

JOHN CALVIN

ON

CHRISTIAN LIVING



1536 - 1936

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ON
CHRISTIAN LIVING

Translated into modern English from the 1559 edition of Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion on the occasion of the 400th Anniversary of the publication of the first edition of the Institutes in 1536.

PUBLISHED BY
THE LIFE AND WORK COMMITTEE OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NEW ZEALAND.

TRANSLATION OF TITLE PAGE.

An admirable tract on the Christian life, being a book of instruction in doctrine for the guidance of all who profess Christianity so that they may live here below in the obedience of God according to the command of our Master and Lawgiver Jesus Christ.

By John Calvin.

At Geneva.

1550.



FOREWORD.

The Life and Work Committee of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, acting under instructions from the General Assembly, has been arranging for the suitable commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the commencement of John Calvin's work at Geneva and also of the publication of the first edition of the Institutes of the Christian Religion.

It seemed to the Committee that one of the most appropriate and helpful ways of honouring the great Reformer was by re-translating and publishing something from his own writings, and the following chapters from Calvin's great work were selected. This task was entrusted to and carried out by the Rev. J. T. V. Steele, M.A. (Convener), J. Baird, B.A., and J. M. Bates, M.A.

The Committee owes a great debt of gratitude to the three translators named above, and also to Mr W. H. Adams, the Hon. Publisher of the Assembly, for his willing and helpful co-operation.

RONALD S. WATSON, Convener,
Assembly Life and Work Committee.

July, 1936.

T R A I C T E

tré excellent de la
vie Chrestienne

Q V I E S T C O M M E

une Instruction & Formulaire, à tous ceulx qui font profession de Chrestienté, pour régler leur vie, & se maintenir ici bas en l'obéissance de Dieu, selon l'ordonnance de nostre Maistre & Legislatéur Iesus Christ.

P A R M . I E A N C A L V I N .

A G E N E V E .

M . D . L .

Facsimile of the title page of the original tract of 1550 extracted from the Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses Mai-Juin 1934.

TRANSLATORS' NOTE.

This booklet contains Chapters 6 to 10 of Book III of the Institutes in their definitive form of 1559. They were originally written in Latin in 1539 and appeared first as the last chapter of the second edition of the Institutes, published at Strasbourg. Calvin himself put them into French, and they appeared in a similar position in the French edition of 1541. In 1550 they were published separately in pamphlet form at Geneva by the famous printer Crespin. It is the title page of this edition that we publish overleaf. In this form they enjoyed such a wide circulation that to-day they would be called a "best seller." The fact that they were issued in this separate form by Calvin himself, together with the fact that their contents make them admirably suited for this purpose, has moved us to select this section of Calvin's great book for similar treatment 400 years after the first edition of it was published. This particular section was not in the first edition, but, after appearing in 1539, it remained practically unaltered in all the subsequent editions. We have made our translation from the Latin text of 1559, as we have it in the well-known edition of Tholuck. We have been able to compare this with the text as it appears in the *Corpus Reformatorum*. Beyond a few minor alterations in punctuation, often illuminating to a translator, there are no important changes in the text. We regret that we have not been able to use Vol. V of the *Opera Selecta* of Barth and Niesel, which is not yet available in New Zealand, and Vol. IV of Pannier's new edition of the French text of 1541, which has not yet appeared from the press. We would like freely to express our debt to the standard English translation of Henry Beveridge. Our only reason for departing from this is the audience to which our effort is addressed. Beveridge writes in the English of a past age and is far too close to the idiom of the Latin. What is good Latin is not always good English. We have striven to give faithfully Calvin's meaning in our own mother tongue rather than to translate Calvin's words into English. We shall have to leave to others to judge the success of our effort. The curious can readily compare our translation both with the original Latin text and the standard English version of Beveridge. In several places we have cut out whole sections which we have judged to be not of immediate relevance. In the same way we have removed here and there sentences and clauses which, in accordance with the Latin idiom, express emphasis. We have tried to convey a similar emphasis in our own idiom. The reader, however, may take our assurance for what it is worth that we present this booklet as a serious attempt to present to the men of our day the thought and writing of Calvin, and our only hope is that they will be enabled to feel something of the wealth of Christian devotion and insight which permeates the whole of his writing. We may hope also that our effort does no great injustice to either Calvin or his book.

We are,

J. M. BATES,

J. BAIRD,

J. T. V. STEELE.

INTRODUCTION.

It will not be out of place, and we hope it will enable the reader to understand the insight and force of the following extract from Calvin's writings, if we give a short historical introduction narrating the circumstances out of which this account of the Christian life arose.

According to the learned French authority, Jacques Pannier, these chapters were written in the spring of 1539 after Calvin had given the first part of the second edition of his book to the printer, Wendelin Rihel. For Calvin the Bible is the Word of God. Not only does it contain all that is essential and necessary to know for the salvation of the soul, but it also gives a perfect rule of conduct pleasing to God and resulting in His glory. The chief end of man was never far from Calvin's thoughts, and the first answer of our Catechism admirably reflects his spirit. It is therefore in accord with his usual practice that he begins his account of the Christian life by drawing attention to its Scriptural basis. Calvin does not forget that he is dealing with the life of a *Christian* man. These chapters not only presume the evangelical faith, but they are permeated with its spirit also. The Gospel issues in the Christian life as a good tree produces good fruit. We are to be holy because God is holy. On this general basis Calvin uses all the distinctive features of the Christian religion to enforce his eloquent appeal (see the third section of chapter 1). Faith without works is dead, and a Christian must press on to the prize of his high calling, never despairing because of the slender measure of his success, and never being satisfied until he has achieved perfection itself. Following the injunction of Christ Himself, Calvin calls upon men to take up the Cross of suffering and in this divine school train assiduously to learn the secret of that method by which God trained His own Son. Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the meaning of suffering. Calvin was no theorist giving empty counsel from a comfortable arm chair. He knows of what he speaks, and he has personal experience of all the different kinds of cross which he mentions. His personal health was never very good, and suffering was always with him, bringing him to an early grave. Just before he wrote the first draft of these chapters he recovered from a serious illness. The reader will note what a lot Calvin has to say about exile. It was fresh in his mind. At the end of 1538 Farel and he were banished from Geneva, and on the way to Basel they were both nearly drowned. This banishment seems to have made a profound impression on Calvin, all the more so because it was only in response to what he felt was an imperative call of God that he undertook to help Farel at all. Then every day his congregation of French exiles in Strasbourg was being recruited by those who had left all for Christ's sake. They would bring with them tales of the sufferings of the faithful in France. Soon after Calvin settled in Strasbourg, one of the dreadful plagues which decimated the population of those days visited the city. In it Calvin lost some of his friends, and in particular two young students to whom he was greatly attached.

Just before he went to Geneva for the first time he had lost his father in most distressing circumstances. Later he was to lose his cousin Olivetan, to whom he was devotedly attached and with whom he shared the labour of producing a French Bible. After a short married life, Calvin lost his wife and only child. He speaks of poverty. He was in desperate straits during his first year in Strasbourg, and refused to accept the willing help offered by his friends. He speaks of war. In those unhappy days there was much fighting, and Calvin would constantly hear of wars and rumours of war as well as see something of its "devilish horrors." He speaks of refractory horses. Bucer frequently enlisted the services of his brilliant young colleague at the many different conferences in which he was engaged, seeking to bring unity in the Reformed world. If Pannier's conjecture is correct, Calvin had just returned from a Conference at Frankfort when he wrote these chapters, and the hack was the only method of transport at that time. Living in a district rich in agricultural pursuits, Calvin would know from experience the effect of adverse seasons. In fact, he freely drew upon his varied experience of life's vicissitudes to unravel the tangled web of human suffering in the light of his understanding of the Gospel of a Crucified Redeemer.

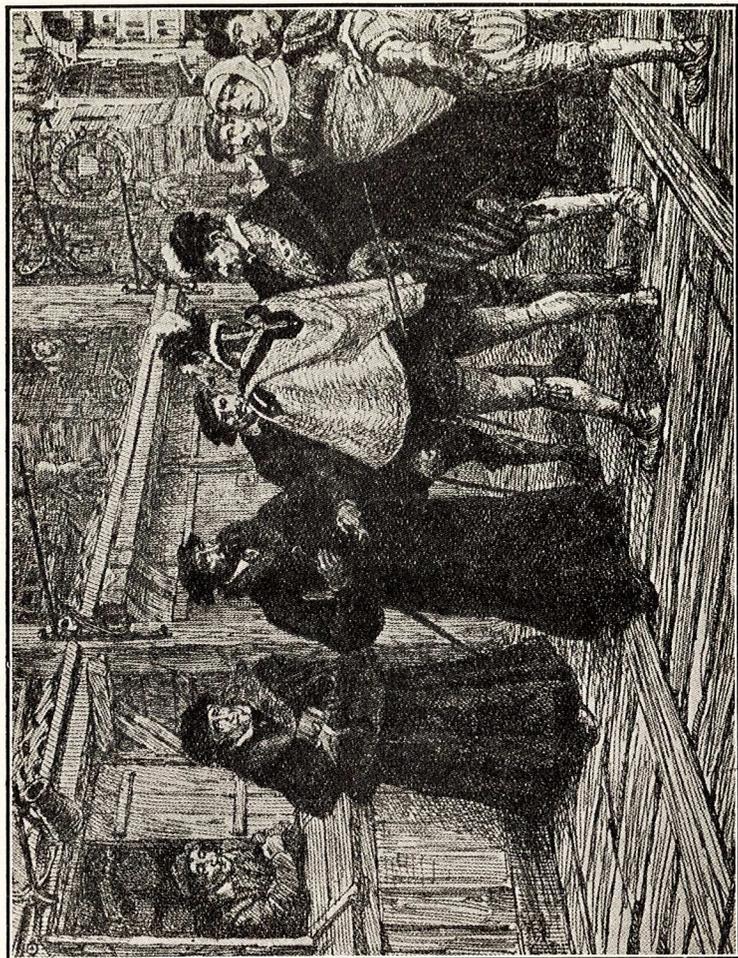
Calvin then turns in the fourth chapter to consider the Christian's hope of eternal life. The Communist echoes in our day the charge that is often raised against Christianity, that its hope of eternal life robs it of the incentive to effort in this world. No support for this thesis can be found in Calvin. He quotes the great passage of St. Paul in Titus 2, where the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ is not only to redeem us from sin, but also to purify us a peculiar people zealous for good works. With full meaning, Calvin takes the words of St. Paul to ensure that in the hope of eternal life we should do all that we can to make our calling and election sure.

