

The Lamentation of a Sinner by Queen Catherine Parr

Bewailing the ignorance of her blind life, led in superstition.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER

Of an humble sins to the confession of sins to the glory of God.

WHEN I consider, in the bethinking of mine evil and wretched former life, mine obstinate, stony and untractable heart, to have so much exceeded in evilness, that it hath not only neglected, yea contemned, and despised God's holy precepts and commandments; but, also, embraced, received, and esteemed, vain, foolish, and feigned trifles, I am partly, by the hate I owe to sin, which hath reigned in me, and partly by the love I owe to all Christians, whom I am content to edify; even with the example of mine own shame, forced, and constrained, with my heart and words, to confess and declare to the world, how ingrate, negligent, unkind, and stubborn, I have been to God my Creator, and how beneficial, merciful, and gentle, he hath been always to me his creature, being such a miserable and wretched sinner.

Truly, I have taken no little small thing upon me. First, to set forth my whole stubbornness and contempt in words; the which is incomprehensible in thought, as it is in the nineteenth Psalm, "*Who understandeth his faults?*" Next this, to declare the excellent beneficence, mercy, and goodness of God, which is infinite, and unmeasurable. Neither can all the words of angels and men make relation thereof, as appertaineth to his most high goodness. Who is he, that is not forced to confess the same, if he consider what he hath received of God, and doth daily receive? Yea, if men would not acknowledge and confess the same, the stones would cry out. Truly, I am constrained and forced to speak, and write thereof, to mine own confusion and shame, but to the glory and praise of God. For he, as a loving father, of most abundant and high goodness, hath heaped upon me innumerable benefits; and I, contrary, have heaped manifold sins, despising that which was good, holy, pleasant and acceptable in his sight, and choosing that which was delicious, pleasant, and acceptable in my sight.

And no marvel it was that I so did, for I would not learn to know the Lord, and his ways, but loved darkness better than light, yea, darkness seemed to me light. I embraced ignorance, as perfect knowledge, and knowledge seemed to me superfluous and vain. I regarded little God's word, but gave myself to vanities, and shadows of the world. I forsook him in whom all truth is, and followed the vain, foolish imaginations of my heart. I would have covered my sins with the pretence of holiness; I called superstition godly meaning, and true holiness error. The Lord did speak many pleasant and sweet words unto me, and I would not hear; he called me diversely, but through frowardness, I would not answer.

Mine evils and miseries are so many, and so great, that they can accuse me even to my face. Oh, how miserably and wretchedly am I confounded, when, for the multitude and greatness of my sins, I am compelled to accuse myself! Was it not a marvellous unkindness, when God did speak to me, and also call to me, that I would not answer him? What man, so called, would not have heard? Or what man, hearing, would not have

answered? If an earthly prince had spoken, or called, I suppose there are none, but would willingly have done both. Now, therefore, what a wretch and caitiff am I, that, when the Prince of princes, the King of kings, did speak many pleasant and gentle words unto me, and also called me so many and sundry times, that they cannot be numbered; and yet, notwithstanding these great signs and tokens of love, I would not come unto him, but hid myself out of his sight, seeking many crooked and by-ways, wherein I walked so long, that I had wholly lost his sight. And no marvel, or wonder, for I had a blind guide, called Ignorance, who dimmed so mine eyes, that I could never perfectly get any sight of the fair, goodly, straight and right ways of his doctrine; but continually travelled, uncomfortably, in foul, wicked, crooked, and perverse ways; yea, and because they were so much haunted of many, I could not think, but that I walked in the perfect and right way, having more regard to the number of the walkers, than to the order of the walking: believing also, most assuredly, with company, to have walked to heaven, whereas, I am most sure, they would have brought me down to hell.

I forsook the spiritual honouring of the true living God, and worshipped visible idols, and images made of men's hands, believing, by them, to have gotten heaven; yea, to say the truth, I made a great idol of myself, for I loved myself better than God. And, certainly, look, how many things are loved, or preferred, in our hearts, before God, so many are taken and esteemed for idols, and false gods. Alas! how have I violated this holy, pure, and most high precept and commandment of the love of God! Which precept bindeth me to love him with my whole heart, mind, force, strength, and understanding: and I, like unto an evil, wicked, and disobedient child, have given my will, power, and senses, to the contrary, making, almost, of every earthly and carnal thing, a god!

Furthermore, the blood of Christ was not reputed by me sufficient for to wash me from the filth of my sins; neither such ways, as he had appointed by his word; but I sought for such ruffraff as the bishop of Rome hath planted in his tyranny and kingdom, trusting, with great confidence, by the virtue and holiness of them, to receive full remission of my sins. And so I did, as much as was in me, obfuscate and darken the great benefit of Christ's passion, than the which, no thought can conceive anything of more value. There cannot be done so great an injury and displeasure to almighty God, our Father, as to tread under foot Christ, his only begotten and well beloved Son. All other sins in the world, gathered together in one, are not so heinous and detestable in the sight of God. And no wonder, for, in Christ crucified, God doth show himself most noble and glorious, even an almighty God, and most loving Father, in his only dear and chosen blessed Son.

And, therefore, I count myself one of the most wicked and miserable sinners in the world, because I have been so much contrary to Christ my Saviour. St. Paul desired to know nothing, but Christ crucified; after he had been rapt into the third heaven, where he heard such secrets, as were not convenient and meet to utter to men, but counted all his works and doings as nothing to win Christ. And I, most presumptuously thinking nothing of Christ crucified, went about to set forth mine own righteousness, saying, with the proud pharisee, "*Good Lord, I thank thee, I am not like other men: I am none adulterer, nor fornicator...*" and so forth; with such like words of vain glory, extolling myself, and despising others; working as an hired servant for wages, or else for reward; and not, as a loving child, only for very love, without respect of wages or reward, as I ought to have done. Neither did I consider how beneficial a Father I had, who did show me his charity and mercy, of his own mere grace and goodness, that, when I was most his enemy, he sent his only begotten and well-beloved Son into this world of wretchedness and misery, to suffer most cruel and sharp death for my redemption. But my heart was so stony and hard, that this great benefit was never truly and lively printed in my heart, although, with

my words it was oft rehearsed, thinking myself to be sufficiently instructed in the same, and being, indeed, in blind ignorance; and yet I stood so well in mine own judgment and opinion, that I thought it vain to seek the increase of my knowledge therein.

Paul calleth Christ the wisdom of God; and, even the same Christ, was, to me foolishness. My pride and blindness deceived me, and the hardness of my heart withstood the growing of truth within it. Such were the fruits of my carnal and human reason – to have rotten ignorance in price for ripe and seasonable knowledge; such, also, is the malice and wickedness that possesseth the hearts of men; such is the wisdom and pleasing of the flesh. I professed Christ in my baptism, when I began to live, but I swerved from him after baptism, in continuance of my living, even as the heathen, which never had begun.

Christ was innocent, and void of all sin; and I wallowed in filthy sin, and was free from no sin. Christ was obedient unto his Father, even to the death of the cross; and I disobedient, and most stubborn, even to the confusion of truth. Christ was meek and humble in heart, and I most proud and vain-glorious. Christ despised the world, with all the vanities thereof, and I made it my god, because of the vanities. Christ came to serve his brethren, and I coveted to rule over them. Christ despised worldly honour, and I much delighted to attain the same. Christ loved the base and simple things of the world, and I esteemed the most fair and pleasant things. Christ loved poverty, and I wealth. Christ was gentle and merciful to the poor, and I hard-hearted and ungentle. Christ prayed for his enemies, and I hated mine. Christ rejoiced in the conversion of sinners, and I was not grieved to see their reversion to sin. By this declaration, all creatures may perceive how far I was from Christ, and without Christ; yea, how contrary to Christ, although I bare the name of a Christian: insomuch that, if any man had said, I had been without Christ, I would have stiffly denied and withstood the same; and yet, indeed, I neither knew Christ, nor wherefore he came.

