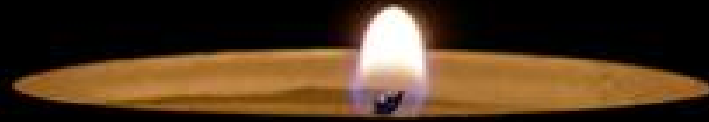


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The Marks of the  
**CHILDREN OF GOD**

and of their Comforts in Afflictions



JEAN TAFFIN

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# The Marks of the Children of God

*And of their Comforts in Afflictions.*

To the faithful of the Low Country.

By Jean Taffin

Overseen again and augmented by the Author, and translated out of French by Anne Prowse.

Rom 8.16.

*The spirit beareth witness to our spirit that we are the sons of God. If we be sons, then are we also heirs, the heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ: so that we suffer together that we also may be glorified together.*

At London, Printed by Thomas Orwin, for Thomas Man. 1590.

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**TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE AND VIRTUOUS LADY, THE  
COUNTESS OF WARWICK.**

Forasmuch as it hath pleased almighty God of his infinite goodness, to give unto the glorious Gospel of his eternal son, so long & prosperous success in this our Country; it is now time (right Honorable and my very good Lady) for everyone that is a true professor of the same, all carnal persuasions of human reason deluding the soul being set aside, to prepare ourselves to the day of trial. For although it pleaseth God sometimes, for the gathering of his Church, to give unto it as it were Halcyon days: yet common it is not, that it should any long time continue in rest and pleasure. Nay, by the word of God we know, & by experience sometimes of our selves (her Majesty's royal person not excepted) and now of our neighbors round about us we see, that the Church of God in this world, as it ever hath been, so must it ever be under the cross. And therefore if we will be counted of the Church indeed, and glory in that excellent name of a Christian, let us know assuredly, that unto us, even unto us (that have so long lived in rest and pleasure, if we be the children of God) in some sort and measure a trial must come. For, if God chastise every son whom he receiveth, and every member of Christ's body must be fashioned like unto the head, if the afflictions of this

world are manifest tokens to the children of God, of his favor and love towards them, and sure pledges of their adoption: how can we look, or how can we desire to be exempted from this common condition of God his own children and household? To this end therefore (right Honorable Lady) I have translated this little book, first to admonish some (who for lack of experience, never feeling other days than these full of peace and quietness) that they learn to apply unto themselves whatsoever they hear or read of the trial of God his children, least falsely imagining it to appertain either to the times that are past, or to other Nations, it fall suddenly upon them as a thief in the night, & they be destitute of all hope and comfort. Secondly, to awake others abounding both in knowledge and other graces, whom notwithstanding, Satan (by the deceivable lusts & vain pleasures of this wicked world) hath so rocked asleep, that they seem almost, as they that are diseased with the Lethargy, to have forgotten both themselves, their holy calling and profession. Last of all, to comfort another sort, whom it hath pleased God so to press down with sorrows, and to exercise with the continual afflictions and calamities of this mortal life, as no times seeming favorable unto them, they can scarce receive the words of any comfort. And because your Honor hath been of long time, not only a professor, but also a lover of the truth, whom the Lord (exalting to an higher place of dignity than many other) hath set up, as it were a light upon an high candlestick, to give light unto many, I have especially dedicated unto your Honor this my poor travail, humbly beseeching the Lord to make it no less comfortable to your Honor, and to those that shall read it, than it hath been unto me who have translated it. Everyone in his calling is bound to do somewhat to the furtherance of the holy building; but because great things by reason of my sex, I may not do, and that which I may, I ought to do, I have according to my duty, brought my poor basket of stones to the strengthening of the walls of that Jerusalem, whereof (by grace) we are all both Citizens and members. And now to return to those whom experience hath not yet taught, and whom prosperity will not suffer to awake: I earnestly beseech them both in the Lord, no longer to deceive themselves with vain imaginations, neither to suffer their hearts so to be tied to

earthly vanities, that they should despise or neglect those things that cā truly make them happy indeed. When it shall please God to open their eyes to discern between heavenly and earthly, between things transitory, and things everlasting, I know they will of themselves be ashamed of this their negligence. For what are all the pleasant things of this world, which most bewitch the minds of men, if they be compared with heavenly and eternal things? If stately & sumptuous buildings do delight; what building is so stately and glorious as new Jerusalem? If riches; what so rich as that, whose pavement is of pure gold, whose foundations and walls of precious stones, & gates of orient pearls? If friends, kinsfolk and neighbors; what City so replenished as this, where God himself in his Majesty, Jesus Christ the head of the Church in his glory, & all the holy Angels, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs do dwell together in happiness forever? If honor; what honor comparable to this, to be the servant and child of so mighty a King, and heir of so glorious a kingdom; where neither time doth consume, nor envy deprive of honor, nor power of adversary spoil of glory, that is endless & incomprehensible? If then there be no comparison between things heavenly and things that are earthly, and no man can attain to the things that are heavenly, but by the same way that Christ himself attained unto them; which was by the cross: why (casting off all impediments that presseth down) do we not run on our course with cheerfulness and hope, having Christ so mighty a King, for our Captain & guide, who (as the Apostle saith) for the glory that was set before him, endured the cross, and despising the shame, sitteth now at the right hand of the throne of God? How slow and dull of heart are we, if as Esau, (who for a mess of pottage sold his birthright) we are contented for a small and short pleasure in this wicked world, to lose that incomparable and everlasting glory, which Christ the son of God with so great a price hath purchased for us. The Lord give us wisdom to understand, & grace to hear his voice while it is said today, that when days and nights & times shall cease, we may (without time) enter into his joy and rest which never shall have end. The Lord ever preserve your Honor; and add unto a multitude of

happy years spent in his fear, a continual increase of all spiritual graces to his glory, and your endless comfort.

Your Honors in the Lord most humble A.P.

## **TO THE FAITHFUL OF THE LOW COUNTRY.**

It is not without reason (right dear and worshipful brethren) that the Church of Christ is called militant upon earth: and compared as well to a woman in travail of child from the beginning of the world, as to a ship upon the sea tossed with tempests, and to a field tilled, upon which the plow is drawn to cut it. The present estate of the Church exercised by so many dissipations, assailed so mightily by continual wars (the mother and nurse of all calamities) and afflicted by revolts, by Libertines, by people profane, and by so many heretics, is to us a lively mirror, a manifest seal, and an example good to be marked. Now, as the infirmity of the flesh which dieth not in the very children of God, but at their death, taketh from thence, and from other matter, occasion of temptations most dangerous, and many assaults: so the bounden duty & affection which I bear towards you, driveth me to testify unto you the fervent desire which I feel continually in my heart, of your comfort, constancy and perseverance in the way of salvation. For this cause it is that in my voyage from Germany I made this little treatise Of the marks of the children of God, & of their consolations in their afflictions: the which (being God be thanked returned) I was willing, with the advise of my brethren and fellows in the holy Ministry, to put to light & dedicate unto you, to the end that reading it you might know and feel more and more the incomprehensible grace of God towards you, by the testimonies of your adoption, and the full assurance of the certainty of it: and that in the midst of your so long and heavy afflictions, you might be partakers of the unspeakable comforts which God setteth forth to his



children in his word: whereby also you feeling yourselves truly happy, you may constantly persevere in his holy truth and obedience of his will, aspiring with contentment and joy of the holy Ghost to the enjoining of that kingdom of glory, the right and possession whereof is purchased for you, and kept in your head Jesus Christ. Finally, I pray God with all my heart to show me this favor, that this my little labor may be acceptable unto you, and that it will please him to bless it, by the efficacy of his holy spirit, to your comfort and salvation, and to the advancement of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ: Harlem 15. September 1586.

Your humble brother and servant in Christ: Jean Taffin, Minister of the holy Gospel in the French Church at Harlem.

## **CHAPTER 1.**

Of the great and incomprehensible happiness of the life everlasting promised to the children of God.

Saint Paul hath very aptly set forth unto us the incomprehensible excellency of the felicity of the children of God, saying, That the eye hath not seen, the ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for those that love him. According to this sentence, Saint Augustine, tending to the same butt, saith of the goodness of grace: Let your hearts go beyond all that you are able to comprehend, and stay not yourselves at the greatness and excellency of it which you imagine: but say, yet this is not it; for if it were it, it could not enter into thy thought and heart. This happiness then cannot be comprehended by us according to the greatness and excellency of it, so long as we dwell in these earthly mansions, where we know God but in part and darkly.

Notwithstanding, seeing the same Apostle addeth, that the holy Ghost who searcheth the most deep things of God, hath given us some revelation: Seeing also he prayed to God for the Ephesians; That he would open the eyes of their understanding, that they might know, what is the hope of their vocation, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance among the Saints: we should be too unthankful to God, and enemies of our own comfort, if we should make courtesy or refuse to understand that, which it pleaseth him to reveal unto us by his word. Now, in it this felicity is oftentimes signified by the promise of life everlasting, and not without reason. For in our felicity, two points may and ought specially to be considered: first, the greatness and excellency of the good thing: secondly, the long continuance and sureness of it.