In the final chapter Calvin speaks of the Christian pilgrim's use of the material gifts of God in this present life. Calvin was no ascetic Puritan. He took a healthy delight in the good things of life which are not only for necessity and use, but also for enjoyment. Though temperate and modest in all things, he did not try to bind conscience with a straiter rule than the Word of God.

These chapters also reveal the rich humanity of Calvin. It will be seen that he is an acute and careful observer of his fellow-men, possessed of a penetrating insight into the devious ways of the human mind. His warm sympathy for them is equally apparent. With such a piece of his writing before us we can readily understand why it was that his advice was eagerly sought by all sorts of people, and we can well believe Beza when he says that he cannot recall a single instance of anyone being misled through following Calvin's counsel. In this connection we might well quote from a letter written by Calvin's friend, Des Gallars, to the printer Crespin, which the latter used as a preface to his 1570 edition of Calvin's Commentary on Isaiah, and which will be found in Vol. II of the Calvin Translation Society's edition of this Commentary. Des Gallars writes: "When I look back, my

dear Crespin, upon his frankness and integrity, his affectionate benevolence towards me, and the familiar intimacy which I enjoyed for sixteen years, I cannot but grieve for my separation from such a friend, or, I should say, such a father. What labours, watchings, and anxieties did he endure! With what wisdom and perspicacity did he foresee all dangers, and how skilfully did he go out to meet them! No words of mine can declare the fidelity and prudence with which he gave counsel, the kindness with which he received all who came to him, the clearness and promptitude with which he replied to those who asked for his opinion on the most important questions, and the ability with which he disentangled the difficulties and problems which were laid before him. Nor can I express the gentleness with which he would console the afflicted and raise the fallen and distressed, or his courage in adversity and moderation in prosperity." The following pages amply bear out this evidently sincere testimony from an intimate friend and enable us to realise why Calvin's life was so rich in enduring friendships. Not only did the circle of his friends include many of the greatest men and women of his time, but also those of humbler circumstances who so eagerly sought the interest and help of one whom experience had endeared to them as a true father in God—a faithful shepherd and bishop of souls.

Calvin's first task in Strasbourg was to expound the Epistles of St. Paul. He began with the Epistle to the Romans, publishing his commentary in 1539. He then worked on Corinthians. Thus fresh from a study of St. Paul, and while actually working on Corinthians, he writes these chapters. The reader will notice how often St. Paul is quoted. Indeed, the whole section of his book may be regarded as an exposition of 2 Corinthians 4: 7 to 18. This guide book of instruction in Christian living is in marked contrast in spirit and temper to a book on a similar theme by the great scholar Erasmus. Though Calvin once shared the same general outlook of the cultured humanist, he has it no longer. He writes this book as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and it is a fair sample of the Christian appeal and religious earnestness which so few people unacquainted with Calvin's writings seem to realise is the driving force of all he writes. He is no logician spinning fanciful paradoxes, but an eloquent and forceful Christian minister writing, not to amuse the learned, but to save souls to the glory of God.



CALVIN RIDICULED BY THE LIBERTINES.

John Calvin on Christian Living

I.—THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS OF CHRISTIAN LIVING.

INTRODUCTION.

In treating of the life of a Christian man it is not my purpose to dwell in detail upon the Christian virtues, with lengthy exhortation in each case. That method may be found in the writings of others, and especially in the homilies of the Fathers. It will suffice if I show how an earnest man may be assisted to order his life aright, and outline some general rule which he may follow with advantage. Philosophers are in the habit of having certain well-defined concepts of morality from which they derive particular duties, and the whole train of virtues. Likewise Scripture proceeds in an orderly manner, following a finely conceived arrangement—one indeed which is more convincing than that of the philosophers. There is some difference, however. Spurred by ambition, and keen to display their ingenuity, the philosophers laboriously evolve a system which will please by its logical transparency. The Spirit of God, although innocent of such motive, and not so obviously concerned about exact method, by paying attention to it at times shows that it is not to be neglected.

THE DOUBLE PURPOSE OF SCRIPTURE.

The orderly arrangement of Scripture, to which we referred, aims at two objects. The first is that the love of righteousness, by no means natural to us, may take root in our hearts. The second is (see next chapter) to prescribe a rule which will guide us in our quest for righteousness. It has many excellent ways of advocating

righteousness. With what better foundation can it begin than by reminding us that we must be holy because God is holy? (Lev. 19: 1; 1 Peter 1: 16). For when we were scattered abroad like lost sheep wandering through the maze of this world, He brought us back again to His own fold. When we speak of our union with God let us remember that holiness must be the bond. This is far from meaning that any claim of our own in respect of holiness gives us standing in the presence of God. Rather, our need is such that we must utterly depend on God in order that we may be enabled by His holy might to follow where He calls. Holiness must be the bond, as stated above, merely because in the nature of the case His glory cannot have fellowship with sin and uncleanness. Holiness, then, He tells us, is the goal of our calling, the goal which we should ever keep before us if we would answer the call of God. And, seeing that we have been delivered from the sin and shame of the world in which we were sunk, it is unthinkable that we should be content to wallow in them all our lives. Moreover, we are reminded that if we would count ourselves among the people of God, we must inhabit the holy city, the New Jerusalem, which, seeing He hath consecrated it to Himself, it were horrible for its inhabitants to desecrate with impurity. Hence the saying: "Who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness" (Ps. 15: 1-2; 24: 3-4). The sanctuary in which He dwells should not resemble a dirty stable.

THE DISTINCTIVELY CHRISTIAN NOTE.

And to move us even more, the Bible reveals God the Father, Who, as He has reconciled us in Christ, sets upon us the mark of His own image to which He wills that we be conformed. Let it be proved, then, that a better system exists among the philosophers, who imagine that they alone have a moral philosophy duly and orderly arranged. All they can do when they advocate virtue is to tell us to live more in accordance with Nature. The Bible takes higher ground when it bids us lead our lives with eyes uplifted to God, to Whom they belong, and when it further assures us who are convinced of our fallen condition that Christ, Who has reconciled us to God, is given as our pattern so that we might reproduce His

likeness in our lives. What do you require more efficacious than this? If the Lord receives us on the condition that our life be patterned on Christ, then, should we fail to live as devoted servants of righteousness, we are guilty of treachery to our Creator; and not only so, but we disown the Saviour Himself. Then the Bible reminds us of all the blessings of God, dwelling on everything that God has done in redeeming us, and proceeds to show what our response should be. Let us take examples. Ever since God manifested Himself as a Father we should be guilty of base ingratitude if we did not in turn conduct ourselves as His sons. Ever since Christ purified us by His blood and communicated this purification in baptism, it would ill become us to be defiled with new sin. Ever since He ingrafted us into His body we who regard ourselves as His members should have a horror of being infected with any stain or defect. Ever since He, Who is our Head, ascended to heaven, it follows surely that we, withdrawing ourselves from worldly attractions, should set our hearts on high. Ever since the Holy Spirit consecrated us a temple to God we should so direct our efforts that His glory might shine in our lives, and never yield ourselves as the instruments of sin. Ever since we were chosen for a deathless life and unfading crown we should earnestly strive to keep our soul and body pure and untainted against the day of the Lord. These, I say, are the surest foundations of a well-ordered life, and nothing approaching them can be found among the philosophers, who in their commendation of virtue appeal to no higher sanctions than the moral self-respect of the natural man.

FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD.

Hence we would take the opportunity of speaking to people who call themselves Christians, though they are so only nominally. How dare they boast that sacred name! The point is that none can have intercourse with Christ except those who are enlightened in the knowledge of Him through the Gospel. The Apostle maintains that no one has learned Christ who has not learned to put off the old man, "which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and put on Christ." These people are therefore convicted of hypocritically presuming a knowledge of Christ, in spite of their being able to talk so glibly

and fluently about the Gospel. The Christian faith is not simply a matter of words, but of life. It is not simply a matter of intellectual apprehension, as is the case with other branches of learning. It is ours only when it possesses the whole soul and finds its seat and hiding place in the inmost recesses of the heart. Let them, therefore, either leave off mocking God by claiming to be what they are not, or let them prove themselves not unworthy disciples of their Divine Master. We have assigned priority to the teaching of the Bible, for it is the source of our salvation. But to be saving knowledge it must be assimilated into the soul and pass into conduct, and so transform us into itself if it is not to be unfruitful. We can appreciate the annoyance of the true philosopher who ostracises and stigmatises those who, professing an art which should govern life, turn it into wordy sophistry. And have we not more reason to detest those flimsy sophists, who are satisfied to let the Gospel play upon their lips, when by virtue of its divine force it ought to penetrate the inmost affections of the heart and quicken the whole being a hundred times more than the uninspiring discourses of philosophers?