As concerning the effect and purpose of his coming, I had a certain vain and blind knowledge, both cold and dead, which may be had with all sin; as doth plainly appear by this my confession and open declaration.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

A Lamentation of a Sinner, with a hearty repentance in Faith, to obtain absolution and remission, through the merits of Christ.

WHAT cause now have I to lament, sigh, and weep, for my life and time so evil spent! With how much humility and lowliness ought I to come, and acknowledge my sins to God, giving him thanks, that it hath pleased him, of his abundant goodness, to give me time of repentance! For I know my sins, in the consideration of them, to be so grievous, and, in the number, so exceeding, that I have deserved, very often, eternal damnation. And for the deferring of God's wrath, so manifoldly due, I must incessantly give thanks to the mercy of God; beseeching also, that the same delay of punishment cause not his plague to be the sorer, since mine own conscience condemns my former doings. But his mercy exceedeth all iniquity. And if I should not thus hope, alas, what should I seek for refuge and comfort? No mortal man is of power to help me; and, for the multitude of my sins, I dare not lift up mine eyes to heaven, where the seat of judgment is, I have so much offended my God. What! shall I fall in desperation? Nay, I will call upon Christ, the Light of the world, the Fountain of life, the Relief of all careful consciences, the Peacemaker between God and man, and the only health and comfort of all true repentant sinners.

He can, by his almighty power, save me, and deliver me out of this miserable state, and hath will, by his mercy, to save even the whole sin of the world. I have no hope nor confidence in any creature, neither in heaven nor earth, but in Christ, my whole and only Saviour. He came into the world to save sinners, and to heal them that are sick; for he said, "*The whole have no need of the physician.*" Behold, Lord, how I come to thee, a sinner sick, and grievously wounded; I ask not bread, but the crumbs that fall from the children's table. Cast me not out of thy sight, although I have deserved to be cast into hell fire.

If I should look upon my sin, and not upon thy mercy, I should despair; for, in myself, I find nothing to save me, but a dunghill of wickedness to condemn me. If I should hope, by mine own strength and power, to come out of this maze of iniquity and wickedness, wherein I have walked so long, I should be deceived. For I am so ignorant, blind, weak, and feeble, that I cannot bring myself out of this entangled and wayward maze; but, the more I seek means and ways to wind myself out, the more I am wrapped and tangled therein.

So that I perceive my striving therein to be hinderance, my travail to be labour spent in going back. It is the hand of the Lord that can, and will, bring me out of the endless maze of death. For, without I be prevented by the grace of the Lord, I cannot ask forgiveness, nor be repentant, or sorry for them. There is no man can avow that Christ is the only Saviour of the world, but by the Holy Ghost; yea, as St. Paul saith, "*no man can say, The Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost.*" "*The Spirit helpeth our infirmity, and maketh continual intercession for us, with such sorrowful groanings as cannot be expressed.*"

Therefore, I will first require, and pray the Lord, to give me his Holy Spirit, to teach me to avow, that Christ is the Saviour of the world, and to utter these words, "*The Lord Jesus;*" and, finally, to help mine infirmities, and to intercede, or entreat for me. For I am most certain and sure, that no creature, in heaven or earth, is of power, or can, by any mean, help me; but God, who is omnipotent, almighty, beneficial, and merciful, well-willing, and loving, to all those that call, and put their whole confidence and trust in him. And, therefore, I will seek none other means, nor advocate, but Christ's Holy Spirit; who is only the Advocate and Mediator between God and man, to help and relieve me.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

What true Faith worketh in the soul of a Sinner.

BUT now, what maketh me so bold and hardy, to presume to come to the Lord with such audacity and boldness, being so great a sinner? Truly, nothing, but his own word. For he saith, "*Come to me, all ye that labour, and are burdened, and I shall refresh you.*" What gentle, merciful, and comfortable words are these to all sinners! Were he not a frantic, mad, beast-like, and foolish man, that would run for aid, help, or refuge to any other creature? What a most gracious, comfortable, and gentle saying was this, with such pleasant and sweet words to allure his very enemies to come unto him! Is there any worldly prince, or magistrate, that would show such clemency and mercy to their disobedient and rebellious subjects, having offended them? I suppose they would not with such words allure them, except it were to call those whom they cannot take, and punish them being taken. But even as Christ is Prince of princes, and Lord of lords, so his charity and mercy exceedeth and surmounteth all others. Christ saith, If carnal fathers do

give good gifts to their children when they ask them, how much more shall your heavenly Father, being in substance all holy, and most highly good, give good gifts to all them that ask him.

It is no small nor little gift that I now require, neither think I myself worthy to receive such a noble gift, being so ingrate, unkind, and wicked a child. But when I behold the benignity, liberality, mercy, and goodness of the Lord, I am encouraged, boldened, and stirred to ask such a noble gift. The Lord is so bountiful and liberal, that he will not have us satisfied and contented with one gift, neither to ask simple and small gifts; and therefore he promiseth and bindeth himself by his word, to give good and beneficial gifts to all them that ask him with true faith, without which nothing can be done acceptable or pleasing to God; for faith is the foundation and ground of all other gifts, virtues, and graces; and therefore I will pray and say, "*Lord, increase my faith.*"

For this is the life everlasting, O Lord, that I must believe thee to be the true God, and him whom that thou didst send, Jesus Christ. By this faith I am assured, and by this assurance I feel the remission of my sins. This is it that maketh me bold, this is it that comforteth me, this is it that quencheth all despair.

I know, O my Lord, thine eyes look upon my faith. St. Paul saith, "*We are justified by faith in Christ, and not by the deeds of the law; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ died in vain.*" St. Paul meaneth not here a dead, human, and historical faith, gotten by human industry; but a supernatural and lively faith, which worketh by charity, as he himself plainly expresses. This dignity of faith is no derogation to good works; for out of this faith spring all good works, yet we may not impute to the worthiness of faith or works our justification before God, but ascribe and give the worthiness of it wholly to the merits of Christ's passion, and refer and attribute the knowledge and perceiving thereof only to faith; whose very true and only property it is to take, apprehend, and hold fast the promises of God's mercy, which maketh us righteous; and to cause me continually to hope for the same mercy, and in love to work all manner of ways allowed in the scripture, that I may be thankful for the same.

Thus I feel myself to come, as it were, in a new garment before God; and now by his mercy to be taken as just and righteous, who, of late, without his mercy, was sinful and wicked; and by faith to obtain his mercy, the which the unfaithful cannot enjoy. And although St. John extolleth charity in his epistle, saying, that "*God is charity, and he that dwelleth in charity dwelleth in God.*" Truly, charity maketh men live like angels, and of the most furious, unbridled, and carnal men, maketh meek lambs.

Yea, with how fervent a spirit ought I to call, cry, and pray to the Lord to make his great charity to burn and flame my heart, being stony and evil affected, that it never would conceive nor regard the great, inestimable charity and love of God, in sending his only begotten and dear beloved Son into this vale of misery, to suffer the most cruel and sharp death of the cross for my redemption. Yea, I never had this unspeakable and most high charity and abundant love of God printed and fixed in my heart duly, till it pleased God of his mere grace, mercy, and pity, to open mine eyes, making me to see and behold with the eye of lively faith, Christ crucified to be mine only Saviour and Redeemer. For then I began, and not before, to perceive and see mine own ignorance and blindness; the cause thereof was that I would not learn to know Christ my Saviour and Redeemer.