Now, both the one and the other is noted by these words, life everlasting: For by life is signified the greatness of the felicity, and by everlasting, the infinite length of it. As touching life, we may consider three degrees as well in the body, as specially in the soul. The first degree of life as touching the soul, is meant by this peace of conscience, and joy of the holy Ghost which we receive and feel, being reconciled to God in Jesus Christ. And this peace and beginning of life, surmounteth all understanding, as Saint Paul doth witness, & God his children do feel. And indeed it is a thing ravishing our souls with joy unspeakable, when God maketh the brightness of his face to shine upon us: As also David showeth, when he asketh so oft of God this grace, for a full measure of all felicity. As touching the body, the first degree of life lieth in this, that the afflictions of it be not only mitigated, & made light by this life of the soul reconciled to God, and feeling joy through the brightness of his countenance, but also are converted (being the fruits of the love of God towards us) into salvation and glory. The second degree of life may be considered in the separation of the soul and the body, the which improperly (as touching the faithful) is called death. For even as touching our bodies, although they go to rot in the earth, yet being then delivered, and free from all sickness, from hunger, thirst, heat, cold, and from a thousand other torments, which of their nature are a kind of death,

they go to rest in their beds, as Isaiah saith; and being delivered from their labors and travails, they are blessed, as Saint John saith. And this rest proceeding from the favor of God, cannot properly be called death, but is to them a kind of life. But specially the soul then entereth into the possession of the second degree of life. For being delivered from the body, she is carried up by the Angels into the bosom of Abraham, and into Paradise with Jesus Christ, exempted then from ignorance, from incredulity, from mistrust, from covetousness, ambition, envy, hatred, fear, terror, lusts, and from all other passions, vices and corruptions which are deadly in them, which also bring forth the fruits of death. And contrariwise, is then fully sanctified, victorious, and assured against Satan, Hell, sin and all other enemies: waiting after that, with great joy, for the accomplishment of her glory in the resurrection of her body.

The third degree, shall be at the glorious coming of Jesus Christ, when our bodies being awaked out of their sleep, they shall rise again all renewed, bodies incorruptible, spiritual and immortal, yea fashioned like to the image of the glorious body of Jesus Christ: And so being joined together again to their souls, they shall be together caught up into the clouds before our Lord Jesus Christ in the air, and exalted above all the heavens, into the house of God our father. Then also shall be the accomplishment of the life of our souls reunited to their bodies, being together where Jesus Christ is, and with him, as members of his body, his brethren, and his spouse, united to him, & by him, to God the fountain of life. And by this union enjoining a community in all his goods, and of this incorruptible inheritance, which can neither fail nor fade away, reserved for us in heaven. Then shall God wipe all tears from our eyes, & death shall be no more, neither shall there be any sorrow, cry or travail anymore. All these old things shall be gone away: God shall make all things new. Then shall we be before the throne of God, and shall serve him night and day in his Temple, and shall be led by the Lamb to the living fountains of waters. Then shall be the day of our marriage with the Lamb, when being clothed with pure & bright raiments, we shall sit at his marriage banquet. Then shall we be like unto the Angels. If our

bodies shall shine then as the Sun, what shall the brightness of our souls be? Then our pilgrimage being finished, we shall be indeed the citizens of this heavenly and holy Jerusalem, which shall be all of pure gold like unto the clear glass: having the foundations of the wall garnished with precious stones: whereof also the twelve gates, are twelve pearls: which hath no need of the Sun, nor of the Moon to shine in it, because the brightness of God shall be the light of it, and the Lamb himself shall be the candle of it. O how happy shall the citizens be, that shall live in such a City? See then what good things are signified by life everlasting, and the three degrees of it.

But Saint Paul lifteth us up yet higher into the contemplation of this life which we shall enjoy after the resurrection. Then, saith Saint Paul, Jesus Christ shall give up his kingdom unto God his father, as if he should say: Father, behold those whom thou hast given to me before the foundation of the world: they were lost, & thou diddest send me to save them: I have redeemed them with my blood; thou hast appointed me King over them: they are my kingdom which I have gotten, and which I have so guided and governed, that having sanctified and delivered them from all their enemies, I have brought, given and presented them unto thee, that having as touching myself, accomplished the work & charge which thou haddest enjoined me, from this time forth, thou mayest be king reigning immediately in them, and filling them with all happiness and glory. Then shall there be no creature either in heaven or in earth, that shall have any domination or Lordship. There shall be neither King nor Prince, neither Master nor Lord. There shall be neither father, mother, husband nor wife. There shall be neither Prophet, Doctor, Minister nor Pastor. There shall be neither riches, nor estates. All the enemies also of Jesus Christ shall be destroyed for evermore, death being swallowed up into victory, and Satan with his angels, and all the reprobate being cast into the bottomless pit. Contrariwise, the Elect being fully sanctified, shall be lifted up both in body & soul above all the heavens. The work of Christ shall be finished. And all being done. The very same offices which Christ hath received, & shall exercise for the accomplishment of our salvation, to be a King, a Priest, and a

Prophet, and to sit at the right hand of God, shall cease, but so, as the fruits and the incomprehensible benefits gotten by them unto the church, shall ever abide to his everlasting glory. But what shall that be then? God the Father, the Son, and the Holy ghost, one only God shall be immediately all things, both in this man Christ, and in all us the members of his body. The Godhead (I say) shall be in the man Jesus Christ and in us, King, Prince, father, riches, life and glory. To be short, all things, & such a heap of happiness and felicity, that as sundry vessels cast into the sea are full of water, so as they can neither want, nor have more: So this sea of Divinity being all things in us all, we shall be filled and satisfied with life & glory, so as we can neither want, nor receive more. Then shall we not only taste how sweet our God shall be, but we shall be filled and thoroughly satisfied with his sweetness most wonderful. Then shall the son himself be subject to the father, to wit, as touching his humanity: but that shall be for the increase of his glory, and our felicity. For the son of man abiding still united to the son of God, and then ceasing the government which he shall have until the resurrection, God shall in such sort be in this son of man, and in us, that the majesty and brightness of the divinity then reigning immediately, shall cause the difference between the divinity of Christ, and his human nature subject unto it to appear.

But as the principal glory of the son of man, is to be united unto the son of God in one person, and that this his divinity shall be for the most part as it were, hid until that day, and that then it shall be fully revealed: how much more the divine majesty of the son of God, shall cause the subjection of the son of man to appear, so much the greater shall appear the glory of this son of man united in one person to the Godhead then reigning in his full majesty and glory. As (if a mā may find anything never so little to represent this high mystery) we may consider, that the felicity and glory of the brethren of Joseph was so much the greater, that by the greatness of Joseph, exalted to the government of Egypt, they were subject unto him, and there appeared a great difference between Joseph and his brethren, not by the diminishing of them, but by the increasing of Joseph, his

brethren having this happiness and honor, to be the brethren of Joseph, so much more great and honorable, by how much, the greatness of the majesty & glory of Joseph, made their subjection more to appear. And this is it that may in some sort be noted in the church. For although that now, her subjection and the difference appear between her, gathered and composed of sinful men, having their sanctification and their life of their head Jesus Christ: and between him very God, and perfect man sitting at the right hand of God the father almighty: yet as then, the more great the glory of Christ shall appear, showing himself immediately with his divine majesty in his brightness: so much the more clearly shall the subjection and difference of the Church appear, not by diminishing the happiness and glory of it, but by the increase of the glory of her head, brother and bridegroom: The Church having this happiness & honor, to be, and still to abide united unto Christ, making with her this new man, whereof Saint Paul speaketh, yea so much the more happy & glorious, by how much the excellency of the majesty and glory of Christ, the son of man with us, shall exceed in greatness, being united to the son of God, shining then with the Father and the Holy ghost, one only God in his divine majesty. Hereof also it followeth, that our chief felicity shall be to behold this glory of Christ. And indeed this is that benefit and happiness which he asked for us of God his father, saying: Father, my desire for those whom thou hast given me, is, that they be where I am, and that they may see my glory. And what glory? That we should see him, as he shall be in majesty incomprehensible as touching his Godhead, and consequently in sovereign glory as touching his humanity united to this divine majesty. Behold also how this shall be accomplished which is written, that we shall see God face to face for the accomplishment of our felicity. Which that we may the better comprehend, we must finally conclude, that the fruit thereof, shall be this, joy full and perfect, which Christ hath promised us, promising further, to make us enter into the joy of our Lord.