NOT THAT I . . . AM ALREADY MADE PERFECT, BUT I
PRESS ON . . .

It can scarcely be hoped that Christian conduct will in any life achieve absolute harmony with the perfect Gospel, though, of course, this is to be desired, and must ever be our ideal. In my view a man may be accounted a Christian though he has not attained to Christian perfection. Otherwise all would be excluded from the Church; for every man comes far short of such perfection, and the many who have made little progress would be undeservedly rejected. What then? Let us set this before us as the goal of our endeavour. For you cannot bargain with God, submitting to part of what He commands in His Word and choosing to ignore the rest. The first essential of the worship of God is singleness of mind. By this we understand absolute simplicity, free from guile and crookedness. The double mind is contrary to all this, and the true spiritual life begins when the hidden motions of our being are unreservedly surrendered to God, making for holiness and righteousness.

It is obvious, however, that no one in this earthly prison of the body has strength sufficient to advance rapidly, and it is equally apparent that the majority are so weak that, wavering and faltering, and even crawling on the ground, they seem to make scarcely any progress at all. Still, every one must make the most of his spiritual resources and press forward on the pilgrimage once begun. No one will travel so badly as not to make some progress every day. Let us never give up trying, and we shall constantly forge ahead on the great highway of God. Let us not despair because of the slender measure of success. Disappointed though we be, still our effort is not lost if to-day is better than yesterday. What matters is that with all our heart we hold on, endeavouring to reach the goal, not flattering ourselves, nor indulging our vices, but making it our constant effort to become better until we attain to goodness itself. If we make it a life-long quest we shall find it at the last, when, delivered from the bondage of the flesh, we are received into the perfect fellowship of God.

II.—A SUMMARY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE— OF SELF-DENIAL.

YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN.

We have seen that the law contains a perfect rule of conduct, admirably arranged. We are now to see how the Divine Master, with His deep insight, was led to teach His people a surer way by which they could live up to the standards revealed in His law. His leading principle is this (Rom. 12: 1): Believers ought to present their bodies, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is their reasonable service. And this leads on to the further exhortation: "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God." The great thing, then, is to be so dominated by God, that we can never think, speak, plan, or act but to His glory. It certainly would be a glaring affront to God to prostitute to base use what belongs to Him. Seeing, therefore, that we are not our own, but God's, we should have no doubt as to what abuses should be avoided, and as to what the underlying motive of our life's activities should be. We are not our own; thus it is not for reason and will to assume the control of our purposes and acts. We are not our own; thus we should not live for carnal pleasures. We are not our own; thus we should try to forget ourselves and all that is ours. Stated positively the great principle is: we are God's. Let us therefore live and die to Him. Let His wisdom and will direct all our actions. We are God's; then let our whole life draw towards Him, its true destiny. Oh, how great the gain when a man, taught that he is not his own, resigns his own purposes and yields up to God the mastery of his life! When men follow their own inclinations they are on the surest road to ruin. Consequently the only refuge is to have no other wisdom, no other will than simply to follow the Lord. This, then, is the first step—to give up self and concentrate with all the force of our being on the obedience of God. Obedience, therefore, means much more than mere professions of loyalty. It is the readiness of a mind, no longer in bondage to the flesh, to answer the call of the Divine Spirit. This change of outlook (Paul

calls it the renewing of the mind. Rom. 12: 2; Eph. 4: 23), which is the beginning of life, is something which has eluded every philosopher. In the guidance of life they give the primacy to reason; it alone, according to them, should determine conduct. But Christian teaching decrees that reason must give place to and submit to the Holy Spirit, so that the man himself no longer lives, but Christ lives in Him (Gal. 2: 20).

OBEDIENCE TO GOD THE ONE FOUNDATION OF MORALITY.

We come, then, to the second point: we must not seek our own will, but the will of God, and set ourselves to promote His glory. It is a sure sign of progress when, oblivious of self, and reason in the background, we set ourselves firmly to obey God and His commands. When the Bible insists that we should dispense with our self-regarding motives, more is contemplated than the getting rid of the hankering after wealth, power, and regard of men. It bans every craving of our vanity, everything unworthy within us. He is a Christian man who has accepted and adjusted himself to the fact that all his life he has to do with God. And as he gets into the habit of seeking the Divine presence and guidance in all his affairs, his whole mind will be reverently directed towards God. The man who has learned to look to God in everything he does is at the same time weaned from all vain thoughts. This is the self-denial which Christ earnestly commended to His disciples right from the time they were raw recruits (Matt. 16: 24). To the man who has thoroughly learned it, self-denial means the end of all pride and show and ostentation. It means for him the end of greed and lust and luxury and ease and of all the brood of vanity. On the other hand, whenever self-denial is absent the foulest vices parade without shame. Even if there is a semblance of virtue it is vitiated by a perverse desire for recognition. I challenge you to show me a man who, unless he has renounced self to obey the will of God, really obeys the golden rule. We may take it for granted that those who are not so committed do good for the sake of praise. There were certain philosophers at one time who held strongly that virtue should be sought for its own sake, but they put on so many airs as to leave no doubt that they themselves sought

virtue only to gratify their itch for distinction. God is so far from being pleased with these puffed seekers after applause that He says: They have their reward in this world (Matt. 6: 2), and that harlots and publicans are nearer the Kingdom of Heaven than they. We have not yet sufficiently explained the many and great difficulties which confront the man who covets righteousness yet has not denied himself. The old saying is true: There is a world of iniquity hidden in the human heart. We have no other remedy for it but to deny self, renounce our own aims, and make it our purpose to please God by seeking those things which He requires of us.

THE ELEMENTS OF THE WELL-ORDERED LIFE.

In another passage (Titus 2: 11 to 14) he singles out for brief notice the elements in a well-ordered life: "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify us to Himself a peculiar people, zealous for good works." Here Paul begins by setting forth the grace of God which is calculated to move us and constrain us to worship. Then he seeks to remove the two obstacles which stand in the way, namely, ungodliness, to which we are all too prone, and worldly lusts, of which there is a very wide range. Under the heading **ungodliness** he includes not only superstition, but also everything inimical to the true fear of God. **Worldly lusts** are equivalent to the lusts of the flesh. We are thus really confronted with the two tables of the Law and charged to lay aside our own predilections, and abjure our own inclinations and will. He then proceeds to view our whole life in relation to three aspects—sobriety, righteousness, and godliness. **Sobriety**, we may take it, refers to chastity and temperance, as well as to the pure and frugal use of temporal goods, and patience in want. **Righteousness** covers the whole field of justice, so that every man may get his due. Finally, there is **godliness** which draws us away from the defilement of the world and unites us with

God in true holiness. These three—sobriety, righteousness, and godliness—when operating in indissoluble union make for complete perfection. It is extremely difficult to be done for ever with the will of the natural man; to subdue, nay disavow, our lusts, to devote ourselves to God and our fellows, and to lead a holy life in this sinful world. Accordingly Paul, to break the bondage of our minds, recalls us to the hope of blessed immortality. Hopefully he urges us to persevere in the fight, remembering that the Christ, Who once appeared as our Redeemer, will at His final advent crown His saving work. Such an outlook is calculated to shatter the illusions that blind us to the heavenly glory to which we should be aspiring. In fact, says Paul, we must be pilgrims in the world if we would gain the heavenly inheritance.

IN HONOUR PREFERRING ONE ANOTHER.

Moreover it is clear that these words envisage a self-denial in relation both to men and to God, especially to God (see last two sections). In our dealings with our fellows the Bible bids us prefer them in honour, and sincerely aim at advancing their interests (Rom. 12: 10; Phil. 2: 3). It is obvious, however, that this scriptural ideal is utterly beyond us until our mind is stripped of its natural propensities. We are all so incorrigibly biased in the direction of self-love, that every one fancies that he has good reason to exalt himself and look down upon all others. Should God have bestowed upon us something of acknowledged worth, immediately on the strength of it we become vain, and not only swell, but almost burst with pride. Our faults, which are not a few, we are careful to hide from others, and flatteringly represent them to ourselves as negligible and trivial, even prizing them as virtues. When others evince qualities equal or even superior to those we deem so impressive in ourselves, we show our unwillingness to admit them by belittling and sneering at them. Likewise in the case of faults, not satisfied with severe and pointed censure, we go out of our way to exaggerate them. What a spectacle of arrogance! Each one desires to be set on a pedestal above the rest as though he were different from the common breed, confidently despising all others

without exception, or at least frowning on them as inferiors. The poor man gives place to the rich, the commoner to the noble, the servant to the master, the unlearned to the learned, and yet everyone without exception dreams of his own superiority. This self-conceit leads to a man being a king in a dream world of his own. It is the way of the arrogant to be critical of the talents and behaviour of others, and when, in consequence, a quarrel arises, much bad feeling is displayed. Many are more or less courteous when things are going smoothly and pleasantly with them, but few remain reasonable when vexed and irritated. Now the only remedy is to tear out of our hearts these awful perversities of self-glorification and self-love. The doctrine of Scripture is calculated to do this. It impresses upon us the fact that the qualities with which God has endowed us are not our own, but His free gifts. To pride ourselves upon them is therefore a mark of ingratitude. "Who maketh thee to differ?" saith St. Paul, "and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. 4: 7). It becomes us, therefore, with due recollection of our faults to be humble. While we have nothing to puff us up, we have much to abase us. Again we are bidden to esteem and respect the gifts of God in others, and thus honour those who possess them. Since God deemed them worthy of honour, it would be most presumptuous of us to detract from it. We are also taught to be generous towards their faults, without indulging them, and not to fasten upon them for the purpose of disparaging those whom we ought to regard with esteem and goodwill. Our treatment of those with whom we have intercourse would accordingly be more temperate and considerate, also more courteous and friendly. The only secret of true tolerance is to be actuated by a lowly view of oneself and by respect for the other man.