But when God, of his mere goodness, had thus opened mine eyes, and made me see and behold Christ, the Wisdom of God, the Light of the world, with a supernatural sight of

faith, all pleasures, vanities, honour, riches, wealth, and aids of the world, began to wax bitter unto me. Then I knew it was no illusion of the devil, nor false, nor human doctrine I had received. When such success came thereof, that I had in detestation and horror that which I erst so much loved and esteemed, being of God forbidden that we should love the world, or the vain pleasures and shadows in the same, then began I to perceive that Christ was my only Saviour and Redeemer; and the same doctrine to be all divine, holy, heavenly, and infused by grace into the hearts of the faithful, which never can be attained by human doctrine, knowledge, or reason, although they should travail and labour for the same to the end of the world. Then began I to dwell in God by charity, knowing, by the loving charity of God in the remission of my sins, that God is charity, as St. John saith. So that of my faith, whereby I came to know God, and whereby it pleased God, even because I trusted in him, to justify me, sprang this excellent charity in my heart.

I think no less, but many will wonder and marvel at this my saying, that I never knew Christ for my Saviour and Redeemer until this time. For many have this opinion, saying, Who knoweth not there is a Christ? Who, being a Christian, doth not confess him his Saviour? And thus believing their dead, human, historical faith and knowledge, which they have learned in their scholastical books to be the true infused faith and knowledge of Christ, which may be had, as I said before, with all sin, they used to say, by their own experience of themselves, that their faith doth not justify them. And true it is, except they have this faith, which I have declared here before, they shall never be justified.

And yet it is not false that by faith only I am sure to be justified. Even this is the cause that so many impugn this office and duty of true faith, because so many lack the true faith. And even as the faithful are forced to allow this true faith, so the unfaithful can, in nowise probably, entreat thereof; the one feeling in himself that which he saith, the other not having in him for to say.

I have certainly no curious learning to defend this matter withal, but a simple zeal and earnest love to the truth inspired of God, who promiseth to pour his Spirit upon all flesh; which I have, by the grace of God, whom I most humbly honour, felt in myself to be true.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Of the great Love of God towards mankind, and of the inward beholding of Christ crucified.

LET us therefore now, I pray you, by faith, behold and consider the great charity and goodness of God, in sending his Son to suffer death for our redemption when we were his mortal enemies; and after what sort and manner he sent him.

First, It is to be considered, yea, to be undoubtedly and with a perfect faith believed, that God sent him to us freely; for he did give him, and sold him not. A more noble and rich gift he could not have given. He sent not a servant or a friend, but his only Son, so dearly beloved; not in delights, riches, and honours, but in crosses, poverties, and slanders; not as a Lord, but as a servant, yea, and, in most vile and painful sufferings, to wash us, not with water, but with his own precious blood; not from mire, but from the puddle and filth of our iniquities. He hath given him not to make us poor, but to enrich us with his divine virtues, merits, and graces ; yea, and in him he hath given us all good things, and finally himself, and with such great charity as cannot be expressed.

Was it not a most high and abundant charity of God to send Christ to shed his blood, to lose honour, life, and all for his enemies? Even in the time when we had done him most injury he first showed his charity to us with such flames of love, that greater could not be showed. God in Christ hath opened unto us, although we are weak and blind of ourselves, that we may behold in this miserable estate the great wisdom, goodness, and truth, with all the other godly perfections which are in Christ. Therefore inwardly to behold Christ crucified upon the cross is the best and goodliest meditation that can be.

We may see also in Christ crucified the beauty of the soul better than in all the books of the world: for who that with a lively faith seeth and feeleth in spirit that Christ, the Son of God, is dead for the satisfying and purifying of the soul, shall see that his soul is appointed for the very tabernacle and mansion of the inestimable and incomprehensible majesty and honour of God. We see also in Christ crucified how vain and foolish the world is, and how that Christ, being most wise, despised the same. We see also how blind it is, because the same knoweth not Christ, but persecuteth him. We see also how unkind the world is, by the killing of Christ in the time he did show it most favour. How hard and obstinate was it that would not be mollified with so many tears, such sweat, and so much bloodshed of the Son of God, suffering with such great and high charity?

Therefore he is now very blind that seeth not how vain, foolish, false, ingrate, cruel, hard, wicked, and evil the world is. We may also in Christ crucified weigh our sins, as in a divine balance, how grievous and how weighty they are, seeing they have crucified Christ; for they would never have been counterpoised but with the great and precious weight of the blood of the Son of God. And therefore God, of his high goodness, determined that his blessed Son should rather suffer bloodshed than our sins should have condemned us. We shall never know our own misery and wretchedness but with the light of Christ crucified; then we shall see our own cruelty, when we feel his mercy; our own unrighteousness and iniquity, when we see his righteousness and holiness. Therefore, to learn to know truly our own sins is to study in the book of the crucifix, by continual conversation in faith; and to have perfect and plentiful charity is to learn, first by faith, the charity that is in God towards us.

We may see also in Christ upon the cross how great the pains of hell, and how blessed the joys of heaven are; and what a sharp and painful thing it shall be to them that shall be deprived of that sweet, happy, and glorious joy, Christ. Then this crucifix is the book wherein God hath included all things, and hath most compendiously written therein all truth profitable and necessary for our salvation. Therefore let us endeavour ourselves to study this book, that we, being enlightened with the Spirit of God, may give him thanks for so great a benefit.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Of the glorious Victories of Christ over all Enemies.

IF we look further into this book we shall see Christ's great victory upon the cross, which was so noble and mighty that there never was other so noble or mighty, that there never was, neither shall be such. If the victory and glory of worldly princes were great because they did overcome great hosts of men, how much was Christ's greater, which vanquished not only the prince of this world, but all the enemies of God; triumphing over persecution, injuries, villanies, slanders, yea, death, the world, sin, and the devil, and brought to confusion all carnal prudence!

The princes of the world never did fight without the strength of the world: Christ contrarily went to war even against all the strength of the world. He fought, as David did with Goliath, unarmed of all human wisdom and policy, and without all worldly power and strength. Nevertheless, he was fully replenished and armed with the whole armour of the Spirit; and in this one battle he overcame for ever all his enemies. There was never so glorious a spoil, neither a more rich and noble, than Christ was upon the cross, who delivered all his elect from such a sharp and miserable captivity. He had in his battle many stripes, yea, and lost his life, but his victory was so much the greater. Therefore, when I look upon the Son of God with a supernatural faith and light, so unarmed, naked, given up, and alone, with humility, patience, liberality, modesty, gentleness, and with all other his divine virtues, beating down to the ground all God's enemies, and making the soul of man so fair and beautiful; I am forced to say that his victory and triumph was marvellous; and therefore Christ well deserved to have this noble title, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.

But if we will particularly unfold and see his great victories, let us first behold how he overcame sin with his innocency, and confounded pride with his humility; quenched all worldly love with his charity, appeased the wrath of his Father with his meekness, and turned hatred into love with his so many benefits and godly zeal.