Saint Augustine in a certain meditation (which is indeed both holy and heavenly) showeth very excellently, how great this our joy shall

be, and that joy of our Lord which we shall enter into. Having discoursed of the everlasting felicity of the children of God, thus he saith. O heart human, poor & needy, O heart exercised with miseries, & almost consumed of them, what should thy joy be, if thou haddest the full enjoining of the abundance of these good things? Ask of thy soul if thou were capable of the joy, which thou shouldest feel of one such felicity. But if besides, any other whom thou lovest as thyself, should enjoy the same happiness with thee, surly this superabounding joy which thou shouldest feel of thine own happiness, should it not be twice doubled, for the glory & the joy of him whom thou lovest as thyself, & for whose happiness, thou shouldest be as joyful as for thine own happiness? Now, if there were two, three, yea a great number enjoining the same happiness with thee, whom also thou lovedst as thyself, thou shouldest feel as much joy for the happiness of each of them, as for thine own happiness. What then shall be in this perfect charity, when we shall love all the blessed angels, and all the elect, loving every each one of them even as ourselves, and being no less joyful of the felicity of each of them, than of our own? Surely if never a one of the elect shall be capable of his own joy for the greatness of it, how shall he be capable of so many joys for the happiness of so many of the elect, for whom he shall feel as much joy, as for his own? Loe what it is Saint Augustine saith. But yet how much shall this joy be augmented for the happiness, felicity and glory of this elect of God, in whom we ourselves have been elected, who having died for the elect, shall sanctify, preserve and lift them up into heaven to the enjoining of this felicity? who is not only man holy and just, but also true God, especially beholding him in his glory, to be united in one person to the Godhead then shining in his Majesty. Surely if we, loving other elect as ourselves, should have as much joy of the happiness of each of them, as of our own, what shall be the joy that we shall receive of the happiness and glory of this sovereign Elect Jesus Christ, whom by good right we should love more than ourselves? See then more than a sea of joy proceeding from the happiness of the servants of God. Let us now understand the great depth of joy which we shall feel, entering into the joy of our Lord. The cause why we should love God (saith Saint Bernard) is God

himself. And the measure which we ought to keep in this love, is to love him without measure, and so, infinitely. But according to that we know him, we love him. But now we know him, but in part, and as it were in darkness; even so very little and obscure is the love which we bear him. But when we shall know him as he is, we shall love him according as he is. What shall our love be towards him then, when Jesus Christ having given over his kingdom to God his Father, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy ghost one only God, shall be all things, in this man Jesus Christ, and in us? and when we shall know him as he is, beholding the brightness of his face, and his Godhead then reigning immediately in us, & filling us with all happiness? Without doubt this contemplation of the glory of the divine majesty shall bring forth in us an infinite love towards God. Now (to return to the meditation of Saint Augustine) if according to that we love each one, we should rejoice of his happiness.

Then as in this blessed felicity each one of us shall love God without comparison, more than himself, and more than all the Angels and elect with us: so shall we feel more joy without comparison of the blessedness and glory of God, than of our own, or of all the Angels and the elect with us. And if then we shall love God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our understanding: yet so as all our heart, all our understanding, and all our soul shall not be capable of the excellency of this love: Surely we shall so feel joy with all our heart, with all our understanding, and with all our soul, as yet all our heart, all our understanding and all our soul shall not be able to comprehend the fullness of this joy. Howsoever it be then, that this full joy, yea more than full, through the greatness of it (whereof all our heart, all our understanding, & all our soul shall not be capable) cannot enter into us: It shall remain that we, (filled with the sea of joy of the felicity of the Angels, and of all the elect) shall enter into this great depth of joy proceeding from the contemplation of the glory of our God. And this shall be the joy of the Lord, into which all his faithful servants shall enter. Now, when this felicity so great, and joy incomprehensible, shall endure so many years as there be drops of water in the sea, or grains of sand in the whole earth, yet should



not this be a perfect happiness. For howsoever the continuance shall seem to us infinite, yet the end will once come. And indeed the drops of water, and the grains of the sand are numbered before God. But this our felicity and joy shall last without end. Such shall be the life everlasting: As also Saint John saith, we shall reign in heaven world without end. We shall be the kingdom of that immortal king whom Isaiah calleth the father of eternity, who hath promised life and immortality to those that shall believe the Gospel. Also death shall then be swallowed up into victory. The author and prince of life, having vanquished the devil, who had the rule over death, shall make us partakers of the life that is everlasting. And as we shall be united to the fountain of life, so shall it run in us eternally. For as the fountain of this life which we shall enjoy, hath no beginning, so the life that proceedeth from it, shall have no end. The mercy of God (saith S. Bernard) is from eternity to eternity upon those that fear him; from eternity, because of the predestination; to eternity, because of the glorification: The one hath no beginning, the other hath no ending. This therefore shall be a happiness incomprehensible for the greatness, and infinite for the eternity of it. Behold also how we shall then enjoy a full and perfect joy, which shall never be taken away from us. Now, this life is promised and assured to all the children of God, in as much as they are heirs of God the fountain of life, & coheirs and members of Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life: who also hath so often protested, that whosoever believeth in him, he hath life everlasting. Let us conclude then, that the children of God are truly and only blessed, being assured to enjoy this great and incomprehensible happiness of life everlasting, which is purchased, promised, and kept for them in Jesus Christ our Lord.

## **CHAPTER 2.**

How we shall know that we are the children of God.

Of this conclusion it followeth, that there is no greater joy or contentment in this present life, or anything more sure or more necessary for the happy overcoming the difficulties of it, that to know and feel that we are the children of God. For this foundation being laid, we ought to be assured that whatsoever shall happen unto us, can be none other than the blessing of a father, and so consequently a mean, aide, and way disposed by his providence, either to lead us unto life everlasting, or to increase our glory in it. True it is, that God only knoweth his own, whom he hath chosen before the foundation of the world to be his children. Yet there are two principal means by which he giveth us to understand who are his children: the one is outward, by marks visible unto men: the other is inward by testimonies, which he that is the child of God feeleth in himself. The outward mark lieth in this, that we be members of the church of Christ. Now, we call that the church of Christ, in which the word of God is truly preached, the Sacraments are purely ministered, and one only God is called upon in the name of his only son Jesus Christ. First, this Church is often called the kingdom of heaven, because that by it, we enter in thither; so that it is (as it were) the suburbs or the gate of it. Whereof it followeth, that being the true members of the Church, we are in the way and forwardness to enter, & make our abode in heaven. It is also called the house of God, to give us to understand, that those that abide there, are by good right accounted the children and household of God. Furthermore, when after we have protested in our Creed, that we believe the holy Church universal, we add the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the rising again of the body, and the life everlasting: is not this to assure us that those that are the members of the Church, have a community in all these treasures and goods of it, and consequently that they are the children of God, and inheritors of everlasting life? According unto this S. Luke also saith resolutely, that God joined unto the Church those that should be saved. The which is confirmed by the Prophet Joel saying, that there shall be salvation in Zion. And S. Paul himself sticketh not at all, to call those that are the members of the Church,

the elect of God. But yet so much the more to resolve us, let us consider the marks of the true church touched here before. The first is, the pure preaching of the word of God. Now, Jesus Christ saith, my sheep hear my voice, and they follow me: showing thereby very manifestly, that this is one mark to be the child of God, to hear the voice of his son Jesus Christ: As also he saith in another place, that is of God, heareth the voice of God. And indeed, seeing that the preaching of the Gospel is called the ministry of reconciliation, the Gospel of peace, the word of grace, of salvation and of life, (as without doubt, God by the ministry of his word, presenteth Reconciliation, peace, grace, salvation and life): So they that are the members of the Church, hear and receive the word, show therein, that they are partakers of all these benefits, and consequently, the children of God. The second mark of the Church consisteth in the Sacraments of Baptism and of the Lord's supper. As touching Baptism, it is a seal & sure warrant that the sins of those that receive it are washed away by the blood of Christ: that they are engrafted and incorporate into his death and resurrection: that they are regenerate, & that they have put on Jesus Christ. Whereof it followeth, as S. Paul affirmeth, that they are the children of God. The like assurance of our adoption is given us in the Lord's supper. For if the bread and the cup, which are given to the members of the Church, are the communion of the body and of the blood of Jesus Christ: it followeth that in this communion of Christ, they have the food and life of their souls. And that consequently, as the children of God, they shall obtain life everlasting, according to the protestation of Christ. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, he hath everlasting life.