NONE OF US LIVETH TO HIMSELF.

How difficult it is to live up to our obligations in seeking the good of our neighbour! Unless you discard all thought of self, and, so to speak, leave yourself altogether out of account, you will make no headway here.

The rendering of those works of charity, as Paul describes them, involves denial of self and unreserved devotion to others. "Charity," says he (1 Cor. 13: 4), "suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked," etc. Supposing that it were the one demand made upon us—to seek not our own—nature would be powerless to comply. By nature we are so egotistical that we do not easily and spontaneously neglect ourselves and our own interests, by looking on the things of others. The Bible, however, comes to our assistance by laying down certain principles for our guidance. It impresses upon us the fact that what we receive from the Lord we receive only on the condition that we use it for the common good of the Church. Therefore the right use of all our gifts involves a glad and liberal sharing of them with others. We can receive no higher principle than that which the Bible lays down, the very statement of which is sufficient to carry conviction. It is that the gifts which we possess are Divine deposits entrusted to us for the one purpose of being distributed for the good of our neighbour. The Bible goes on to draw an analogy (1 Cor. 12: 22) by comparing these endowments with the members of the body. No member of the body functions merely on its own behalf, but on behalf of all the members; nor does it derive any benefit from its functioning other than that which it receives in common with the whole body. In the same way, whatever a good man can do, he is bound to do for his brethren, serving his own interests, not directly but indirectly, as he gives himself to the general upbuilding of the Church. Therefore, in showing kindness and goodwill, we should be governed by this principle, that we are stewards in relation to everything God has bestowed upon us as equipment for the service of others, and that an account of our stewardship will be required of us. It should be added here that there is a right way of administering our gifts, which only love can teach us. If we follow this general principle, concern for our neighbour's advantage will always be accompanied by consideration for our own, though the latter will be subordinate to the former. There is no excuse for being ignorant of this rule of mutual advantage in administering our gifts from God, since God Him-

self in ancient times observed it in the minutest expressions of His kindness. He commanded the first fruits to be offered to Him, by which act the people affirmed that it was impious to reap advantage from goods not first offered to Him (Exod. 22: 29, and 23: 19). If the gifts of God are not sanctified unto us until we dedicate them to Him, then there is gross abuse that breathes not the spirit of dedication. It is useless to say that you cannot enrich God with your offerings. Though, as the psalmist says, "Thou art my God; my goodness doth not extend to thee," yet you can extend it to the saints which are on the earth (Ps. 16: 3). This suggests a comparison between sacred oblations and the charity which now corresponds to the offerings under the Law.

INASMUCH.

Moreover, that we may not grow weary in well-doing (as would inevitably be the case), we must make this further quotation from the Apostle: "Charity suffereth long and is kind, is not easily provoked." The Lord instructs us to do good to all without exception, though, judged on their own merits, they are quite undeserving. The Bible nevertheless supplies a very excellent reason when it tells us not to treat men according to their deserts, but to have respect to the image of God in all which merits nothing but honour and respect. The same holds, but with greater emphasis, in the case of those who are of the household of faith, in whom the image of God is renewed and restored by the Spirit of Christ. Therefore irrespective of who the man is who is introduced to you as needing your assistance, you must befriend him. Is he a stranger? Still, the Lord has given to him a mark which ought to be familiar to you, for which reason He forbids you to despise your own flesh (Gal. 6: 10). Is he mean and of no consideration? Still, the Lord draws attention to him as one whom He may distinguish with the lustre of His own image (Is. 58: 7). Are you under no obligations to him? Still, the Lord has, as it were, set this man in His own place in order that in him you may recognise the many and great obligations with which the Lord has laid you under His debt. Is he unworthy of your least exertion on his account? Still, the image of God by which he appeals to you is worthy of you and all your exertions. Supposing we

add to the fact of his personal unworthiness the further fact that he has offended and injured you—still, that does not justify you in refusing to greet him in the spirit of love and visit him with the offices of love. He has deserved very differently from me, you will say. Yes, but what has the Lord deserved of you? When God says that you are to forgive Him the injury he has done you, He really means that you should charge it to His account. In this way alone we hope to attain to what is not only difficult, but repugnant to our natural feelings—to love those that hate us, to render good for evil, and blessing for cursing. Such heights we can attain only when we penetrate beyond the evil of men to the Divine image in them. As the beauty and glory of that image hold our gaze, their faults are erased and fade away, and we are constrained to love and cherish them.

THOUGH I BESTOW ALL MY GOODS TO FEED THE POOR
AND HAVE NOT LOVE.

We shall finally succeed in mortifying ourselves if we perform the duties of charity. But even though they are performed to the last detail the mere discharge of these duties is insufficient unless accompanied by a genuine feeling of love. It is possible that one may perform to the full all which he ought, so far as the external act is concerned, and yet be far from performing them for the true reason. Yet you see some who like to appear very generous, but what they give with one hand their haughty bearing and insolent words take away with the other. And to such a sorry pass have we come in this unhappy age that most men seldom give to charity without insolence. As such conduct ought not to be tolerated even among the heathen, so from the Christian something more is required than doing one's duty with a cheerful smile and a courteous word. First, they should imagine themselves to be in his needy position, and pity his misfortune as if it were their own. The dictates of humanity would move them to help him as they would themselves. A man who feels this way will help his fellows without spoiling his actions by his superior manner of saying: "It's your own fault." We do not insult an injured limb when the whole of the rest of the body works to

heal it. And no more should we look down on a man because we have helped him, and keep reminding him of his obligations. It would be absurd to deny that there is anything extraordinary in the co-operation of the members of the body. It is quite natural. Following this, no man, having performed his duty in one particular, need consider himself free. Rich men often donate a certain amount to charity, delegating other deserving objects as if they did not concern them. No matter how exalted his position, a man should consider that he owes himself to his neighbours, and that the only limit of his charity is the failure of his means.

I COUNT ALL THINGS BUT LOSS.

Let us now consider more fully the most important aspect of self-denial. This, as we have said, has reference to God. It would be superfluous to repeat what we have already said. It is enough to show how self-denial produces in us balance and repose of mind as well as endurance. The secret of a pleasant and quiet life, as the Bible says, consists of putting ourselves and all that we possess at the disposal of the Lord, and yielding our hearts to Him so that He may tame them. We are reckless in our pursuit of wealth and honour. We intrigue for power, and we accumulate all those trifles which promise pomp and splendour. At the same time we have a remarkable horror of poverty, ignoble birth, and humble circumstances, and will do anything to escape them. Hence we see how unsettled are the minds of people who want their own way all through life; how they scheme; to what trouble they will go in order to satisfy ambition and greed or to escape being impecunious nobodies. Therefore Christian men who want to avoid these pitfalls must follow this course. In the first place they must not hope for or think of any kind of prosperity apart from the blessing of God in which they should base their confidence and security. For however well the worldling gets on by himself, striving for honour and wealth by his own efforts and persistence, or through the goodwill of others, it is certain that all this amounts to nothing, nor will any amount of intelligence and effort avail without the blessing of God. On the contrary, His

blessing alone will find a way through all obstacles and make the ultimate issue happy and successful. Secondly, although we may achieve honour, glory, and wealth without His blessing—we see examples of this every day among unbelievers—nevertheless since those on whom the curse of God rests do not enjoy the merest fraction of happiness, we may be assured that everything will turn out badly without it. Surely men should not seek what adds to their misery.

ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD.

This is not the only respect in which the religious mind will display balance and repose. It must be extended to all the chances of this life. Therefore the only man who really knows the meaning of self-denial is he who has surrendered to the Lord and put his whole life at His disposal. Happen what may, he whose mind is thus at rest will never count himself wretched or complain to God of his bad luck. It will be clear how necessary this state of mind is if you consider the numerous accidents which are liable to befall us. We are always liable to infection of one kind or another. At one time a plague rages; at another we are involved in all the devilish horrors of war; frost and hail devour the promise of a season, and its ensuing failure brings us to want; death carries off wife, children, parents, and relatives; homes are destroyed by fire—these are the things which make men swear at life and curse the day they were born, blaspheming God. So free are they with their blasphemy that they charge Him with injustice and cruelty. But the believer must see even in these things the mercy and fatherly kindness of God. Accordingly, should he see his house rendered desolate by the loss of loved ones, even then he will not cease to bless the Lord because he is able to direct his mind to this thought: "The grace of God which dwells in my house will not leave it desolate." If his crops are burnt up in the sun, rusted with too much rain, cut with the frost, or flattened with hail so that famine threatens him, he will not despair in his heart or murmur against God, for he will remember the words of the Psalmist (79: 13): "We Thy people and sheep of Thy pasture will give Thee thanks

for ever," and retain the confidence that He will give us abundance even in the extremity of want. If he is smitten down with disease the acuteness of the pain will not crush him so that he cries out in impatience and complains against God, but, recalling that the Divine rod is both just and light, he will be patient. In short, happen what may, he will receive it with a quiet and grateful spirit, because he knows that it comes from the hand of God. He will not stubbornly resist the rule of Him at Whose disposal he has placed himself and all that he has. Especially let the Christian man conscientiously avoid that miserable, stupid comfort which the heathen rely on. For when things go badly their stock argument is: "My luck was out. I couldn't do anything." On the contrary, the religious man is guided by the thought that the hand of God is the ruler and arbiter of every man's destiny, and that both prosperity and adversity issue from the perfect will of Him Who doeth all things not haphazardly, but well.