Christ hath not only overcome sin, but rather he hath killed the same; inasmuch as he hath satisfied for it himself with the most holy sacrifice and oblation of his precious body in suffering most bitter and cruel death. Also after another sort, that is, he giveth all those that love him so much spirit, grace, virtue, and strength, that they may resist, impugn, and overcome sin, and not consent, neither suffer it to reign in them. He hath also vanquished sin, because he hath taken away the force of the same; that is, he hath cancelled the law, which was in evil men the occasion of sin. Therefore sin hath no power against them that are, with the Holy Ghost, united to Christ; in them there is nothing worthy of damnation. And although the dregs of Adam do remain, that is, our concupiscences, which indeed are sins, nevertheless they are not imputed for sins, if we be truly planted in Christ. It is true, that Christ might have taken away all our immoderate affections, but he hath left them for the great glory of his Father, and for his own greater triumph. As for example: when a prince fights with his enemies, which sometime had the sovereignty over his people, and subduing them, may kill them if he will, yet he preserves and saves them; and whereas they were lords over his people, he makes them after to serve whom they before had ruled. Now, in such a case the prince shows himself a greater conqueror in that he hath made them which were rulers to obey, and the subjects to be lords over them to whom they served, than if he had utterly destroyed them upon the conquest. For now he leaves continual victory to them whom he redeemed, whereas otherwise the occasion of victory was taken away where none were left to be the subjects. Even so, in like case, Christ hath left in us these concupiscences, to the intent they should serve us to the exercise of our virtues, where first they did reign over us to the exercise of our sin. And it may be plainly seen, that whereas first they were such impediments to us that we could not move ourselves towards God, now, by Christ, we have so much strength, that notwithstanding the force of them, we may assuredly walk to heaven. And although the children of God some time do fall by frailty into some sin, yet, that falling maketh them to humble themselves, and to acknowledge the goodness of God, and to come to him for refuge and help.

Likewise Christ, by his death, hath overcome the prince of devils with all his host, and hath destroyed them all. For, as Paul saith, it is verified that Christ should break the

serpent's head, prophesied by God. And although the devil tempt us, yet if by faith we are planted in Christ, we shall not perish, but rather by his temptation take great force and might. So it is evident that the triumph, victory, and glory of Christ is the greater, having in such sort subdued the devil; that whereas he was prince and lord of the world, holding all creatures in captivity, now Christ useth him as an instrument to punish the wicked, and to exercise and make strong the elect of God, in Christian warfare.

Christ likewise hath overcome death in a more glorious manner, if it be possible, because he hath not taken it away; but leaving universally all subject to the same. He hath given so much virtue and spirit, that whereas afore we passed thereto with great fear, now we are bold through the Spirit, for the sure hope of the resurrection, that we receive it with joy. It is now no more bitter, but sweet; no more feared, but desired; it is no death, but life.

And also it hath pleased God that the infirmities and adversities do remain to the sight of the world; but the children of God are by Christ made so strong, righteous, whole, and sound, that the troubles of the world are comforts of the spirit, the passions of the flesh are medicines of the soul; for all manner of things work to their commodity and profit; for they in spirit feel that God their Father doth govern them, and disposeth all things for their benefit; therefore they feel themselves sure. In persecution, they are quiet and peaceful; in trouble, they are without weariness, fears, anxieties, suspicions, miseries; and, finally, all the good and evil of the world worketh to their commodity.

Moreover, they see that the triumph of Christ hath been so great, that not only he hath subdued and vanquished all our enemies and the power of them, but he hath overthrown and vanquished them after such a sort, that all things serve to our health. He might and could have taken them all away, but where then should have been our victory, palm, and crown? For we daily have fights in the flesh, and by the succour of grace have continual victories over sin; whereby we have cause to glorify God who, by his Son, hath weakened our enemy the devil, and by his Spirit giveth us strength to vanquish his offspring.

So do we acknowledge daily the great triumph of our Saviour, and rejoice in our own fights; the which we can no wise impute to any wisdom of this world, seeing sin to increase by it; and where worldly wisdom most governeth, there most sin ruleth; for as the world is enemy to God, so also the wisdom thereof is adverse to God, and, therefore, Christ hath declared, and discovered the same to be foolishness. And, although he could have taken away all worldly wisdom, yet he hath left it for his greater glory, and the triumph of his chosen vessels. For before, whereas it was our ruler against God, now, by Christ, we are served of it for God, as of a slave in worldly things; albeit, in supernatural things, the same is not to be understood. And further, if, at any time men would impugn, and gain say us with the wisdom of the world, yet we have, by Christ, so much supernatural light of the truth, that we make a mock of all those that repugn the truth.

Christ also, upon the cross, hath triumphed over the world. First, because he hath discovered the same to be naught; and that, although it was covered with the veil of hypocrisy, and the vesture of moral virtues. Christ hath showed, that, in God's sight, the righteousness of the world is wickedness, and he hath yielded witness, that the works of men, not regenerated by him in faith, are evil; and so Christ hath judged and condemned the world for naught. Furthermore, he hath given to all his so much light and spirit, that they know it, and dispraise the same; yea and tread it under their feet, with all vain honours, dignities, and pleasures; not taking the fair promises, neither the offers which it presents, nay, they rather make a scorn of them. And, as for the threatenings and force of the world, they nothing fear.

Now, therefore, we may see how great the victory and triumph of Christ is, who hath delivered all those the Father gave him from the power of the devil, cancelling upon the cross the writing of our debts. For he hath delivered us from the condemnation of sin, from the bondage of the law, from the fear of death, from the danger of the world, and from all evils in this life, and in the other to come. And he hath enriched us, made us noble, and most highly happy, after such a glorious and triumphant way, as cannot with tongue be expressed; and, therefore, we are forced to say, his triumph is marvellous.

It is also seen and known, that Christ is the true Messiah; for he hath delivered man from all evils, and by him man hath all goodness, so that he is the true Messiah. Therefore, all other helpers are but vain and counterfeited saviours; seeing that, by this, our Messiah, Christ, wholly and only, we are delivered from all evils, and by him we have all goodness. And that this is true, it is evident and clear, because the very true Christian is a Christian by Christ. And the true Christian feeleth inwardly, by Christ, so much goodness of God, that even troublous life and death are sweet unto him, and miseries are happiness. The true Christian, by Christ, is disburdened from the servitude of the law, having the law of grace, graven by the Spirit, inhabiting his heart, and from sin that reigned in him, from the power of the infernal spirits, from damnation, and from every evil; and is made a son of God, a brother of Christ, heir of heaven, and lord of the world; so that, in Christ and by Christ, he possesses all good things.

But let us know that Christ yet fighteth in spirit in his elect vessels, and shall fight even to the day of judgment; at which day shall that great enemy, death, be wholly destroyed, and shall be no more. Then shall the children of God rejoice in him, saying, "*O death, where is thy victory and sting?*" there shall be then no more trouble nor sin; nay, rather, none evil, but heaven for the good, and hell for the wicked. Then shall wholly be discovered the victory and triumph of Christ, who, according to Paul, shall present unto his Father the kingdom, together with his chosen saved by him.

It was no little favour towards his children, that Christ was chosen of God to save us, his elect, so highly by the way of the cross. Paul calleth it a grace, and a most singular grace. We may well think, that he, having been to the world so valiant a captain of God, was full of light, grace, virtue, and spirit; therefore, he might justly say, "*It is finished.*" We, seeing then that the triumph and victory of our Captain Christ is so marvellous, glorious, and noble, to the which war we are appointed; let us force ourselves to follow him, with bearing our cross, that we may have fellowship with him in his kingdom.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

That we ought to submit ourselves to the school of the cross, and still look and learn in the book of the cross.