The third mark of the Church of God, is the invocation of the name of God, in the name of that only one Jesus Christ. Now, as all the service of God is oftentimes signified by this invocation: So Saint Luke noteth the faithful and children of God by this description, that they call upon the name of the Lord. As on the contrary side, it is said of the reprobate, that they do not call upon the name of God. And indeed when the members of the Church join together and lift up their prayers unto God, saying: Our Father which art in heaven: and

so calling him father, by the commandment of Christ, they may well assure themselves that God doth acknowledge them for his children, and that he will make them feel the fruit of their prayers, according to the promise of Christ, that whatsoever they shall with one consent ask of God, it shall be given them. By this that is above said, it manifestly appeareth, how every member of the Church may and ought to assure himself to be the child of God, and to acknowledge all other members of the Church with him in like manner to be the children of God. If any allege that we may thus account such a one for the child of God, who possibly is an hypocrite, and may after show himself a reprobate, we answer, that such discourses are contrary to charity, so much recommended unto us by Saint Paul, noting amongst other properties of charity, that she thinketh not evil, or is not suspicious, but that she believeth all things, and hopeth all things. We ought then to hold the members of the Church, for the children of God. until that departing from it, or discovering their hypocrisy, they show themselves reprobates. Furthermore, as God would that all those to whom he vouchsafeth to be father, should acknowledge the Church for their mother: so let us not doubt, but being borne again, and nourished in the Church our mother, we may call God our father, and abiding united to the family of the mother, let us not doubt but that we be the heirs of the father. Thus much for the outward marks.

Now let us come to the inward marks. As to the blind and deaf the opening of their eyes and ears is needful, clearly to see and hear the voice of him that speaketh: So being of our own nature both blind and deaf as touching understanding, the holy spirit is he, that openeth our eyes and ears, to comprehend the revelation of our adoption, and to feel in our hearts the assurance of it, engendering in us faith, which is as it were the hand, by which we apprehend this great benefit: whereof also the fruits and effects as well of the holy ghost dwelling in us, as of the faith that is in us, are the principal & most assured marks, to give us knowledge of our adoption. According whereunto, Saint Paul saith, that the Holy ghost giveth testimony to our spirits that we are the children of God, so as having

received this spirit of adoption, we cry with all assurance, Abba father. This is it also which S. John teacheth us, saying: we know that he abideth in us, by the spirit which he hath given us. Also, By this we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given of his spirit unto us. In like manner the Apostle S. Paul affirmeth, that by the peace and quietness which we feel in our consciences before God in the free forgiveness of our sins by the blood of Jesus Christ, we show and prove that we are justified by faith, and so the children of God. Wherein to confirm us, he saith in another place, that after we have believed, we are sealed by the holy spirit of promise, which is the earnest penny of our inheritance, until the redemption of the possession purchased to the praise of his glory.

First he showeth there, that faith is as it were the seal whereby the Holy ghost imprinteth in our hearts for our assurance, that we are the children of God. Furthermore, as in a thing that is bought there is sometimes given an earnest penny, to wit, some part of the money agreed on, as well for the beginning of the payment, as by consequent, for the assurance that the bargain shall be held firm: so the holy ghost, who by faith engendereth peace and joy in the hearts of the faithful, is the earnest penny, assuring us, by this beginning, of the spiritual blessings which God promiseth to his children, that he holdeth us for his possession, purchased to the praise of his glory, and that at the length he will gather us into the full enjoining of the inheritance of heaven. Hereunto it is also, that goodly gradation leadeth us, which is proposed of the same Apostle, saying: Those whom God hath before known, those he hath also predestinate to be made like unto the image of Jesus Christ: and those whom he hath predestinate, he hath also called, and those whom he hath called, he hath also justified: and those whom he hath justified, those he hath also glorified. For all will confess, that those that are elected and predestinated to be made like unto the image of Jesus Christ, are the children of God, as also they, who in his eternal counsel and decree are glorified. Now they, who being lightened with the knowledge of the Gospel, believe that their sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ through his satisfaction, and so are called and justified,

are elected and glorified before God, as S. Paul teacheth here: it followeth then, that they are the children of God. And this is so certain, that the Apostle, opposing the will & power of God, against all impediments, addeth: If God be on our side, who shall be against us? S. Bernard teacheth the self-same thing very aptly, saying: we are certain of the power of God to save us: but what shall we say of his will? who is he that knoweth whether he be worthy of hate or of love? who is he that hath known the will of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? It behooveth that herein faith help us, and that truth succor us. That that, which is hid concerning us in the heart of the father, may be revealed unto us by the spirit, and his spirit testifying unto us, may persuade us that we are the children of God; that he persuade it us, I say, in calling and justifying us freely by faith, which is as it were a mean or passage from the predestination of God to the glory of the life everlasting. The same thing is it which S. Augustine meaneth, saying: We are come into the way of faith, let us hold it constantly, it shall lead us from degree to degree even unto the chamber of the heavenly King, where all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom being hid, we may learn and behold the revelation of our election. From hence proceedeth yet another fruit serving us for a mark to assure us more & more that we are the children of God, when we love God, and our neighbors for his sake: whereof also followeth the hatred of evil, and an earnest desire to render obedience to God. For if it be so as Saint John saith, that our love to God cometh of this, that he hath first loved us: The love that we bear unto him, is a testimony that he loveth us. As also Jesus Christ maintaineth and showeth, that by the signs of love, which the sinful woman gave him, God loved her greatly, and had forgiven her many sins. So the brightness of the Moon is a certain argument that the Sun ministereth wholly to her, for otherwise she hath no brightness at all. And in summer, the heat that is felt in the stones set against the Sun, is a sign that the Sun shineth upon them. Of our own nature and first generation we are unprofitable to all goodness, and inclined to all evil, as Saint Paul very largely setteth forth unto us writing to the Romans. If then on the contrary we walk in the fear God, giving ourselves to his service, and occupying ourselves in all good works: is

not such a change a testimony of our regeneration, and consequently of our adoption? The tree is known by his fruit, saith Jesus Christ: If then we bear the fruit of justice, holiness and of charity, we are trees planted in the garden of God by his holy spirit, and so consequently the children of God. Charity, saith Saint John, is of God, and he that loveth, is borne of God, and knoweth God. As then the heat and light of a coal is a sign that it hath fire: and as the moving and actions of the body are certain signs, that it liveth, & that the soul is within it: so the testimony of the holy ghost in our hearts, the peace & quietness of our consciences before God, feeling ourselves justified by faith; this love towards God and our neighbor, this change of our life, and desire to walk in the fear and obedience of God, are assured tokens of our adoption: as also this, that we are members of the Church of Christ hearing his word, participating with the holy Sacraments, and calling upon God in the name of Jesus Christ, are testimonies that we are the children and household servants of God, and heirs of eternal life.

### **CHAPTER 3.**

How every member of the Church ought to apply unto himself the tokens of it, to assure himself of his adoption and salvation.

Now, although the tokens before mentioned are certain to assure us that we are the children of God: yet there are two sorts of temptations, which above all other tend to shake us. The one proceedeth of ourselves, either for lack of applying to ourselves the testimonies, which God giveth to the members of his Church to assure them of their salvation: or through the feeling of a want (as we think) but rather, of the smallness or weakness of those tokens of adoption here above alleged. The other temptation cometh unto us

from some other where, and consisteth specially in two points. To wit, in the revolt of some having made profession of the true religion: and in the grievous and long afflictions which are ordinary to those that follow the doctrine of the Gospel. Now, as there is nothing of greater importance than the salvation of the soul: so there is nothing that doth more grievously afflict and trouble the tender consciences desirous of eternal life, than the doubts & fears not to be the child of God, getting to themselves hereby such sorrows and anguishes, as none are able to comprehend, but those that have themselves felt and tried them. To help then, to the consolation of the souls so dangerously, and so mightily afflicted: first it is to be noted, that this disease cometh to many of this, that they pretend to resolve themselves of their salvation, examining themselves whether they be worthy to be the children of God or no. And as there is none that is, or can be worthy, so this is at the last to turn doubts into despair. Other discourse, whether they be of the number of the elect, and whether their names be written in the book of life, to wit, if God love them, and hold them for his children. But it is not so high, that we must mount, but in the doctrine of the Gospel it is, where we should search the revelation hereof, and resolve ourselves if God hath loved us, if he do love us, and will hold us for his children in Jesus Christ. For as a man if he be of credit, maketh the hid thoughts of his heart to be known by speaking: even so God, who is the truth itself, revealeth unto us, by the preaching of the Gospel, his counsel, and his will touching our adoption & salvation: and confirmeth this revelation by the use of the holy Sacraments. But we must note, that this revelation of the will of God in the Gospel comprehendeth first two points: to wit, that there is perfect & entire salvation in one only Jesus Christ, and that the mean to obtain it, is to believe in him. Moreover, when this Gospel is preached unto us, God revealeth unto us yet two points more: first, that he will make us partakers of this salvation in Christ. Secondly, that he will have us to believe the testimony that he hath given us of this his will, to the end that we might be saved. Now, the difficulty of believing lieth in the persuasion of these two last points, which notwithstanding are certain and true. Behold, saith S. John, the testimony of God, which



he hath given us of everlasting life, and this life is in his son, he saith not only that the life is in his son, but saith further, that he giveth us this life, & that the Gospel is the witness. And having protested a little before, that he which believeth not this testimony of God, maketh him a liar: he showeth sufficiently that he will that we should believe it.