III.—CROSS-BEARING: ONE PART OF SELF-DENIAL.

THE NATURE OF THE CROSS: ITS NECESSITY AND DIGNITY.

The serious mind must rise to the still greater heights to which Christ called His disciples in bidding every one of them to take up His Cross. All those whom the Lord has made fellow-workers and honoured with His friendship must prepare themselves for a hard, laborious, and troubled life, for it is the will of the Heavenly Father to make sure of them by training them in this way. As He began this course with Christ, the first-born, so He continues it with all His sons. For, although He was that Son, dear above all others, in Whom the Father was well pleased, we see that, nevertheless, He did not treat Him in a soft and indulgent manner; for we may truly say that He was subjected to a perpetual cross while He dwelt on earth, nay, that His whole life long was a kind of cross. Thus it is with good reason that the Apostle says that He learned obedience through what He suffered. (Hebrews 5: 8.) Why, therefore, should we exempt ourselves from that suffering to which Christ our Head submitted Himself, especially since He submitted Himself on our behalf, thus showing us an example of patience in His own person? Wherefore the Apostle teaches that the appointed end for all the sons of God is that they should become like Him. (Romans 8: 29.) Surely it affords us notable consolation in the so-called evil of difficult circumstances to reckon ourselves sharers in the sufferings of Christ, in order that, as He passed into heavenly glory through a maze of sorrows, so we, too, are led there through much tribulation, as St. Paul tells us, first, in the Acts of the Apostles 14: 22, that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the Kingdom of God, and then, secondly, in Philippians 3: 10, that we learn, through fellowship in His sufferings, to grasp the power of His resurrection, that being made conformable unto His death we might be prepared for a share in His glorious resurrection. How effectively does it ease the bitterness of every cross to know that the more we are trained in adversity, the

more certain are we made of our fellowship with Christ. In communion with Him our sufferings are not only blessed to us, but contribute much to promote our salvation.

THE NECESSITY.

We may add that the necessity for our Lord's bearing the Cross was simply to prove and testify His obedience to the Father. There are many reasons which make it necessary for us, however, to live out our lives under a constant cross. First, since, without ocular demonstration of our incapacity, we are naturally too prone to think that as human beings we are capable of everything, it is easy for us to have an exaggerated idea of our own strength, and to have no doubt that whatever happens it will survive intact and triumphant in the face of all difficulties. Hence we plume ourselves in a stolid and vain self-assurance, which leads us insolently to exalt ourselves even before the Lord Himself, as if our natural capacities were sufficient without His grace. This arrogance cannot be better suppressed than when He proves to us by experience not only the extent of our frailty, but also the weakness under which we labour. Therefore He afflicts us with disgrace, poverty, disease, bereavement, and other misfortunes. We bear these in a very unequal contest as far as we can, but we soon succumb. Thus humiliated, we learn to invoke His strength, which alone is able to make us strong under the weight of affliction. Then, too, even the holiest of men, quite well aware that they do not stand in their own strength, but in the grace of God, are too secure in their own resolution and steadfastness, unless He leads them to a deeper knowledge of Himself by the discipline of the cross. This carelessness crept on David. (Psalm 30: 6 and 7.) "When I was prospering, I thought I would never be shaken; for by Thy favour, O Jehovah, Thou hast set me in a strong hill; but when Thy favour was withheld, I fell into dismay." He confesses that in prosperity his feelings were dull and blunted, so that, neglecting the grace of God, in which alone he ought to have depended, he relied on himself to secure his own future. If this happened to such a great prophet as David, which of us will not be apprehensive and cautious? Thus, therefore, when things go well, men flatter themselves with

the opinion of greater constancy and patience, but when adversity brings them low, they learn that this was deception. Believers, I say, warned by such proofs of their maladies, become more humble, and, having rid themselves of a perverse confidence in the flesh, betake themselves to the grace of God. Then when they have trusted themselves to Him, they experience the presence of that divine power in which there is more than ample protection.

THE VIRTUES OF THE CROSS.

It is this which St. Paul teaches when he says that tribulation engenders patience and patience experience. God having promised that He will be with believers in adversity, they feel the promise to be true since they are supported by His hand while they patiently endure. This they could not do in their own strength. Patience therefore provides the saints with a proof in experience that whenever there is need, God really provides the aid which He has promised. Thence, also, their hope is confirmed; for it would be very ungrateful not to expect that the truth of God will be as firm and constant in the future as they have already found it to be. We now see how many are the related blessings which are born out of the cross. Overthrowing that mistaken notion which we take for granted concerning our own powers, and detecting the hypocrisy in which we delight, it removes our pernicious carnal confidence, teaching us, when thus humbled, to rest on God alone, so that we neither despair nor are oppressed. But victory follows hope, in that the Lord, by performing what He has promised, establishes His truth in the days to come. Even if these were the only reasons, it appears how necessary it is for us to be disciplined by the cross. It is of no little moment to be rid of your blind self-love and so be made fully aware of your weakness; to be impressed with a sense of your own natural weakness, and so learn to distrust yourself; to distrust yourself, and so transfer your trust to God; to rest on God with heartfelt trust and so, depending on His aid, persevere to the end invincible; to stand firm in His grace, and so discover His promises to be reliable; to be ensured of His certain promises, and thence have your hope strengthened.

THE FIERY FURNACE.

Another object, too, which the Lord has in afflicting His own is to try their patience and to train them in obedience. Of course, they can yield obedience to Him only in so far as He enables them; but He was thus pleased to make those graces which He conferred on the saints clear and noted by shining examples, lest they remain hidden and idle within. Therefore by displaying openly the strength and stability of the endurance with which He has endowed His servants, He is said to try out their patience. Hence it is said that God tempted Abraham, and by this had clear proof of his piety in that he did not hesitate to sacrifice his only son. (Genesis 22: 1 and 21.) Hence St. Peter (1 Peter 1: 7) teaches that our faith is proved by tribulation just as gold is tested in a furnace. But who will say that it is not expedient that the most excellent gift of patience which the believer has received from his God should be brought out and used, thus becoming definite and evident. Otherwise men would never appreciate its true worth. But if God Himself, to prevent the virtues with which He had endowed believers from lying hidden in obscurity and perishing, does right in supplying material for stimulating them, there is good reason for the afflictions of the saints, since without this stimulus their patience would not exist. I say that by the cross they are also trained to obedience, for they are thus taught to live, not after their own fancy, but by the will of God. Indeed, if everything turned out just as they wished they would not know what it is to follow God. Seneca mentions that there was an old proverb when anyone was exhorted to endure adversity: "Follow God." (De Vita Beata, chapter 15.) This meant, of course, that a man indeed truly accepted the yoke of God only when he yielded his hand and back to His rod. But if it is most right that we should in all things prove our obedience to our Heavenly Father, certainly we ought not to refuse any method by which He accustoms us to obedience.

THE PRESCRIPTIONS OF THE DIVINE PHYSICIAN.

Still, however, we do not grasp how necessary this very obedience is, unless we consider at the same time both the proneness of our lustful flesh to throw off the

yoke of God and the gentleness and indulgence with which it has been treated for so long. We are reminded of refractory horses, which, if kept fed and idle for a few days, become ungovernable and no longer recognise the rider whose every command they previously obeyed. And what God complains of in the people of Israel is invariably true of us; we wax gross and fat and kick against Him Who has nourished and reared us. (Deuteronomy 32: 15.) The kindness of God ought to lead us to contemplate and love His goodness; but since our perverseness is invariably such that the more He indulges us, the more corrupt we become, it is all the more necessary for us to be restrained by some discipline from running riot in such a childish fashion. And so lest an overplus of wealth make us arrogant, lest honours give us a swelled head, lest other advantages of body or mind or fortune make us high and mighty, the Lord Himself interferes as He sees fit, and subdues the arrogance of our flesh by the medicine of the cross. This He does in a variety of ways corresponding to the state of spiritual health. As the diseases from which we suffer are not all identical in nature or seriousness, we do not all need the same radical cure. Hence it is clear that one man's cross is not his neighbour's. Because His purpose is to provide a cure for all, the Heavenly Physician employs with some a mild treatment, and with others severer purges. Nevertheless, He leaves none immune and untouched, for He knows that all to a man are diseased.

THE MARK OF A SON.

Our most merciful Father not only seeks to overcome our weakness, but also often to correct our past mistakes in order to keep us in due obedience to Himself. Therefore, whenever we are afflicted, we ought immediately to refresh our minds about our past life. I have no doubt that we shall find that we have to admit that the faults which we have committed are deserving of such punishment. And yet the exhortation to patience is not founded primarily on the acknowledgment of sin. For the Bible gives a far weightier consideration when it says that in adversity "we are chastened of the Lord that we may not be condemned with the world." (1 Corinthians 11: 32.) Thus in the very bitterness of tribulation we ought

to recognise the kindness of our Father Who even in this fails not to promote our spiritual good. He afflicts not to ruin or destroy, but rather to deliver us from the condemnation of the world. Let this thought lead on to what the Bible elsewhere teaches: "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor be weary of His reproof, for whom the Lord loveth He reproveth, even as the father the son in whom he delighteth." (Proverbs 3: 11 and 12.) When we experience the Father's rod, surely it is better for us to show ourselves obedient and submissive sons than to imitate the rebellion of desperate men hardened in wickedness. God loses us, unless, through correction, He calls us back when we have fallen from Him. Thus it is truly said: "If we are without chastening . . . then we are bastards and not sons." (Hebrews 12: 8.) We are most unreasonable, therefore, if we cannot bear with Him while He is thus declaring to us His good will and the care in which He studies our spiritual good. Scripture states the difference between believers and unbelievers to be that the latter, as the willing slaves of inveterate and deep-seated iniquity, only become worse and more obstinate under the lash; whereas the former, like free-born sons, go on to repentance. Choose now which of the two you prefer.