TRULY, it may be most justly verified, that to behold Christ crucified in spirit, is the best meditation that can be. I certainly never knew mine own miseries and wretchedness so well by book, admonition, or learning, as I have done by looking into the spiritual book of the cross. I lament much I have passed so many years, not regarding that divine book; but I judged, and thought myself to be well instructed in the same; whereas now I am of this opinion, that if God would suffer me to live here a thousand years, and I should study continually in the same divine book, I should not be filled with the contemplation thereof. Neither hold I myself contented, but always have a great desire to learn and study more

therein. I never knew mine own wickedness, neither lamented for my sins truly, until the time God inspired me with his grace, that I looked in this book; then I began to see perfectly, that mine own power and strength could not help me, and that I was in the Lord's hand, even as the clay is in the potter's hand; then I began to cry and to say:

“Alas! Lord, that ever I have so wickedly offended thee, being to me, from the beginning, so gracious, and so good a Father, and, most specially, now thou hast declared and showed thy goodness unto me, when, in the time, I have done thee most injury, to call me, and also to make me know, and take thee for my Saviour and Redeemer.”

Such are the wonderful works of God, to call sinners to repentance, and to make them to take Christ, his well-beloved Son, for their Saviour; this is the gift of God, and of all Christians to be required and desired. For, except this great benefit of Christ crucified be felt and fixed surely in man's heart, there can no good work be done acceptable before God; for in Christ is all fulness of the Godhead, and in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge: even he is the water of life, whereof whosoever shall drink, he shall never more thirst, but it shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life. St. Paul saith, *“There is no damnation to them that are in Christ, which walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”* Moreover he saith, *“If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son, much more, seeing we are reconciled, we shall be preserved by his death.”* It is no little or small benefit we have received by Christ, if we consider what he hath done for us, as I have perfectly declared heretofore. Wherefore, I pray the Lord, that this great benefit of Christ crucified may be stedfastly fixed and printed in all Christians' hearts, that they may be true lovers of God, and work as children, for love, and not as servants, compelled with threatenings, or provoked with hire.

The sincere and pure lovers of God do embrace Christ with such fervency of spirit, that they rejoice in hope, are bold in danger, sutler in adversity, continue in prayer, bless their persecutors. Further, they are not wise in their own opinion, neither high-minded in their prosperity, neither abashed in their adversity, but humble and gentle always to all men. For they know, by their faith, they are members all of one body, and that they have all possessed one God, one faith, one baptism, one joy, and one salvation. If these pure and sincere lovers of God were thickly sown, there should not be so much contention and strife growing on the fields of our religion as there is. Well, I shall pray to the Lord to take all contention and strife away, and that the sowers of sedition may have mind to cease their labour, or to sow it among the stones, and to have grace to sow gracious virtues, where they may both take root, and bring forth fruit, with sending also a godly unity and concord amongst all Christians, that we may serve the Lord in true holiness of life.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

A Christian bewailing the miserable ignorance and blindness of men.

THE example of good living is required of all Christians, but especially in the ecclesiastical pastors and shepherds. For they are called in scripture, workmen with God, disbursers of God's secrets, the light of the world, the salt of the earth; at whose hands all others should take comfort in working, knowledge of God's will, and sight to become children of light, and to taste of seasonable wisdom. They have, or should have, the Holy Spirit, abundantly to pronounce and set forth the word of God, in verity and truth. If ignorance

and blindness reign amongst us, they should, with the truth of God's word, instruct and set us in the truth, and direct us in the way of the Lord.

But thanks be given unto the Lord, that hath now sent us such a godly and learned king, in these latter days, to reign over us; that, with the virtue and force of God's word, hath taken away the veils and mists of errors, and brought us to the knowledge of the truth, by the light of God's word; which was so long hid and kept under, that the people were nigh famished, and hungred, for lack of spiritual food. Such was the charity of the spiritual curates and shepherds. But our Moses, and most godly wise governor and king, hath delivered us out of the captivity and bondage of Pharaoh. I mean by this Moses, king Henry the eighth, my most sovereign favourable lord and husband; one, if Moses had figured any more than Christ, through the excellent grace of God, meet to be another expressed verity of Moses's conquest over Pharaoh.* And I mean by this Pharaoh, the bishop of Rome, who hath been, and is a greater persecutor of all true Christians, than ever was Pharaoh of the children of Israel; for he is a persecutor of the gospel and grace, a setter forth of all superstition and counterfeit holiness, bringing many souls to hell with his alchemy and counterfeit money, deceiving the poor souls under the pretence of holiness; but so much the greater shall be his damnation, because he deceiveth and robbeth under Christ's mantle. The Lord keep and defend all men from his jugglings and sleights, but especially the poor, simple, and unlearned souls. And this lesson I would all men had of him, that, when they began to mislike his doing, then only begin they to like God, and certainly not before.

As for the spiritual pastors and shepherds, I think they will cleave and stick to the word of God, even to the death; to vanquish all God's enemies, if need shall require; all respects of honour, dignity, riches, wealth, and their private commodities, laid apart; following also the examples of Christ, and his chosen apostles, in preaching and teaching sincere and wholesome doctrine, and such things as make for peace, with godly lessons, wherewith they may edify others; that every man may walk after his vocation in holiness of life, in unity and concord, which unity is to be desired of all true Christians.

It is much to be lamented, the schisms, varieties, contentions, and disputations that have been, and are in the world about the Christian religion, and no agreement nor concord of the same among the learned men. Truly, the devil hath been the sower of the seed of sedition, and shall be the maintainer of it, even till God's will be fulfilled.

There is no war so cruel and evil as this, for the war with sword killeth but the bodies, and this slayeth many souls; for the poor unlearned persons remain confused, and almost every one believeth and worketh after his own way; and yet there is but one truth of God's word, by the which we shall be saved. Happy are they that receive it, and most unhappy are they which neglect and persecute the same. For it shall be more easy for Sodom and Gomorrah, at the day of judgment, than for them. And not without just cause, if we consider the benevolence, goodness, and mercy of God, who hath declared his charity towards us, greater, and more inestimable, than ever he did to the Hebrews. For they lived under shadows and figures, and were bound to the law. And Christ, we being his greatest enemies, hath delivered us from the bondage of the law, and hath fulfilled all that was figured in their law, and also in their prophecies; shedding his own precious blood to make us the children of his Father, and his brethren, and hath made us free, setting us in a godly liberty; I mean not license to sin, as many are glad to interpret the same, when Christian liberty is godly entreated of.

Truly, it is no good spirit that moveth men to find fault at everything, and when things may be well taken, to pervert them into an evil sense and meaning. There are in the world many speakers of holiness and good works, but very rare and seldom is declared, which are the good and holy works. The works of the Spirit are almost never spoken of, and, therefore, very few know what they are. I am able to show the ignorance of the people to be great, not in this matter alone, but in many others, the which were most necessary for Christians to know. Because I have had just proof of the same, it makes me thus much to say, with no little sorrow and grief in my heart, for such a miserable ignorance and blindness amongst the people.

I doubt not but we can all say, "*Lord, Lord;*" but I fear God may say unto us, "*This people honoureth me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.*" God desireth nothing but the heart, and saith, He will be worshipped in spirit and truth. Christ condemned all hypocrisy and feigned holiness, and taught sincere, pure, and true godliness; but we, worse than frantic, or blind, will not follow Christ's doctrine, but trust to men's doctrines, judgments, and sayings, which bedims our eyes, and so the blind lead the blind, and both fall into the ditch. Truly, in my simple and unlearned judgment, no man's doctrine is to be esteemed, or preferred, like unto Christ and the apostles; nor to be taught, as a perfect and true doctrine, but even as it doth accord and agree with the doctrine of the gospel.