The Apostle to the Hebrews passeth further, & saith; that God, willing to show the immutable stableness of his counsel to the heirs of the promise, interposeth himself by an oath, that by two things immutable in which it is impossible that God should lie, we might have firm consolation, we, I say, who have our refuge to the hope that is set before us, the which we hold as the anchor of the soul sure & stable, piercing even into the sanctuary of heaven, where Jesus Christ our forerunner is entered for us. By this he teacheth us first, that when we hear the Gospel, we ought to hold for certain, that the counsel of God which was hid in his heart, touching his will to save us, and to take us for his children, is there made manifest unto us. Secondly, that he will that we believe it, seeing he confirmeth it by two things immutable, in which he cannot lie, to wit, his word and his oath, to the end that we might have firm consolation, which cannot be in us, if we believe not. Moreover, he calleth the revelation of his counsel, the hope set before us. Speaking then to us, he would that we should have hope: yea and he will that this revealing of his counsel should be unto us a sure anchor of the soul, to show, that as a ship is held fast by the anchor, that it might not be carried away of the wind: so God would that this revealing of his counsel by the doctrine of the Gospel should hold us fast, & assure us against all doubts of our adoption, yea and to pierce even into the very heavens with assurance, whereof our forerunner Jesus Christ hath taken possession both for himself, and for us. See then one place showing very expressly, that when thou hearest the Gospel, God declareth and revealeth unto thee, that it is his will to save thee by his son Jesus Christ. And to this end he will further, that thou believe it. And indeed when S. Paul saith, that faith cometh by hearing the Gospel, he showeth that thou canst not believe, except that thou hear. Now,

faith is a knowledge and certainty, that it is the will of God to save thee, & to take thee for his well-beloved child in Jesus Christ. Then it followeth, that the Gospel which is preached unto thee, and which thou hearest, containeth the revealing and testimony: first, that it is the will of God to save thee by Christ: secondly, that thou shouldest believe this testimony which he giveth thee, that thou mayest have everlasting life. Who now is he, that ought or can doubt? Seeing also he is not content to say in general, he that believeth hath everlasting life: but he commandeth thee to believe. Believe (saith he) the Gospel.

Also, This is his commandment, saith S. John, that we believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ. Now, to believe the Gospel, or in the name of Jesus Christ, is not only to believe that there is salvation in Christ, and that he that believeth in him hath life everlasting. For the devil himself believeth that, and yet he believeth not the Gospel, neither in the name of Jesus Christ. But this is to believe, that he hath salvation in Christ for thee, as Isaiah saith: A child is borne to us, a son is given to us. And so speaketh the Angel to the shepherds. This day is borne unto you a savior. Also, that it is the will of God that thou shouldest be his child, and thou shouldest believe it so. The which thing the devil cannot believe for himself: neither is the Gospel offered unto him. Now, when God revealeth unto thee his good will and love towards thee, wherefore doubttest thou? He is true, he neither will, nor can either lie or deceive. And when he commandeth thee to believe it, must thou examine thyself whether thou be worthy or no? Thou art bound to obey, & so to believe, that he doth love thee, and that thou art his child by Christ. Call to mind that which is writ, whosoever believeth (what manner a one, or whosoever it be) he hath life everlasting. Neither is it presumption so to believe, and that constantly, but it is to him obedience most acceptable. And indeed it is an honor that he requireth of thee to believe his word, and so to put to thy seal that he is true. It is very true that in preaching the Gospel, he saith, not, I am come to save Simon Peter, Cornelius the Centurion, Marie Magdalene, and so of others. He nameth no man by his name that was given him by men, either at

their circumcision, or at their baptism, or otherwise: for so might we yet doubt of our salvation, thinking that it might be spoken not of us, but of some other that should have the same name. But when thou hearest that Jesus Christ is come to save sinners: either renounce the name of a sinner, or confess that he speaketh to thee, and that he is come to save thee. Make then boldly this conclusion: Jesus Christ is come to save sinners, I acknowledge my own name, for I am a sinner: therefore he is come to save me. And also when he saith: Come unto men all ye that travail & are heavily laden, and I will refresh you: Thou must mark well these words, all ye; for seeing he saith, all ye, he speaketh to all those that travail and feel the heavy burden of their sins. Wherefore shouldest thou doubt then, whether he speak to thee? Conclude rather on this manner, seeing he saith, all ye, he speaketh then also to me, promising to comfort me. And to this purpose saith S. Paul, that there is no difference of men before God, but the same who is Lord over all, is rich towards all those that call upon him: Have thou then recourse unto him, and believe in him, & thou art assured that he will also be rich in mercy even unto thee. If there were two or three hundred inhabitants of some town banished for some offense, and after a general pardon should be published, that all the banished of such a town should have free liberty to return thither, with all assurance to enter again upon all their goods and honors: suppose that thou wert one of those banished, and that he that hath given the pardon were a faithful and true Prince: wouldest not thou believe, that thou wert comprehended in the pardon, although thy name were no more expressed, than the names of the other banished, and that returning to the town thou shouldest again be placed in thy goods?

Now, we have been banished from the kingdom of heaven by the transgression of Adam. Jesus Christ dying for these banished persons, causeth a general pardon to be published by the preaching of the Gospel, with permission, yea with commandment to return into heaven. He is a true King, yea the truth itself: and the abolishing of this banishment, & the reentry into heaven hath cost him very dear, even the shedding of his most precious blood. What occasion

then hast thou to doubt of thy pardon, & return into heaven? For, although thy Christian name be not expressed; yet if thou be of the number of the banished, he speaketh to thee, behold thy name, thou art there comprehended. Believe that he speaketh in truth, and that his will is such towards thee, as he declareth to thee by his word. But let us pass further to the Sacraments, which serve greatly to resolve us to believe that we are the children of God. The Sacraments are (as it were) a visible word, representing the grace of the Gospel. But more than that, they are communicated to thee, and thou receivest them. Is not this to put thee, as it were, into real possession of thine adoption, and to give thee assurance of everlasting life? The Pastor preacheth unto all, the grace of the Gospel in the name of Christ. But in thy Baptism he directeth his speech to thee by name, to assure thee of the forgiveness of thy sins, and of thine adoption, as S. Paul saith, that those that are baptized have put on Christ, and that so they are the children of God. And it is as if a Prince having called back again all the banished, amongst whom thou shouldest be one, calling unto thee by name, amongst the other banished, by a letter sealed of thy pardon, and of reestablishing thee in thy goods. Should not this be to assure thee? As touching the holy supper, Jesus Christ, having published by his Minister, that his flesh is meat indeed and his blood drink, addeth, that whosoever eateth his flesh and drinketh his blood, he hath life everlasting: He calleth thee among others to his table, and giveth thee of the bread and wine, namely, to assure thy person, that he died for thee, and that he giveth thee his body & his blood, yea himself all whole, and all his benefits, that thou shouldest be with him, the child of God, and an inheritor of life everlasting. If the devil or thy conscience trouble thee, to doubt of thine adoption, assure thy soul against such a temptation, by the communication of the holy supper. Say boldly, Satan, canst thou deny that I have been at the holy supper, & that I have received bread and wine? I have seen, touched and tasted it, thou canst not deny it. Further, canst thou deny that this bread and wine were given me for seals and sure pledges of my communicating with the body and blood of Christ? Saint Paul saith plainly, that the bread which I have received, is the communion of the body of Jesus Christ. Seeing then

thou canst not deny, but that I have received the bread and wine: and that the bread and wine are the communion of the body & of the blood of Christ, I have then communion with the body and blood of Jesus Christ, & thou canst not deny it.