THE DIGNITY OF THE CROSS.

There is particular encouragement, moreover, when we are persecuted for righteousness' sake. For then our thought should be, what an honour it is that God should invest us with the distinguishing badge of His soldiers. By suffering for righteousness' sake, I mean not only labouring for the defence of the Gospel, but also for that which makes for righteousness in any way. Whether, therefore, in maintaining the truth of God against the lies of Satan or in upholding the good and the innocent against the injurious attacks of the wicked we are obliged to incur the hostility and odium of the world to the danger of our life, fortune, or honour, let us not hesitate, however much we may be annoyed, to spend ourselves for God nor count ourselves miserable when, with His own lips, He has pronounced us blessed in such circumstances. (Matthew 5: 10.) Poverty, indeed, considered in itself,

is miserable; so are exile, contempt, imprisonment, ignominy, and death itself, the worst calamity of all. Truly, when God's favour is bestowed upon us not one of these fails to yield us happiness. Let us be content, therefore, with the testimony of Christ rather than with the false standards of the world, so that after the example of the apostles we will rejoice in being counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. (Acts 5: 41.) What? If rightly conscious of our innocence we are deprived of our possessions by the wickedness of men, we are, humanly speaking, reduced to poverty, but, in reality, with God our riches in heaven have increased. If we are exiled from our homes, we are received the more intimately into the family of God. If we are marked with ignominy and shame, we are given by it a far larger place in the Kingdom of God. If we are slain, then are we entered into the life of blessedness. Since the Lord has heaped such wealth upon us, to reckon ourselves at less than the fleeting charms of this life would be shameful.

PATIENCE NOT INSENSIBILITY.

Therefore, as by these and similar teachings the Bible amply prepares us for the shame and adversities which we endure for the defence of righteousness, we are ungrateful if we do not willingly and cheerfully accept them as from the very hand of God. This is especially so, as this kind of cross is the most appropriate for believers, since by it Christ desires to be glorified in us, as Peter also teaches. (1 Peter 4: 11 and 14.) But for truly honourable natures disgrace is more bitter than a hundred deaths, for Paul expressly reminds us that not only persecution, but also disgrace awaits us because we trust in the living God. (1 Timothy 4: 10.) So in another of his passages he bids us to walk in good report and evil report. (2 Corinthians 6: 8.) The cheerfulness required from us, however, does not involve complete insensibility to pain. The saints would not show patience under the cross were they not racked with bodily pain. If there were no hardship in poverty, no torture in disease, no sting in ignominy, no terror in death, where would be the fortitude and restraint in enduring them? But while every one of these, by its own

inherent bitterness, naturally wounds the feelings, the believer reveals his courage in this, that, though fully sensible of its misery and suffering acutely, he still resists, struggling bravely. Herein patience reveals itself. Although severely tried, he is kept from breaking forth into any excess by the fear of God. Herein cheerfulness shines out, for, though wounded by sorrow, he rests in the spiritual consolation of God.

PRESSED ON EVERY SIDE . . . YET NOT UNTO DESPAIR.

This conflict which believers maintain with patience and restraint against the natural sensibility to pain Paul elegantly describes in these words (2 Corinthians 4: 8): "We are pressed on every side, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed." You see that to bear the cross patiently is not to be entirely insensible like the Stoics of old. They foolishly pictured the high-minded man as inhumanly indifferent to adversity and prosperity, sorrow and joy—a stone quite beyond feeling. And what did they gain by that "sublime wisdom"? Their patience was an imitation. It has never existed among men, because it is impossible. No, aiming at a patience too exacting and difficult, they took the nerve out of life. Now among Christians, too, we have our Neo-Stoics, who count it a fault not only to groan and weep, but even to be careful and anxious. These paradoxes usually come from leisured people who amuse themselves more with dreams than deeds, and do nothing else for us than pose such paradoxes. But we will have nothing to do with that iron philosophy which our Lord and Master condemned by word and example. He grieved and shed tears on His own account and for the troubles of others. Nor did He counsel His disciples differently. "The world will rejoice," He says, "but you will weep and lament." (John 16: 20.) Lest anyone should turn this into a fault, He explicitly declares, "Blessed are they that mourn." (Matthew 5: 4.) No wonder! For if all tears are condemned, what shall we think of our Lord Himself Whose tears were as great drops of blood? If to be apprehensive is a mark of unbelief, what place shall we give to that dread which, we read, disturbed Him in no slight degree? If all sadness is displeasing to Him, what are we to make of the fact that His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death?

THE SOVEREIGN CONSOLATION.

I wish to say these things in order to recall serious minds from despair, lest, unable to keep themselves from the natural feelings of grief, they give up the cultivation of patience as an impossibility. This must necessarily follow with those who make patience into stupor and a firm man into a block. The Bible gives the saints the credit of patience, for they are afflicted by the hardships they endure, but they are not broken or disheartened. Though they are bitterly mortified, they are also filled with spiritual joy. Though weighed down with anxiety, they are lifted up by the consolations of God. However, a certain repugnance in their hearts because of natural inclination avoids and dreads that which causes suffering. The feeling of piety, nevertheless, strives to obey the Divine will even in the face of these difficulties. This repugnance God expresses when He says to Peter, "When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself and walkest whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldest not." (John 21: 18.) It is not indeed likely that Peter, when it was necessary to glorify God through His death, had to be dragged to it, an unwilling and resisting victim. Otherwise his martyrdom would be no credit to him. Although he yielded with the greatest readiness of heart to the Divine decree, yet, since he had not lost his human feelings, he was distracted by conflicting desires. When he thought over the bloody death which he was to die, his horror was such that he would willingly have escaped it. On the other hand, when he realised that he was called to it by God, conquering and suppressing his fear, he freely and gladly submitted himself to it. Therefore if we would be disciples of Christ, it must be our study so to imbue our minds with reverence and fear to God as to tame and subdue all desires which arise contrary to His appointments. Thus, with whatever kind of cross we are vexed, even although in the direst straits, we shall firmly maintain our patience. Adverse circumstances will have their misery, and will sting us. When laid low with disease, we shall groan and be disquieted and long for health; oppressed by poverty, we shall feel the worry of anxiety and sorrow, feel the pain of disgrace, contempt, and injury; and we shall pay the tears due to nature at the funerals of our

friends. But our consolation will be that it is the Lord's will, therefore we will follow it. Nay, amid the stabs of grief it is necessary that this thought should spring into our minds and incline our hearts to bear cheerfully the cause of our affliction.

CHRISTIAN PATIENCE DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF THE
PHILOSOPHER.

But since we have derived the chief inducement for patience under the cross from a consideration of the Divine will we must define in a few words the difference between philosophic and Christian patience. Indeed, very few of the philosophers rise to heights of insight which would enable them to understand that we are tried by affliction from the hand of God. In these things they have no other reason to offer except fate. But what is this except to say that we must yield to God, because to fight against Him is futile? For, if we obey God only because we must, we shall cease to obey Him if we can avoid it. But what the Bible commands us to consider concerning the will of God is very different, namely, first, justice and equity, and then a care for our eternal well-being. Hence the Christian exhortations to patience are of this nature. Whether poverty, exile, imprisonment, insult, disease, bereavement, or any similar evil tortures us, we must reckon that none of these befalls us, except in the providence of God. Further, everything which He does is most just. What then? Do not our innumerable daily faults deserve to be punished by a heavier rod than His mercy already lays upon us? Is it not most just to tame our flesh, accustoming it, as it were, to the yoke, so that it does not blaze up of its own natural desire? Are not the justice and truth of God, for Whose sake we labour, worth while? Because it is beyond doubt that the justice of God is manifest in sufferings, we cannot either resist or rebel without sin. Now we do not hear that chilly cant which says, "Yield because it is fate," but we hear a precept living and full of power, "Yield because it is a sin to resist." Bear patiently, because impatience is rebellion against the justice of God. Because we value only that which we recognise to be in our own self-interest, we

are consoled by the best of Fathers when He teaches that in the very cross in which He afflicts us, He is thinking of our spiritual good. But, if He decides that these tribulations are good for us, why do we not bear them calmly and gratefully? In bearing them patiently we are not succumbing to fate, but consenting to our own good. The result of these thoughts, I say, is that the extent to which our minds are restricted by the natural feelings of bitterness under the cross measures the extent to which they are permeated with spiritual joy. Hence follows thanksgiving, which is impossible without joy. If there can be no praise and thanks to God which does not issue from a thankful and joyous heart, nothing should be allowed to hinder it in us. We see thus how necessary it is that the bitterness of the cross should be tempered with spiritual joy.

IV.—MEDITATION ON THE FUTURE LIFE.

BY DESPISING THE PRESENT WE ARE STIMULATED TO
AIM AT THE FUTURE LIFE.