But yet, those that are called spiritual pastors, (although they are most carnal, as very evidently and plainly appears by their fruits,) are so blinded with the love of themselves, and the world, that they extol men's inventions and doctrines before the doctrine of the gospel. And when they are not able to maintain their own inventions and doctrines with any jot of the scripture, then they most cruelly persecute them that are contrary to the same. Are such the lovers of Christ? Nay, nay, they are the lovers of the wicked mammon, neither regarding God, nor his honour. For filthy lucre hath made them almost mad, but frantic they are doubtless. Is not this miserable state of spiritual men in the world much to be lamented of all good Christians? But yet I cannot allow, neither praise all kind of lamentation, but such as may stand with Christian charity.

[*Although these expressions are too favourable for one who was such a slave to his appetites and lusts, yet it must not be forgotten that to Henry the eighth we are indebted, as an instrument, for the scriptures in our own language, and for the beginning of the reformation. He was a coarse instrument, yet well suited to break the iron bands of popery.]

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

Of the fruits and rules of true Christianity for men to follow.

CHARITY suffereth long, and is gentle, envieth not, upbraideth no man, casteth frowardly no faults in men's teeth, but referreth all things to God; being angry without sin, reforming others without slanders, carrying ever a storehouse of mild words to pierce the stony-hearted men. I would that all Christians, like as they have professed Christ, would so endeavour themselves to follow him in godly living. For we have not put on Christ to live any more to ourselves in the vanities, delights, and pleasures of the world, and the flesh; suffering the concupiscence and carnality of the flesh to have its full swing, for we must walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh; for the spirit is spiritual, and coveteth spiritual things, and the flesh carnal, and desireth carnal things. The men, regenerate by Christ, despise the world and all the vanities and pleasures thereof; they are no lovers of

themselves, for they feel how evil and infirm they are, not being able to do any good thing without the help of God, from whom they acknowledge all goodness to proceed.

They flatter not themselves with thinking everything to be good and holy which shineth to the world; for they know all external and outward works, be they ever so glorious and fair to the world, may be done of the evil as well as of the good. And, therefore, they have in very little estimation the outward show of holiness, because they are all spiritual, casting up their eyes upon heavenly things; neither looking nor regarding the earthly things, for they are to them vile and abject. They have also the simplicity of the dove, and the policy of the serpent; for, by simplicity, they have a desire to do good to all men, and to hurt no man, no, though they have occasion given; and, by policy, they give not, nor minister any just cause to any man, whereby their doctrine might be reproved. They are not, also, as a reed shaken with every wind; but, when they are blasted with the tempests and storms of the world, then remain they most firm, stable, and quiet, feeling in spirit, that God, as their best Father, doth send, and suffer all things for their benefit and commodity. Christ is to them a rule, a line, and example of Christian life; they are never offended at anything, although occasion be ministered unto them. For, like as Christ, when Peter would have withdrawn him from death, answered, and said, "*Go back from me, Satan, for thou offendest me;*" that is, As much as lieth in thee, thou givest me occasion with thy words to make me withdraw myself from death, although I yield not thereto; for this, thy procurement, cannot extinguish the burning desire I have to shed my blood for my chosen. Even so the perfect men are never offended at anything; for, although the world were full of sin, they would not withdraw themselves from doing of good, nor wax cold in the love of the Lord. And much less would they be moved to do evil, yea rather, they are so much the more moved to do good.

The regenerated by Christ are never offended at the works of God, because they know, by faith, that God doth all things well; and that he cannot err, either for want of power, or by ignorance, or malice; for they know him to be almighty, and that he seeth all things, and is most abundantly good. They see, and feel in spirit that of the will most highly perfect, cannot but proceed most perfect works. Likewise, they are not offended at the works of men; for, if they are good, they are moved by them to take occasion to follow them, and to acknowledge the goodness of God, with giving of thanks, and praising his name daily the more. But if they are indifferent, and such as may be done with good and evil intents, they judge the best part, thinking they may be done to a good purpose, and so they are edified. But, if they are so evil, that they cannot be taken in good part by any means, yet they are not offended, although occasion be given; nay, rather, they are edified, inasmuch as they take occasion to be better, though the contrary be ministered to them.

Then begin they to think and say thus; If God had not preserved me with his grace, I should have committed this sin and worse. Oh how much am I bound to confess and acknowledge the goodness of God! They go also thinking and saying further; He that hath sinned, may be one of God's elect; peradventure the Lord hath suffered him to fall, to the intent he may the better know himself. I know he is one of them that Christ hath shed his blood for, and one of my Christian brethren; truly, I will admonish and rebuke him, and, in case I find him in despair, I will comfort him, and show him the great goodness and mercy of God in Christ; and, with godly consolations, I will see if I can lift him up. And thus ye may see how the men, regenerated by Christ, of everything, win and receive fruit.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

Of the fruits of infidelity, and offence of weaklings.

AND contrariwise, the younglings, and imperfect, are offended at small trifles, taking every thing in evil part, grudging and murmuring against their neighbour; and so much the more, as they show themselves fervent in their so doing, they are judged of the blind world, and of themselves, great zeal-bearers to God. If this were the greatest evil of these younglings, it were not the most evil; but I fear they are so blind and ignorant, that they are offended also at good things, and judge nothing good, but such as they embrace and esteem to be good, with murmuring against all such as follow not their ways. If there are any of this sort, the Lord give them the light of his truth, that they may increase and grow in godly strength. I suppose if such younglings and imperfect had seen Christ and his disciples, eat meat with unwashen hands, or not to have fasted with the Pharisees, they would have been offended, seeing him to be a breaker of men's traditions. Their affections dispose their eyes to see through other men, and they see nothing in themselves; where charity, although it be most full of eyes, to see the faults of others, whom it coveteth to amend, thinketh none evil, but discreetly and rightly interpreteth all things, by the which everything is taken more justly and truly.

Now, these superstitious weaklings, if they had been conversant with Christ, and had seen him lead his life, sometime with women, sometime with Samaritans, with publicans, sinners, and with the Pharisees, they would have murmured at him. Also, if they had seen Mary pour upon Christ the precious ointment, they would have said, with Judas, "*This ointment might have been sold, and given to the poor.*" If they also had seen Christ, with whips, drive out of the temple those that bought and sold, they would forthwith have judged Christ to have been troubled and moved with anger, and not by zeal of charity. How would they have been offended, if they had seen him go to the Jews' feast, heal a sick man upon the sabbath day, practise with the woman of Samaria, yea, and show unto her of his most divine doctrine and life! They would have taken occasion to have hated and persecuted him, as the scribes and Pharisees did; and even so should Christ, the Saviour of the world, have been to them an offence and ruin.

There are another kind of little ones imperfect, which are offended after this sort and manner. As when they see one that is reputed and esteemed holy, to commit sin, forthwith they learn to do that, and worse, and wax cold in doing of good, and confirm themselves in evil; and then they excuse their wicked life, publishing the same with the slander of their neighbour. If any man reprove them, they say, Such a man did this, and worse. So it is evident that such persons would deny Christ, if they saw other men do the same. If they went to Rome, and saw the enormities of the prelates, which are said to reign there amongst them, I doubt not, if they saw one of them sin, who was reputed and taken for holy, their faith would be lost, but not the faith of Christ, which they never possessed; but they should lose that human opinion which they had of the goodness of the prelates. For, if they had the faith of Christ, the Holy Ghost should be a witness unto them; the which should be mighty in them, that, in case all the world would deny Christ, yet they would remain firm and stable in the true faith.