True it is that there are some, who being outward members of the church, baptized in it, hearing the word, and communicating at the holy supper, show themselves after hypocrites, declaring that they were never indeed the children of God. But we cannot say therefore, that the revelation and testimony of the will of God contained in his word, and sealed by the Sacraments, are doubtful or uncertain. For God, who offereth his grace in his word, and hath sealed it by the Sacraments, is faithful and speaketh truly, revealing unto us and assuring us that he will take us for his well-beloved children in Jesus Christ. And he can neither lie nor deceive, as is already said. But these are unfaithful men, who rejecting the testimonies of the will of God towards them, deprive themselves by their incredulity of the grace which was offered unto them, doing this dishonor to Christ, to count him a liar. As the Sun then ceaseth not to give light and brightness, although some man shutteth his eyes that he may not see it, nor be lightened: and as meat ceaseth not to be good and nourishing, although it be received without profit of a stomach evil disposed: So, if many unwilling to believe that the will of God is such, as he hath declared by his word, rejecting (by their incredulity) the grace which God offereth them; should their incredulity make thee call in doubt the truth of God, and the testimony of his good will towards thee? If some few among these banished, not trusting the pardon published by a true and faithful Prince, do him this dishonor to count him as a deceiver or liar: acknowledge thou that justly and by good right they remain banished. But thou, seeing that faithful Prince Jesus Christ hath sent to pronounce unto thee a general pardon, and namely, hath given thee his letters sealed by the Sacraments, commanding thee to believe, and promising thee, that it shall be unto thee according to thy faith: Assure thyself, that his will is that thou shouldest be his child, and heir of everlasting life. See how everyone should assure himself, by the preaching of the Gospel,

and the use of the Sacraments, the true marks of the Church: that (being a member of it) he is the child of God: and consequently, an inheritor of his everlasting kingdom. True it is, that faith is the gift of God, yea proceeding from the operation of the mighty power of his strength, as S. Paul speaketh. And this is it which he maketh us to feel in this difficulty of apprehending (by an assured faith) so many, so clear and so certain testimonies of his good will towards us, touching our adoption. It is therefore needful that he work farther with us by his holy spirit, which (without ceasing) asking of him in the name of Jesus Christ, we are assured by his promise, that he will give us, and that, so joining with the power and efficacy of his spirit, the preaching of his Gospel, and the use of the Sacraments, he will give us grace to apply unto ourselves (by a true and lively faith) the testimonies which he hath given us of our adoption, to our salvation and everlasting life.

## **CHAPTER 4.**

How although the marks of our adoption be in us but small and feeble, yet we ought, and may assure ourselves that we are the children of God.

I See well (will some say) that I have just matter to believe it: & therefore am I the more sorry that I feel not faith in myself, to assure me without doubt that I am the child of God, which thing troubleth me greatly, so as I fear least by this mine incredulity, I reject the grace of God. But understand I pray thee for thy comfort, that there is great difference between unfaithfulness and weakness of faith. The unfaithful man or infidel careth not for his salvation: or, rejecting the salvation which is in Jesus Christ alone, seeketh salvation other where. Contrariwise, the faithful desire salvation: he knoweth that

his salvation is in Jesus Christ alone: he seeketh it in him, and feeleth a desire to increase in assurance, that he hath salvation in Jesus Christ, though he do not yet feel this peace & joy in the holy Ghost so manifestly as faith bringeth it forth at the last. Also it is not written, he that feeleth, but he that believeth hath everlasting life. And indeed, as faith is of things that are not seen, so the understanding of it consisteth more in certainty, than in apprehension. In this complaint of David, yea and of Christ himself: My God my God, why hast thou forsaken me. We hear the testimony of faith by these words: my God my God, but without apprehension or feeling of favor or joy, as this complaint, why hast thou forsaken me, showeth. Also our faith may be so small and weak, as it doth not yet bring forth fruits that may be lively felt of us. But if such as feel themselves in such estate, desire to have these feelings: if they ask them of God by prayer. This desire and prayer are testimonies that the spirit of God is in them, and that they have faith already. For, is such a desire a fruit of the flesh, or of the spirit? It is of the holy spirit, who bringeth it forth only in such, as he dwelleth in. He dwelleth then in them. In like manner, is not this prayer the work of the holy ghost in them? For it is the holy ghost (saith S. Paul) which prayeth for us, and in us, with groans that cannot be expressed. Again, none can come to God by prayers, if he have no trust in him. Then these holy desires and prayers, being the motions of the holy ghost in us, are testimonies of our faith, although they seem to us small and weak. As the woman that feeleth the mooning of a child in her womb, though very weak, believeth and assureth herself that she is with child, and that she goeth with a live child: so if we have these motions, these holy affections and desires before mentioned, let us not doubt, but that we have the holy ghost (who is the author of them) dwelling in us, and consequently that we have also faith. And we must understand, that the faith of the children of God ceaseth not to be a true faith, although they feel doubts, fears, & mistrusts. For if they delight not in such infirmities, to nourish them; but are sorrowful and resist them, with desire to feel their salvation in Jesus Christ, behold a battle in them: and between whom? Between the spirit and the flesh: between faith and mistrust.

There is then in them faith assailed with doubts, and the spirit fighting against mistrust, and laboring to overcome it. These doubts, mistrusting's, and incredulities are the fiery darts which Satan throweth against our faith, the which bearing the blows, as a buckler, as S. Paul saith: thrusteth them back and quencheth them, so as they pierce not to the heart. What devises or assaults soever the devil make against us, faith S. Augustine, so he occupy not the place of the heart where faith dwelleth, he is driven back. Incredulity then assaulteth us without, but woundeth us not deadly: It troubleth only, or so woundeth, as the stroke is yet curable. And such temptations and assaults are common to the most faithful & excellent servants of God. If we consider the continual course of the life of David, there is no mirror of faith better to be noted than in him. And yet was not he assaulted with great fears and doubts? What complaint maketh he in the 77. Psalm? Hath the Lord forsaken forever? will he no more show me favor? Is his mercy clean gone forever? Is his promise come to an end for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he shut up his loving kindness in displeasure? And to conclude, he holdeth such a course, as a man desperate, saying: This is my death. Where was then in David, the feeling of his faith? For all this he had not lost it. And indeed all these words were but representations of fear and despair assailing the faith that was in him, and fighting against it: As he showeth in other places very plainly, saying: My soul, why art thou cast down, why art thou so heavy within me? Put thy trust in God, for I will yet give him thanks, for as much as he is my manifest deliverance (as it were before my face) and my God. If these testimonies of faith before mentioned seem small: how small and dark was the faith of the Apostles before the resurrection of Jesus Christ? They believe that Christ is the son of God, the savior of the world: but yet they understand not that he must die, and rise again: wherein notwithstanding lieth the principal rest of our faith. Yea, and after his resurrection they (acknowledge him for a King) imagined rather a carnal, than a spiritual kingdom.

If their faith was dark in their understanding: it was also small in their hearts, when they were offended at Christ, and all forsook him:



& Peter himself renounced him. And yet we cannot say, that they were without faith, though it were then very weak and small. And also when the ship being covered with floods they cried to Jesus Christ: saying, save us, we perish: he calleth them not infidels, but men of little faith, & fearful: showing that they had some faith in them, though very small, and assailed with fear, wherein notwithstanding having recourse unto him, they were heard, and delivered out of danger. For he came not to break the bruised reed, nor to quench the smoking flax: As Isaiah foretold, showing thereby, that there are some of the children of God, weak as a bruised reed, and having as little strength of faith, as in stead of flaming, it smoketh only. This smallness and beginning of faith is very aptly noted by S. Paul, saying: that the righteousness of God is revealed by the Gospel from faith to faith. He showeth that there are degrees in faith, and that it happeneth to us in the revealing of the righteousness of God, by which we are justified, as when we see one so far off, as with much ado we know him: but the nearer we approach, the more clearly we discern him. Many of the children of God are like to that blind man, whose eyes Christ opened, but so at the beginning, as he saw men like trees, forthwith he recovered his sight, but yet troubled at the beginning, but afterward cleared. To be short, he who in the person of his Apostles hath taught us to pray unto God to increase our faith, showeth that he hath children in whom it is weak, and hath need of increase. Also the chief wisdom of the most perfect is to profit. And to this purpose we must remember, that in all spiritual graces, there is nothing but beginnings and imperfections, in the most perfect, and most highly exalted in this life. But that the perfection (to the which notwithstanding we must always tend) and the accomplishment shall be in heaven. To conclude, there are two effects or fruits of faith, to wit, the rest & peace of the conscience before God: and sanctification, which consisteth in the mortification of the works of the flesh, and newness of life. Now, as the rest and peace of conscience proceeding from faith, is a testimony that it is in us, so is also sanctification, and the desire to walk in the fear and obedience of God. And indeed, faith is the fountain of good works. If then, one of these fruits be

languishing, the other sufficeth to assure us that we have faith. As it is known that there is true and natural fire, by the flame & the heat, which are two effects and operations of fire: but if the flame shall become weak, the heat shall suffice to assure us, that it is natural, and not a painted fire. In like manner, if this fruit of thy faith be weak, to feel peace and rest in thy conscience, and yet thou feelest the other effect of faith, to wit, a desire to the works of the spirit, love towards God, and desire to walk in his obedience: This fruit of thy faith is to thee a sure testimony that it is in thee, though but small and weak. But thou wilt say: what comfort or assurance of salvation can a faith so weak and little give me: I answer; It can assure thee of thine adoption. For so thou have but one spark of true faith, thou art the child of God. Faith is of such a force, that (following the promise of God) one only grain of it, though never so little, layeth hold on Jesus Christ to salvation. Again, it is properly Jesus Christ which saveth us, & not our faith: saving in so much as it is the instrument, and as it were the hand by which we take hold on Jesus Christ. Now, faith how little soever it be taketh hold on Christ and receiveth him, not by halves, but all whole: as an infant taketh and holdeth with his little hand a whole apple, though he doth it not so strongly or surly as a man. By the apple of our eye, though marvelous little, we see very great mountains, and the very body of the Sun, much greater than the whole earth: so our faith, though very little, taketh and receiveth all whole Jesus Christ the sun of righteousness. He who (being in a dark tower) seeth not the light of the Sun, but by a very little hole, may notwithstanding assure himself, that the Sun shineth upon the tower, as well as he that seeth it by an open window, knoweth that it shineth upon his house.