We should always regard any kind of trouble which oppresses us as having two aims—to lead us to despise the present and to stimulate us to meditate on the future. For since God well knows how strongly our nature inclines us to love this world too dearly, He uses the most appropriate means to prevent us from cleaving to it so devotedly. There is no one of us, indeed, who does not want to appear as a candidate for heaven his whole life long. Did we in no respect surpass brute beasts we should be ashamed; yet their state would be in no way inferior to ours apart from our added hope of immortality. Examine people's plans, desires, and deeds, however, and you will see there nothing but earth. Hence our stupidity; our minds are so dazzled by the empty brilliance of wealth and power and honour that they can see no further. Our hearts, too, engrossed with ambition and lust and greed, cannot rise under the load. Our whole soul, caught in the entanglements of the flesh, looks for happiness in the things of earth. To counteract this evil the Lord gives His people ample proof of the emptiness of this life. Its miseries are constant evidence. He allows people to be disturbed and harassed by wars, revolutions, burglaries, or other calamities to prevent the calm assumption that all is quiet and in order, and will remain so indefinitely. Lest they gaze too avidly on transient riches, or are satisfied with what they already possess, He reduces them to poverty by exile, bad seasons, fire, or in other ways. At the very least He keeps them in humble circumstances. Lest they grow too content with domestic bliss, He afflicts them with unfaithful wives, or their children are ne'er-do-wells, or else death breaks the family circle. And even should He deal gently with them in all these regards, He yet shows them plainly, by diseases and dangers, how unstable and transient are all the good things of this mortal life. Therefore, we make due headway in the discipline of the cross when we learn that this life, considered in itself, is unsettled

and miserable in various ways, that all its so-called advantages are insecure and tainted by adulteration with many evils, and that when we think about the crown our eyes must be raised to heaven. It follows, therefore, that unless the mind has been previously impressed with the futility of this life, it will never be seriously aroused to desire and to meditate on the future life.

Between these two there is no middle road: either we must hold the things of earth to be worthless, or else be fettered by unrestrained love of them. Hence, if we have any regard for eternity, it is most incumbent upon us that we free ourselves from these evil chains. Moreover, since the present life seduces us by many allurements and cajoles us by its apparent amenity, grace, and sweetness, it is highly important for us to be called away from its attractions from time to time. What, pray, would be the effect if we enjoyed happiness and good things without interruption here, when even the constant stimulus of affliction cannot stir us enough to realise our wretchedness? That human life is like smoke or shadow is well known not only to the learned; it is a trite proverb even to the man in the street. It is a fact which ought to be widely known, hence the many different statements of it. In spite of this there is no fact which we ponder less carefully or remember less frequently. All our enterprises suggest that it is this earthly life which constitutes our immortality. When we see a funeral or take a walk in a cemetery, and the evidence of death is before us, then, I admit, we philosophise admirably on the vanity of life. Not that we always do so reflect, for these things often have no effect on us at all. But even when we do, our philosophy is momentary; as soon as we turn our back it vanishes without leaving the slightest trace, just like the applause at the theatre after a good show. Nor is it only death that we forget. We forget also that we are mortal—no rumour of it might ever have reached us, so calmly do we assume that our immortality is secure on earth. If any croaker cites the proverb that man is the creature of a day, of course we agree, but so far from heeding it, the thought that as things have been so they always will be remains fixed in our minds. Who, then, will deny that it is of the greatest importance to us all to be, not merely admonished by words, but convinced by all possible experience

that our earthly existence is a poor thing? For, even when convinced, we can hardly stop gazing upon it with fond admiration, as though it contained the acme of good within itself. If God finds it necessary to train us, we on our part ought to listen to Him when He calls us and shakes us out of our lethargy, so that we may hasten to despise the world and with all our heart meditate on the future life.

INDIFFERENCE TO THIS LIFE SHOULD NOT MEAN
HATRED OF IT.

At the same time the contempt of the world to which believers should train themselves should not be such as to engender hatred of it or ingratitude to God. Although it abounds in miseries, this life deserves to be reckoned one of the blessings of God not to be despised. So if we fail to recognise in it the goodness of God, we are guilty of no little ingratitude towards Him. To believers, especially, it should be evidence of the Divine goodness, since it is designed solely to further their salvation. Before unveiling the full inheritance of eternal glory, God is pleased to reveal Himself as our Heavenly Father by lesser proofs, namely, the daily blessings which He bestows upon us. When our earthly life thus helps us to understand the goodness of God, shall we spurn it as though it contained not a particle of good? Our feeling about it should be that it is no mean example of the loving kindness of God. Of this there are numerous clear proofs in the Bible, but even if there were not, Nature herself exhorts us to thank God for having brought us forth into light, for having granted us the use of it, and for having given us all necessary means for conserving it. And there is a much higher reason for this when we think that our life here is a kind of preparation for the glory of the heavenly kingdom. For the Lord has ordained that those who one day will be crowned in heaven must first take part in the battle on earth, so as not to triumph without overcoming the difficulties of war and gaining the victory. Another reason is that in our life here we begin to taste in various ways the sweetness of God's mercies, so that our desire for its full revelation is whetted. Given, then, that our earthly life is a gift of

God's mercy, which we ought gratefully to remember in proportion as we are under obligation for it, we are in a position to consider how very wretched it is. In this way we may avoid being too fond of it—a condition to which we are naturally only too prone, as I have said.

As this perverted love diminishes, the desire for a better life should increase. I admit, indeed, the great accuracy of the opinion held by some that it was best not to be born and next best to die young. Destitute of the light of God and of true religion, what could they see in this life but evil and menace? Nor was it unreasonable for those who sorrowed and wept when their kindred were born to keep holiday when they died. But they did this to no purpose, because, deprived of the right doctrine of faith, they did not see how that which is neither happy nor desirable in itself yields advantage to the righteous. Hence the result of their ideas was despair. Having come to a conclusion about the misery of this mortal life, considered in itself, believers should therefore give themselves all the more readily to meditation on the future life. In any comparison of the two we may not only be neglectful of the former, but actually critical and scornful of it. If heaven is our country, what else can earth be but an exile? If departure from the world is entrance into life, what is the world but a sepulchre? What is residence in it but to be sunk in death? If to be liberated from the body is to gain true freedom, what is the body but a prison? If it is the height of happiness to enjoy the presence of God, is not its absence misery? But "whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5: 6.) Thus, comparing the earthly with the heavenly life, we may unquestionably despise and spurn it. Of course, we ought never to hate it, except in so far as it keeps us subject to sin; and even this hatred ought not to be directed against life itself. However that may be, our weariness and hatred of it should be such that, though longing for it to end, we are ready at the Lord's will to continue in it without the least murmuring or complaint. For it is as if the Lord had stationed us at a post, to be guarded till He recalls us. Paul, indeed, mourns his lot, being bound in the fetters of the body, and sighs earnestly for redemption (Romans 7: 24); nevertheless, he professed to be ready for life or death, whichever might be God's will, and

acknowledged that it was his duty to God to glorify His name whether by life or by death, it being God's prerogative to determine what served His glory most. And so if it becomes us to live and die to the Lord, let us leave the time of our life and death to Him. Still, let us ardently long for death and ever meditate on it, let us despise this life in comparison with the life to come, and prefer to renounce it at God's pleasure because of the bondage of sin.

TO FEAR DEATH IS A WEAKNESS.

Strange to say, however, many who claim to be Christians, instead of looking for death, are so afraid of it that they tremble at the very mention of it as something quite ominous and dreadful. Of course, there is nothing remarkable in our natural feelings being shocked at the mention of our dissolution. But one cannot bear to think that there is insufficient light of piety in the Christian breast to overcome this fear with a greater comfort. For if we reflect that this tabernacle, our body, so corruptible and defective, is dissolved in order to be renewed in incorruptible heavenly glory, will not faith compel us eagerly to desire what nature dreads? Is there no comfort in the thought that by death we are recalled from exile to our homeland, the heavenly country? In all things there is a *nisus* towards permanence. Therefore we should concentrate on the future life, for it has that enduring quality which is lacking on earth. Paul finely teaches believers to hurry on to death, not because they would be **unclothed**, but precisely because they would be **clothed upon**. (2 Corinthians 5: 2.) The brutes, and even the inanimate creation, such as wood and stone, know that now they are nothing; they long for the final resurrection, when they will be delivered from nothingness along with the sons of God. (Romans 8: 19.) Shall we, then, endowed with the light of intellect, and, what is more, enlightened by the Spirit of God, rise no higher than this world of decay where our deepest nature is concerned? But it is not my purpose, nor is this the place, to argue against this perversity. I said at the beginning that I did not want to discuss commonplaces at length. My advice to timid minds is to read Cyprian's little book, "De Mortalitate"—unless, indeed, they ought

to be sent to the philosophers to find out what they have to say about contempt of death. They might begin to blush then. We must, however, hold it as fixed that no man has made much progress in the school of Christ who does not look forward joyfully to the day of death and final resurrection. (2 Timothy 4: 18; Titus 2: 13.) Paul distinguishes believers everywhere by this mark, and the Bible commonly reminds us of it as a standing argument for joy that does not fade. "Look up," says our Lord, "and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." (Luke 21: 28.) Should what He intended to rouse us to eagerness and exultation produce nothing but sadness and consternation? Is that reasonable? If it is, why do we still glory in Him as our Master? Let us take the saner view. No matter how objectionable the blind, stupid longings of the flesh may be, let us not hesitate to groan and sigh for the coming of the Lord as the best thing that could happen. He will come to us as Redeemer to deliver us from an immense abyss of evil and misery and lead us to the blessed inheritance of His life and glory.