The Pharisees also took occasion of the evil of others, to wax haughty and proud, taking themselves to be men of greater perfection than any others because of their virtue; even as the Pharisee did when he saw the publican's submission. And so they are offended with every little thing, judging evil, murmuring against their neighbour; and, for the same, they are of many reputed, and taken for the more holy and good, whereas, indeed, they are the more wicked. The most wicked persons are offended ever, at themselves; for, at

their little stability in goodness, and of their detestable and evil life, they take occasion to despair, where they ought the more to commit themselves to God, asking mercy for their offences; and, forthwith, to give thanks, that it hath pleased him of his goodness to suffer them so long a time.

But what needs it any more to say that evil men are offended even at the works of God? They see God suffer sinners, therefore, think they, sin displeases him not. And, because they see not the good rewarded with riches, oftentimes they imagine that God loveth them not. It seemeth to them God is partial, because he hath elected some, and some reprov'd. And therefore they say, that the elected are sure of salvation; taking, by that, occasion to do evil enough, saying, Whatsoever God hath determined, shall be performed. If also they see the good men oppressed, and the evil men exalted, they judge God to be unjust, taking occasion to live evil, saying, Inasmuch as God favoureth the naughty men, let us do evil enough, to the intent he do us good. If then the wicked be offended, even at God, it is no wonder if they are offended at those that follow and walk in his paths and ways.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

Of carnal gospellers, by whose evil living, God's truth is shamefully slandered.

I WILL, now speak with great dolour and heaviness in my heart, of a sort of people which are in the world, that are called professors of the gospel, and, by their words, do declare and show they are much affected to the same. But, I am afraid, some of them do build upon the sand, as Simon Magus did, making a weak foundation. I mean, they make not Christ their chief foundation; professing his doctrine, of a sincere, pure, and zealous mind; but either because they would be called gospellers, to procure some credit and good opinion of the true and very favourers of Christ's doctrine; or to find out some carnal liberty, or to be contentious disputers, finders, or rebukers of other men's faults; or else, finally, to please and flatter the world. Such gospellers are an offence, and a slander to the word of God, and make the wicked to rejoice and laugh at them, saying, Behold, I pray you, their fair fruits. What charity, what discretion, what godliness, holiness, or purity of life is among them? Are not they great avengers, foul gluttons, slanderers, backbiters, adulterers, fornicators, swearers, and blasphemers, yea, and wallow and tumble in all sins? These are the fruits of their doctrine.

And thus it may be seen how the word of God is evil spoken of, through licentious and evil living; and yet the word of God is all holy, pure, sincere, and godly, being the doctrine and occasion of all holy and pure living. It is the wicked that pervert all good things into evil, for an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit; and, when good seed is sown in a barren and evil ground, it yieldeth no good corn; and so it fareth by the word of God. For, when that is heard, and known of wicked men, it bringeth no good fruit; but when it is sown in good ground, I mean the hearts of good people, it bringeth forth good fruit abundantly; so that the want and fault is in men, and not in the word of God. I pray God, all men and women may have grace to become meet tillage for the fruits of the gospel, and to leave only the jangling of it. For, only speaking of the gospel makes not men good Christians, but good talkers, except their facts and works agree with the same; so then their speech is good, because their hearts are good. And even as much talk of the word of God, without practising the same in our living, is evil and detestable in the sight of God; so it is a lamentable thing to hear, how there are many in the world that do not well digest the reading of scripture, and do commend and praise ignorance, and say, "That much

knowledge of God's word is the original of all dissension, schisms, and contention; and makes men haughty, proud, and presumptuous, by reading of the same."

This manner of saying is no less than a plain blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. For the Spirit of God is the author of his word, and so the Holy Ghost is made the author of evil, which is a most great blasphemy, and, as the scripture saith, a sin that shall not be forgiven in this world, neither in the other to come. It were all our parts and duties to procure and seek all the ways and means possible, to have more knowledge of God's word set forth abroad in the world, and not to allow ignorance, and to discommend knowledge of God's word, stopping the mouths of the unlearned with subtle and crafty persuasions of philosophy and sophistry, whereof comes no fruit, but a great perturbation of the mind to the simple and ignorant, not knowing which way to turn them. For, is it not extreme wickedness to charge the holy, sanctified word of God with the offences of man? Or, to allege the scriptures to be perilous learning, because certain readers thereof fall into heresies?

These men might be enforced by this kind of argument, to forsake the use of fire, because fire burneth their neighbour's house; or to abstain from meat and drink, because they see many are surfeited. Oh blind hate! They slander God for man's offence, and excuse the man whom they see offend, and blame the scripture which they cannot improve. Yea, I have heard of some who have very well understood the Latin tongue, that when they have heard learned men persuade to the credit and belief of certain unwritten verities, as they call them, which are not in scripture expressed, and yet taught as doctrine apostolic, and necessary to be believed; they have been of this opinion, that the learned men have more epistles written by the apostles of Christ, than we have abroad in the canon of the Old and New Testament, or are known of any, but only to them of the clergy. Which belief I did not a little lament in my heart to hear, that any creature should have such a blind, ignorant opinion.

Some kind of simplicity is to be praised; but this simplicity, without the verity, I can neither praise nor allow. And thus it may be seen, how we, that are unlettered, remain confused, unless God, of his grace, enlighten our hearts and minds with a heavenly light and knowledge of his will; for we are given, of ourselves, to believe men better than God. I pray God to send all learned men the Spirit of God abundantly, that their doctrine may bring forth the fruits thereof. I suppose there never was more need of good doctrine to be set forth in the world, than now in this age; for the carnal children of Adam are so wise in their generation, that, if it were possible, they would deceive the children of light. The world loveth his own, and, therefore, their facts and doings are highly esteemed of the world; but the children of God are hated, because they are not of the world; for their habitation is in heaven, and they do despise the world as a most vile slave.

The fleshly children of Adam are so politic, subtle, crafty, and wise, in their kind, that the elect should be deceived, if it were possible. For they are clothed with Christ's garment in outer appearance, with a fair show of all godliness and holiness in their words; but they have so shorn, nopped, and turned Christ's garment, and have so disguised themselves, that the children of light, beholding them with a spiritual eye, do account and take them for men which have sold their master's garment, and have stolen a piece of every man's garment; yet, by their subtle art, and crafty wits, they have so set those patches and pieces together, that they do make the blind world and carnal men to believe it is Christ's very mantle.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

Of the virtuous properties of God's children, of whom every one attendeth his vocation.

BUT the children of light know the contrary; for they are led by the Spirit of God to the knowledge of the truth, and therefore they discern and judge all things right, and know from whence they come, even from the bishop of Rome and his members, the headspring of all pride, vain glory, ambition, hypocrisy, and feigned holiness.

The children of God are not abashed, although the world hate them; they believe they are in the grace and favour of God, and that he, as a best father, doth govern them in all things, putting away from them all vain confidence and trust in their own doings; for they know they can do nothing but sin, of themselves. They are not so foolish and childish, as not to give God thanks for their election, which was before the beginning of the world; for they believe most surely they are of the chosen; for the Holy Ghost doth witness to their spirit, that they are the children of God, and, therefore, they believe God better than man. They say, with St. Paul, *"Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, anguish, persecution, hunger, nakedness, peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake are we killed all day long, and are accounted as sheep appointed to be slain; nevertheless, in all these things we overcome, through Him that loveth us. For I am sure, that neither death, nor life, neither angels, nor rule, neither power, neither things present, neither things to come, neither quantity or quality, neither any creature, shall be able to depart us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

They are not, by this godly faith, presumptuously inflamed; nor, by the same, become they loose, idle, or slow in doing of godly works, as carnal men dream of them; so much the more fervent they are in doing most holy and pure works, which God hath commanded them to walk in. They wander not in men's traditions and inventions, leaving the most holy and pure precepts of God undone, which they know they are bound to observe and keep. Also, they work not like hirelings, for need, wages, or reward; but, as loving children, without respect of lucre, gain, or hire; they are in such liberty of spirit, and joy so much in God, that their inward consolation cannot be expressed with tongue. All fear of damnation is gone from them, for they have put their whole hope of salvation in His hands, who will and can perform it; neither have they any post or pillar to lean to, but God, and his smooth, unwrinkled church; for he is to them all, in all things, and to him they lean, as a most sure square pillar, in prosperity and adversity; nothing doubting of his promises and covenants, for they believe most surely they shall be fulfilled.