Even so although we are hindered by the clouds of mistrust, that we cannot see the Sun of righteousness to shine upon our souls in his brightness: yet so that we see but a little beam, we know that the sun of life shineth upon us, which assureth us that we are the children of God. Also whosoever in this life shall have the least faith among all the elect, shall yet enjoy Jesus Christ all whole, and not a little or half salvation, but the full accomplished salvation of eternal life. For

whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ, saith Saint John, shall not perish, but have life everlasting. Now, as this ought greatly to comfort us in the weakness of our faith, so ought it to be a sharp spur to enforce us to grow in faith, that feeling so much the more clearly and lively the peace and joy of our consciences, by the assurance that we are the children of God, we may the more strongly resist all temptations, and glorify our God. There are others, who call their faith and adoption in doubt, saying: That true faith cannot be without good works. Now, I feel myself so miserable a sinner, that it maketh me to doubt of mine adoption. Indeed this is a thing greatly to be lamented, that we render no better obedience unto God, that there is in us no greater zeal of his glory, nor more fervent charity towards our neighbors: and to be short, no better amendment of life. But if thou hast begun to hate & flee sin, if thou feelest that thou art displeased at thy infirmities and corruptions: If having offended God, thou feel a sorrow and grief for it: if thou desire to abstain: if thou avoidest the occasions: if thou travailest to do thine endeavor: if thou prayest to God to give thee grace: All these holy affections proceeding from no other than from the Holy ghost, ought to be unto thee so many pledges and testimonies, that he is in thee: As also Saint Paul teacheth us, saying: that as those that delight in the works of the flesh, are of the flesh. So on the other side, those that delight in the works of the spirit, are of the spirit. These holy desires then to the works of the spirit, are testimonies of the spirit dwelling in thee. So as being thus led by the spirit of God, thou art the child of God, saith Saint Paul: And indeed seeing the children of Adam are naturally inclined to all vices and corruptions, it is a mark of regeneration, & so of being the child of God, when contrary to nature we are displeased with our infirmities, and fighting against them, we desire and endeavor to fashion ourselves according to the will of our God.

God hath commanded us to love him with all our heart, with all our understanding, and with all our soul. Now, as we cannot know God in this life, but in part, and darkly, so we cannot love him but in part, yea very little. The perfection is reserved for heaven as also S. Augustine saith: All the faithful ought earnestly to aspire to this, that

they may once appear before God pure and without spot. But for as much as the best and most perfect estate that we can attain unto in this present life, is no other thing, than to profit from day today: then shall we come to this mark, when, after putting off this sinful flesh, we shall cleave fully to our God. Therefore also, as the same author saith, when men speak of the perfection of the children of God in this life: to this perfection is required the acknowledging of their imperfection. It is as well in truth, as in humility that the Saints acknowledge how imperfect they are. God deferreth the accomplishment of our holiness and charity until the life to come, to the end that this pride (which taketh force through the increase of virtue) should not overthrow us, but that walking in humility, God might accomplish his mercy in pardoning us, his power in sustaining us, and his truth in saving us. And in deed there is nothing more weak, saith S. Augustine, than the proud, nor more strong than the humble: For as the proud, trusting in himself, who is nothing but vanity, hath God his adversary, who resisteth the proud; so the humble mistrusting himself, hath God for his strength and salvation. God indeed in his law requireth a perfect obedience. But that which he looketh for of us his children in this life, consisteth more in the desire to obey, than in the obedience itself. According whereunto he saith by his Prophet Malachi, I will spare them, as a father doth his own son that serveth him. If a child take pain to write well, or to do as he should do any other service that his father hath commanded him, although there be great want both in the writing, and in the other service; yet in bearing with him he praiseth him, and saith that he hath written well, he had done his duty. Godliness, the love towards God, and the obedience that we owe unto him, is often signified by the fear of God, the which also David calleth the beginning of Wisdom. And those that have this fear of God, are acknowledged & called the children of God. Then if thou feel such love & reverence toward God, that thou fear to offend him, thou art the child of God. But then thou fearest to offend God, when thou shunnest the occasions and enticements to sin, and when having offended, thorough ignorance, oversight, or other infirmity, thou feelest sorrow and displeasure, to raise thee up again, being resolved

to sin no more, and praying to God that he will conduct thee by his holy spirit, that thou mayest walk constantly according to his word. S. John saith, that the children of God sin not: not that they offend not God every day, or that they commit not sometimes most grievous offenses, as David and Saint Peter: And as daily experience doth too much convict every one of us. But he saith, that they sin not, because they love God, and are afraid to offend him, and do not willingly give themselves to do evil: but have sin in such detestation, that they feel in themselves that conflict, which Saint Paul setteth forth unto us in his own person, in as much as they would do the good which they cannot do, and do unwillingly the evil which displeaseth them: whereof it followeth, as the Apostle concludeth, that if they do that which they would not do, it is no more they which do it, but sin which dwelleth in them: which on the one side ought to give them occasion to mourn and to cry with the Apostle, Alas wretch that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? But on the other side they ought to feel the comfort which he addeth, saying, I thank my God through Jesus Christ. And wherefore? Because there is no condemnation to those, who thus fighting against the flesh, walk after the spirit, and consequently are in Jesus Christ. For therest, when thou feelest a doubt of thine adoption through the want of rendering to God such obedience as thou oughtest, know, that Satan is at hand with thee falsifying the gospel in persuading thee, that thou shouldest be saved by thy works; or willing to make thee blaspheme Jesus Christ, in making thee believe, that thou mayest and oughtest to be (at the least) in some part, a Savior of thyself, and so a companion of Jesus Christ. Answer to this temptation, that thou art a poor sinner, but that Christ came to save sinners, and that there is salvation in none but in him. Furthermore, if thou feel a desire to the works of the Spirit, thou art of the Spirit, and there is no condemnation to thee, as is said. If thou delight, as touching the inward man, in the obedience of the commandments of God, he accepteth thee for holy and just, receiving this desire to obey him, for an obedience acceptable unto him. He accepteth his own work in thee, and pardoneth thee thine. Continue in this holy desire, fighting against the flesh and the world, strengthening thyself by fervent

prayer to the Lord. And behold the certain testimonies of thine adoption.

But thou wilt say, I have of long time asked of God, and do daily ask his holy Spirit, the increase of faith and grace to be obedient unto him; yet I feel no manner of fruit of my prayers. If God loved me, and accounted me for his child, would he not hear me? It is the same complaint, that in old time past David made, saying: I am weary of crying, my throat is hoarse, mine eyes are failed, while I wait on my God. And in another place, My God, I cry by day, and thou answerest not, and by night, and I have no rest. Now in saying he had no rest, he showeth that he did continue in prayer. Also Jesus Christ exhorteth us to this diligence, by the example or similitude of the importunate widow, crying still upon the wicked Judge to do hir right, and at the last obtaining by her importunacy. And besides that, he waketh us up, saying: Hear what the wicked Judge saith: Because she troubleth me, I will do her justice. And God which is your Father and Savior, who is just and loveth righteousness, shall not he hear the cry of his children crying unto him night and day? Verily I say unto you, that he will do it, and that quickly. He that went by night to his neighbor to borrow bread, continuing still his request, though the other alleged many excuses, yet at the length he obtained what he would. Continue then in praying to God, without discouragement. This perseverance in prayer, is an evident and vehement testimony of thy faith. For that is not found but in the children of God, guided by his Spirit: especially seeing thou askest the holy Ghost, whom Jesus Christ promised thee, thou askest that, which by his promise is due unto thee, without doubt he will give it thee. And seeing thou askest the increase of faith, and grace to obey him, thou askest that which he commandeth thee to have, and so that which he liketh and is pleased withal, Be then assured that thou shalt be heard. Behold, saith Saint John, the confidence that we have with God, that if we ask anything according unto his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know we shall obtain the requests that we have asked. His promises cannot fail nor deceive. Yea, be thou certain, that before thou hast ended thy prayer, he hath

heard thee, as Isaiah saith, For our God is a God that heareth prayers, saith David. But thou owest him this honor to submit thyself to his wisdom as touching the time of feeling or receiving the fruit of thy prayers. If Jesus Christ had healed the daughter of the Canaanite at the first petition, her Faith had not been so kindled in her, nor so commended in the Church unto the end of the world.