The point is this—the whole society of believers must be like sheep for the slaughter throughout their earthly existence, so that they may be conformed to Christ their Head. (Romans 8: 36.) They would therefore be in a most deplorable position were it not that by lifting their mind to heaven they rise above the everyday affairs of this world. On the other hand, once having lifted their heads above all objects of earth, it is not hard for them to watch the wicked flourishing in wealth and honour and enjoying peace and luxury and splendour and all kinds of delightful things; and they can bear the attacks of the wicked, their proud insults, their greed, or any other passion. Their eyes will see that day (Isaiah 25: 8; Revelation 7: 17) when the Lord will receive His faithful servants, wipe away all tears from their eyes, clothe them in a robe of glory and joy, feed them with the ineffable sweetness of His pleasures, and exalt them to share His greatness. But the wicked, for all that they flourished on earth, He will cast out into utter ignominy. Their pleasures He will convert into torment, their peace into the gnawing of conscience, and their luxury He will punish with unquenchable fire. He will also make them subject to the godly whose patience they abused. As Paul

says, "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven." (2 Thessalonians 1: 6 and 7.) This is our one consolation. Without it we must either give way to despondency or else seek solace in the vain world—to our destruction. The Psalmist confesses, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had wellnigh slipped; for I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." (Psalm 73: 3.) He could find no rest till he entered the sanctuary of God and pondered the ultimate fate of the righteous and the wicked. In a word, it is only when the eyes of believers are turned to the power of the resurrection that the cross of Christ triumphs in their hearts over the devil and the flesh, and over sin and sinners.

V.—HOW TO USE THIS LIFE AND ITS COMFORTS.

USE THIS LIFE, BUT AVOID EXTREMES.

The Bible has certain elementary teachings on the right use of earthly goods—a most important department of any philosophy of life. If people are to live they must make use of the necessary means of life. Even on the things which are pleasant rather than necessary we should not turn our backs. . . . Therefore some principle should be observed, so that we may use them with a good conscience, whether for pleasure or for necessity. We have this principle in the Word of God where we are told that this life is a kind of pilgrimage through which God's people press on to the Heavenly Kingdom. Since we must at least pass through the world, there can be no doubt that its goods should be used to help rather than hinder us on our way. Accordingly, it is natural that Paul should advise us to use the world as though not using it, and to buy our possessions as though we were selling them. (1 Corinthians 7: 30 and 31.) But, as this is a precarious position where we are in danger of falling on both sides, let us be sure that we have a good foothold. There have been some good and holy men who, on seeing luxury and intemperance carried to excess and wanting to correct such an evil, imagined that the one way to do so was to allow the use of only those earthly goods which are necessities. This advice was well-intentioned, but far too austere. It binds men's consciences to the letter of the law more than the Word of God does, and that is a dangerous thing. Moreover, they interpreted "necessity" to mean abstinence from everything that could be dispensed with. They allowed scarcely anything beyond bread and water. Others practised still greater severity, as, for example, Crates the Theban, who threw his riches into the sea, because he thought that if he did not destroy them they would destroy him. Many to-day who are looking for an excuse for their intemperance in the use of worldly goods (and so paving the way for licentiousness) take for granted what I by no means concede. They think that this liberty should not be in any way modified or restricted, but that it should be left to every man's conscience to act as he thinks fit. I admit, of course, that in

this matter consciences neither can nor ought to be tied down by fixed, precise laws. The Bible has laid down general rules for the legitimate use of things, and it is for us to keep within these limits.

Here is our principle: We shall not go astray in the use of God's gifts if we keep in mind the end for which He created and intended them: He created them for our good, not our destruction. No man will keep on the right track better than he who keeps this end carefully in view. Now if we consider the purpose of food we shall find that God thought not only of our needs, but also of our enjoyment and delight. In clothing the end was comeliness and honour as well as necessity. In herbs, fruits, and trees there is a gracefulness of appearance and sweetness of smell as well as their various uses. Were this not so the prophet would not count among the mercies of God "wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face shine." (Psalm 104: 15.) The Bible everywhere commends God's kindness in that He gave such things to men. The natural qualities of things themselves show us how they should be enjoyed. If the Lord has adorned the flowers with all the spontaneous beauty which we see in them, and the fragrance which delights our sense of smell, is it not right for us to enjoy this beauty and scent? Indeed, has He not distinguished the various colours, so as to make some more agreeable than others? Has He not given to gold and silver, ivory and marble, qualities which make them more precious than other metals or stones? In short, has He not made many things which are valuable, though not necessary?

ONE EXTREME TO BE AVOIDED IS THE LUST OF THE FLESH.

Away, then, with that inhuman philosophy which denies all use of created things except for necessity, for it not only meanly deprives us of the lawful fruits of God's kindness, but also is futile in that it would reduce man to a senseless block. On the other hand, we must no less carefully guard against the lusts of the flesh. For, if not controlled, they get out of hand; they have advocates who make the claim for liberty a pretext for licence. To begin with, one restraint is imposed on us if we hold that

all things were created in order to teach us to know their Creator and feel grateful for His goodness. But is it gratitude if you gorge yourself to stupidity with dinners and wine, and become unfit for the duties of religion or business? Is there any recognition of God where the flesh boils up in lustful excess and infects the mind with its impurity and dulls the conscience? Is it gratitude to God for clothing if we admire our own sumptuous raiment and despise others, or if elegance and display lead to immodesty? Is it recognition of God if our minds are dazzled by the splendour of these things? The whole sensuous nature of many is so devoted to luxury that their minds lie buried; many take such a delight in marble, gold, and pictures, that they become marble-hearted, metallic, mere painted figures. The savoury smells of the kitchen make others so dull that they cannot sense the things of the spirit. The same thing can be seen in other matters. Clearly, therefore, licentious abuse must be checked, and that rule of Paul's adhered to which says, "Make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." (Romans 13: 14.) If we give in to them too much, they break all bounds.

METHODS OF AVOIDING THIS EXTREME.

There is no surer or quicker way to do this than to despise this life and meditate on the future heavenly life. Hence follow two rules: Firstly, "It remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none, and they that use this world as not abusing it." (1 Corinthians 7: 29 and 31.) Secondly, we must learn to be no less calm and patient in poverty than temperate in plenty. The man who adopts the rule of using this world as though he used it not eliminates not only gluttony in food and drink and effeminacy, ambition, pride, show, and austerity in his table, house, and clothes, but also every care that would incline him away from dwelling on the heavenly life and the nurture of his soul. Cato has well said, "Luxury is a source of great care, and of great carelessness of virtue"; and it is an old proverb, "People who care much about the body generally care little about the soul." Therefore while the liberty of the Christian in externals is not to be tied down by a rigid formula, it

is subject to this rule—he must indulge himself as little as possible. Conversely, he must aim always at suppressing ostentation and take great care lest a help become a hindrance.

Another rule is that those in reduced circumstances should learn to bear want patiently, so that they do not become unreasonable in their desire for things whose use in moderation implies considerable progress in the school of the Lord. Indeed, a man can scarcely show any claim to be a disciple of Christ if he has not made at least some progress here. For besides the fact that many other vices are associated with the craving for earthly goods, a man who is impatient of poverty nearly always gives abundant evidence of the opposite disease. I mean that if he is ashamed of shabby clothes he will be vain of smart ones; if he is discontented with a meagre supper and annoyed at not having a better one, he will abuse the luxury if he gets it by going to excess; if he finds a humble private station in life hard to put up with, he will scarcely avoid arrogance when honours come. All who have a sincere desire for piety should follow the example of the Apostle and learn “both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” (Philippians 4: 12.) Scripture has yet a third rule for modifying the use of earthly goods, about which we said something when discussing precepts about charity. This rule states that these goods have been given to us by the kindness of God for our use with the understanding that they are a trust, of which we must one day give an account. We must, therefore, administer them as if we constantly heard the words sounding in our ears, “Give an account of your stewardship.” Note, too, by whom the account is demanded; it is by Him Who highly commends abstinence, sobriety, frugality, and modesty, and abominates luxury, pride, ostentation, and vanity. Only when goods are used in love does He approve. With His own lips He has already condemned all those pleasures which entice the human heart from chastity and purity or dull the intellect.

Finally, we note that the Lord bids us all look to our own calling in every activity of life. He knows the fever of man’s restless spirit, how fickle, how lightly

borne hither and thither, how eager to embrace contradictions, how ambitious it is. Therefore, lest we produce chaos by our rash foolishness, He has assigned specific duties to each of the several spheres of life. These are named callings, and they are to prevent men wandering at random beyond their proper spheres. A man’s calling is a kind of station assigned to him by the Lord, so that he may not be driven about heedlessly all his life. The necessity of this distinction of callings appears in the fact that all our actions are judged in His sight with reference to it, and this often in a very different way from that in which human reason or philosophy would judge them. Even among philosophers there is no more distinguished achievement than to free one’s country from tyranny, yet the private individual who stabs the tyrant is openly condemned by the voice of the Heavenly Judge. However, I do not want to waste time quoting examples. It is enough to know that the elementary basis of the right conduct of all affairs is the call of the Lord. The man who does not keep this in view will never hold his course in the discharge of duty. He will sometimes be able, perhaps, to give the appearance of doing something valuable, but, however it may appear in the eyes of men, it will be rejected at the throne of God; and, besides, the different parts of his life will be out of alignment. Hence his life will be best arranged when it is directed to this end. No rash impulse will tempt him beyond his calling, since he will know it is not right to transgress the prescribed bounds. The obscure person will not be reluctant to cultivate a private life, lest he desert the station to which God has appointed him. Again, it will lighten all his cares and toil and troubles and other burdens to know that in them all he has the guidance of God. The magistrate will the more gladly perform his duties, and the family man mind his own business. Each in his own sphere of life will endure its inconveniences and worries, its tedium and anxiety, in the knowledge that the burden is imposed by God. And it is a source of great comfort that if we follow our proper calling no work will be so sordid or mean as not to have a splendour and a value in the sight of God.