Also, the children of God are not curious in searching the high mysteries of God, which are not meet for them to know. Neither do they go about with human and carnal reasons to interpret scripture, persuading men, by their subtle wits and carnal doctrine, that much knowledge of scripture maketh men heretics, without they temper it with human doctrine, sophistry, philosophy, and logic, wherewith to be seduced, according to the traditions of men, after the ordinances of the world, and not after Christ, as St. Paul doth most diligently admonish us; which arts are not convenient and meet to be made checkmate with scripture; for the scriptures are so pure and holy, that no perfection can be added unto them; for, even as fine gold doth excel all other metals, so doth the word of God all men's doctrines. I beseech the Lord to send the learned and unlearned such abundance of his Holy Spirit, that they may obey and observe the most sincere and holy word of God, and show the fruits thereof, which consist chiefly in charity and godly unity – that, as we have professed one God, one faith, and one baptism, so we may be all of one mind, and one accord, putting away all biting and gnawing; for, in backbiting, slandering, and

mis-reporting our Christian brethren, we show not ourselves the disciples of Christ whom we profess. In Him was most high charity, humility, and patience, suffering most patiently all ignominy, rebukes, and slanders, praying to his eternal Father for his enemies with most perfect charity; and, in all things, he did remit his will to his Father's, as the scripture doth witness, when he prayed in the mount. A godly example and lesson for us to follow at all times and seasons, as well in prosperity as in adversity; to have no will but God's will, committing and leaving to him all our cares and griefs, and to abandon all our policies and inventions; for they are most vain and foolish, and, indeed, very shadows and dreams.

But we are yet so carnal and fleshly, that we run headlong, like unbridled colts without snaffle or bridle. If we had the love of God printed in our hearts, it would keep us back from running astray. And, until such time as it please God to send us this bit to hold us in, we shall never run the right way, although we speak and talk ever so much of God and his word. The true followers of Christ's doctrine have always a respect and an eye to their vocation. If they are called to the ministry of God's word, they preach and teach it sincerely, to the edifying of others, and show themselves in their living followers of the same. If they are married men, having children and family, they nourish and bring them up, without all bitterness and fierceness, in the doctrine of the Lord, in all godliness and virtue; committing the instruction of others, which appertain not to their charge, to the reformation of God, and his ministers, which chiefly are kings and princes, bearing the sword even for that purpose to punish evil doers. If they are children, they honour their father and mother, knowing it to be God's commandment, and that he hath thereto annexed a promise of long life. If they are servants, they obey and serve their masters with all fear and reverence, even for the Lord's sake, neither with murmuring nor grudging, but with a free heart and mind.

If they are husbands, they love their wives as their own bodies; after the example as Christ loved the congregation, and gave himself for it, to make it to him a spouse without spot or wrinkle. If they are women married, they learn of St. Paul to be obedient to their husbands, and to keep silence in the congregation, and to learn of their husbands at home. Also, they wear such apparel as becometh holiness and comely usage with soberness; not being accusers or detractors; not given to much eating or delicate meats, and drinking of wine; but they teach honest things, to make the young women sober-minded, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, housewifely, good, and obedient unto their husbands, that the word of God be not evil spoken of. Verily, if all sorts of people would look to their own vocation, and ordain the same, according to Christ's doctrine, we should not have so many eyes and ears to other men's faults as we have. For we are so busy and glad to find and espy out other men's doings, that we forget, and can have no time to weigh and ponder our own; which, after the word of God, we ought first to reform, and then we shall the better help another to take the straw out of his eyes.

But, alas! we are so much given to love and to flatter ourselves, and so blinded with carnal affections, that we can see and perceive no fault in ourselves; and, therefore, it is a thing very requisite and necessary for us, to pray all, with one heart and mind to God, to give us a heavenly light and knowledge of our own miseries and calamities; that we may see them, and acknowledge them truly before him.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

The conclusion, with a Christian exhortation to the amendment of Life.

IF any man shall be offended at this my lamenting the faults of men which are in the world, fantasizing with themselves, that I do it either of hatred or of malice to any sort or kind of people, verily, in so doing, they shall do me great wrong; for, I thank God, by his grace, I hate no creature – yea, I would say more, to give witness of my conscience, that neither life, honour, riches, neither whatsoever I possess here, which appertaineth to mine own private commodity, be it ever so dearly beloved of me, but most willingly and gladly I would leave it to win any man to Christ, of what degree, or sort soever he were. And yet is this nothing, in comparison to the charity that God hath showed me, in sending Christ to die for me. No, if I had all the charity of angels, and apostles, it should be but like a spark of fire, compared to a great heap of burning coals.

God knoweth of what intent and mind I have lamented mine own sins and faults to the world. I trust nobody will judge that I have done it for praise or thanks of any creature; since, rather, I might be ashamed, than rejoice in rehearsal thereof. For, if they knew how little I esteem and weigh the praise of the world, that opinion were soon removed and taken away; for, I thank God, by his grace, I know the world to be a blind judge, and the praises thereof to be vain and of little moment; and, therefore, I seek not the praises of the same, nor to satisfy it, none otherwise than I am taught by Christ to do, according to Christian charity. I would to God we would all, when occasion doth serve, confess our faults to the world, all respects of our own commodity laid apart. But, alas, self-love doth so much reign among us, that, as I have said before, we cannot espy our own faults. And although, sometimes we find our own guilt, either we are favourable to interpret it no sin, or else we are ashamed to confess ourselves thereof; yea, and we are sorely offended and grieved to hear our faults charitably and godly told us of others, putting no difference between charitable warning and malicious accusing.

Truly, if we sought God's glory, as we should do in all things, we should not be ashamed to confess ourselves to digress from God's precepts and ordinances, when it is manifest we have done, and daily do so. I pray God, our own faults and deeds condemn us not at the last day, when every man shall be rewarded according to his doings. Truly, if we do not redress and amend our living according to the doctrine of the gospel, we shall receive a terrible sentence of Christ the Son of God, when he shall come to judge and condemn all transgressors, and breakers of his precepts and commandments, and to reward all his obedient and loving children. We shall have no man of law to make our plea for us, neither can we have the day deferred; neither will the Judge be corrupted with affection, bribes, or reward; neither will he hear any excuse or delay; neither shall this saint, or that martyr, help us, be they ever so holy; neither shall our ignorance save us from damnation; but yet wilful blindness, and obstinate ignorance, shall receive greater punishment, and not without just cause. Then shall it be known who hath walked in the dark; for all things shall appear manifest before him; no man's deeds shall be hidden, no, nor words nor thoughts. The poor and simple observers of God's commandments shall be rewarded with everlasting life, as obedient children to the heavenly Father; and the transgressors, adders to, and diminishers from, the law of God, shall receive eternal damnation for their just reward. I beseech God we may escape this fearful sentence, and be found such faithful servants, and loving children, that we may hear the happy, comfortable, and most joyful sentence ordained for the children of God, which is:

“Come hither, ye blessed of my Father, and receive the kingdom of heaven prepared for you before the beginning of the world.”

Now unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be ail honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

