obstinacy), that set Adam upon seeking a higher station than God placed him in. The Jews, out of the same pride, seeking to outdo the holy pattern given by God to Moses upon the mount, taught for doctrines their own traditions, insomuch that those who refused conformity to them ran the hazard of death. So too nominal Christians, from the same sin of pride, with great superstition and arrogance, have introduced, instead of a spiritual worship and discipline, that which is evidently ceremonious and worldly, with their great innovations and traditions of men which are the fruit of the wisdom that is from below.

And as this unwarrantable pride set them at first to pervert the spirituality of Christian worship, making it rather to resemble the shadowy religion of the Jews, and the gaudy worship of the Egyptians, than the plainness and simplicity of the Christian institution; so has the same pride and arrogance spurred them on, by all imaginable cruelties, to maintain their great image. The meek supplications and humble protests of those that kept close to primitive purity in worship and doctrine could not prevail with these nominal Christians to dispense with the imposition of their traditions. But as the ministers and bishops of these degenerate Christians grew ambitious, covetous, and luxurious (more resembling worldly potentates than the humble-spirited and mortified followers of the blessed Jesus), so almost every history tells us with what pride and cruelty, blood and butchery, and unusual and exquisite tortures, they have persecuted the holy members of Christ. These, true Christians call martyrs; but the clergy (like the persecuting Jews), have called them blasphemers and heretics—so fulfilling the prophecy of our Lord. No doubt such persecutors are the wolves that the apostle foretold would arise among them, not sparing the flock of Christ, after the great falling-away should commence; which apostasy was foretold by him as being necessary, for the proving of the faithful, and the revelation of the great mystery of iniquity.

I shall conclude this subject with the following assertion, which is an undeniable truth: wherever the clergy has been most in power and authority, and has had the greatest influence upon leaders and states, there, there has been the most confusion, contention, bloodshed, imprisonments and exiles. To prove this, I call upon the testimony of the records of all times. How it is in our age, I leave to the experience of the living; yet here is a charge that can hardly be disputed: the people are not converted, but rather debauched to a lamentable degree. The worship of Christendom is visible, ceremonious, and gaudy. The clergy are ambitious of worldly preferments under a pretense of spiritual promotions, making earthly revenue much the reason of their function. Thus, with their pride and avarice (which the apostle Peter foresaw would be their snares), these have drawn after them great ignorance, misery and godlessness upon the Christianity of our time.

The way of recovery from this miserable defection is to come to a saving knowledge of true religion, which is an experience of the divine work of God in the soul, obtained by diligent obedience to the grace of God that appears in your own soul. This grace brings salvation, turning you out of the broad way into the narrow way, from your lusts to your duty, from sin to holiness, from Satan to God. You must see and abhor self. You must watch, and pray, and fast. You must not look at your tempter, but at your Preserver. Avoid evil company, retire to solitude, and be a chaste pilgrim in this evil world. Thus you will arrive at the knowledge of God and Christ which brings eternal life to the soul.

It was Christ's complaint of old, "That light had come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."¹⁰ If you desire to be a child of God, and a believer in Christ, you must be a child of light. You must bring your deeds to it, and examine them by that holy lamp in your soul, which is the candle of the Lord that shows you your pride and arrogance, and reproves your delight in the vain fashions of this world.

True religion is a denial of self; yes and of self-religion too. It is a firm tie or bond upon the soul to holiness, the end of which is happiness, for by it men come to see the Lord. "The pure in heart," says Jesus, "see God."¹¹ He that comes to bear Christ's yoke is not carried away by the devil's allurements; indeed he finds far greater joys in his watchfulness and obedience. Had Adam minded that holy light in paradise more than the serpent's bait, and stayed his mind upon his Creator, the rewarder of fidelity, he would have seen the snare of the enemy and resisted him. O then, do not delight in that which is forbidden! Look not upon it, if you desire not to be captivated by it. Did Christ submit His will to His Father's, and, for the joy that was set before Him, endure the cross and deny the shame of a new and untrodden way to glory? You also must submit your will to Christ's holy law and light in your heart, and for the reward He sets before you, endure His cross and despise the shame of it. Many desire to rejoice with Him, but few will suffer with Him, or for Him. They will follow Him for the loaves of bread, but the bitter cup of His agony they leave. Yes, many will magnify His miracles, who are yet offended at the humiliation of His cross. But O man! as He has done for your salvation, so you must do for the love of Him—you must humble yourself, and be content to be of no reputation, that you may follow Him; not in the carnal, formal way, of vain man's tradition and prescription, but in "the new and living way,"¹² which Jesus has consecrated. All who walk in this way do travel to the eternal rest of God, into which He Himself has entered, who is the holy and only blessed Redeemer.

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[The unabridged *No Cross, No Crown* continues beyond this point with an exhaustive treatment of the sins of pride, avarice, and luxury, describing their many branches and fruits, and the corrupting effect

¹⁰ John 3:19

¹¹ Matthew 5:8

¹² Hebrews 10:20

they have on the heart of man. The unedited treatise can be found in *The Friend's Library, Vol. 1*, or through several online sources.]