The fruits of all trees are not ripe in one day. In some they do ripen sooner, and men wait patiently for the other, which ripen in the latter season: Zechariah and Elizabeth thought that they had prayed in vain, asking of God posterity in their youth. And when they were old, and without all hope for to obtain it, the Angel of the Lord said unto Zechariah, Thy prayer is heard: not that prayer which he made then, for he thought not now to have issue, but the prayer which he made long time before. That which is more, do we not ask of God many graces, the which we know well that we obtain, either in part, or in hope only? the enjoying or full accomplishment whereof is deferred either until death, or even until the day of the resurrection. In the Prayer of all Prayers taught by Jesus Christ, we do ask of God that his name may be sanctified, his Kingdom may come, his will may be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven. And when shall we see the full accomplished effect of this prayer, but in Heaven, when Christ having given up his kingdom to God his father, we shall love him perfectly, and praise him everlastingly? Furthermore, he oftentimes heareth us, so as Saint Augustine saith: not according unto our will, but as is most for our profit, giving us better things than those that we expressly ask. The Jews desired the coming of the Messias, and asked it of God. He deferred it of long time: at the last he sent him, but not such a one, as all (as it were) and the Apostles themselves looked for: to wit, victorious in battle as David, to deliver them from the yoke of the Romans, triumphing in riches & worldly glory, as Solomon; but such a Messias, as obtaining victory against the devil, death, and sin, hath established a spiritual kingdom in everlasting life and glory. Jesus Christ feeling and apprehending the terrible gulfs of the fearful wrath of God upon him for our sins, prayed with strong cries & tears to God his Father that he might not enter into the

deep pit of death. The Apostle to the Hebrews saith, that he was heard: and yet notwithstanding he entered, and drank the Cup of the wrath, and of death which the Father had given him. But he was heard, saith the same Apostle, as touching that which (in making his prayer) he feared: to wit, from being swallowed of death. In like manner, S. Paul prayeth to God oftentimes that he would deliver him from the Angel of Satan that buffeted him, but God much better (as he himself confesseth) gave him to understand, that the power of God was made perfect in his infirmity: so as he protesteth, as it were enjoying the fruit of his prayers, though otherwise than he thought, that from that time forth he would rejoice in his infirmities, & would take delight in them, forasmuch as being weak in himself, he was strong in God. So we will demand many times commodities concerning this life, as health, goods, parents, friends, or our country: and God depriving us of them, giveth us spiritual graces, patience, faith, contentment in God, and other like: yea, and our prayer tending only unto the preservation, and enjoying such commodities appertaining unto this life alone: God contrariwise depriveth us of them, to keep them for us in heaven, and to give us everlasting enjoying of them, as when we are deprived of them, being persecuted for his name. And that which more is, when we feel weakness in faith, negligence to hear the word of God, coldness in charity, impatience in our afflictions, and we having asked of God graces contrary unto these, feel no amendment: his will is to make us feel that these graces are the gifts of God, seeing we have them not when we will, and that he will keep us in humility by the feeling of our infirmities, and try our patience & faith, in waiting patiently until he make us feel the fruit of our prayers. I think well (wilt thou say) that those that pray unto God fervently and continue constantly in such prayers, have therein testimonies that they are the children of God, & are assured to be heard. But what comfort may I take therein, seeing my prayers are so cold, and with so little feeling of zeal & faith required in them? But is it not in the name of Jesus Christ that thou prayest? And it is for the love of his well-beloved Son, our advocate and mediator, that God heareth us, and not for the excellency of our prayers. It is, as it were, by the mouth of Jesus Christ that we present



our prayers to God, to be sanctified by him, and acceptable to God for his sake, in whom he hath delight. Satan, the enemy of our prayers, by the feeling of this infirmity, would make thee leave praying to thy God. Resist then this temptation.

Think that it is not a thing indifferent, or left in thy liberty, to pray to God or not. God hath commanded thee to pray; thou owest him obedience; it is an honor he requireth of thee; thou canst not deny it him. God commandeth thee to love him with all thy heart. Wilt thou say, I will not love God at all, because I love him so coldly: I will help the poor no more, because I cannot do it with a fervent charity. To conclude, what infirmity or coldness soever thou feelest, thou art bound to pray, and to continue in thy duty. In the meantime, acknowledge thy infirmity, and in thy prayers ask double pardon, first of thy sins which thou hast committed before, secondly for this sin, that thou prayest to God so negligently. See how God (supporting the infirmity of thy prayers) will smell a sweet savor of them, as incense offered by our high Priest Jesus Christ, and shall make thee at last feel the fruit of thy prayers. Many complain of another infirmity, that hardly they begin their prayers, but instead of thinking of God, & of that which they ask of him, their mind is wandering other where. And for this they are vexed and troubled: and in truth it is a great infirmity, for the which we ought greatly to be displeas'd with our selves. Notwithstanding it is common to all the children of God in general. Chrysostom reproveth those of his time for this infirmity, showeth quickly the first original, and after the remedy. Whence cometh this (saith he) that if we talk of war, of merchandize, or of other things of the world, we can discourse a great while without thinking of any other thing, and so soon as we set ourselves to pray unto God, our minds wander? It is because the Devil knoweth well, that in speaking of things of this world, thou doest him no hurt, & therefore he suffereth thee to talk at thy pleasure: but when he seeth, that thou settest thyself upon thy knees to pray to God, he knoweth that thou goest to procure that, which is against his heart, & to the ruin of his kingdom. Therefore he thrusts himself in by & by, troubling & drawing thy thoughts hither &

thither, to hinder the fruit of thy prayers. Say then to Satan, who is hard by thee, and fighteth against thee; go behind me Satan, for I must pray to my God. And if he be importunate, yet must thou pray to God to drive him away from thee. So thinking to whom thou speakest, to wit, to the Majesty of God; and how great things thou askest of him: be displeas'd with thy infirmity, fight against it, & lifting up thy hands to heaven continue in prayer; and do it so much the more courageously and constantly, for that Satan feareth nothing more than the prayers of the children of God; & showeth sufficiently in going about to trouble and turn away their minds to other things, that he feeleth himself hindered by their prayers, and that he feareth the fruit of them.

On the other side, if it happen that by affliction either of body or of spirit, thou art so cast down, that thou canst not make a framed prayer unto God; be not discourag'd for that, for at the least thou canst desire thine own health & salvation. There is neither sickness nor yet tyrant that can let thee to desire: now, desire is prayer before God, saith Saint Augustine; according whereunto David saith, that God heareth the desire of the humble. Say thou then with David; Lord all my desire is before thee, and the sighs of my thoughts are not hid from thee. Hezekiah King of Judah in his affliction, could not distinctly pray unto God, but chattered as a Crane or a Swallow, and mourned as the Dove; yet so lifting up his eyes on high, he was heard. What prayer maketh the little Infant to his mother? He weepeth and crieth, not being able to express what he lacketh. The Mother offereth him the breast, or giveth him some other thing, such as she thinketh his necessity requireth. Much more then the heavenly father heedeth the sighs, the groans, the desires and tears of his children: and doing the office of a Father, he heareth them, and provideth for them. There are some also that doubt of their adoption & salvation, because they feel not any comfort or increase of the graces of God, neither by reading or hearing the word, neither by communicating at the holy Supper of the Lord. Now, if thou feel thyself afflicted and troubled in this respect; understand, that when thou goest to employ thyself in these spiritual exercises, Satan

followeth thee, to make it unsavory to thee, yea and to take out of thy mind the word of God that thou hast heard. Pray then to God, that he drive him away from thee. Secondly this cometh, forasmuch as thou art not yet much accustomed to the language of the holy Ghost, so as it is to thee as if thou didst hear an excellent sermon, but of one whose language thou didst scarce understand, whereby thou canst neither feel taste nor pleasure, and so thou canst receive but small profit. Then thou must continue, & also accustom thyself to read & hear the word of God, thinking always that God speaketh to thee for the salvation of thy soul, praying him that he will give thee grace by his holy spirit to profit to his glory and thy salvation. And thou shalt feel at the last that which is said to sick men that have lost their taste, that thy appetite will come to thee by eating: And that the word of God, and the participating of the bread and wine in the holy supper shall be to thee more sweet, than honey to the mouth, as David saith. Manie sick persons having neither taste nor appetite, eat notwithstanding and receive nurture. So, though in reading and hearing the word of God, and communicating at the Lord's supper, thou feelest not any taste or appetite: yet in continuing, thou shalt receive some nurture for thy soul. And if it seemeth to thee that thou forgettest by & by, that which thou hast read or heard, practice for thy soul that which thou doest for thy body: because the meats digest & abide not in the body, thou returnest to eat meat again every day: So be thou so much more diligent to hear and read the word, and to communicate at the holy supper without losing any one meal for thy soul, when God offereth it thee. And as the corporal meat though it pass away: yet there remaineth always some nurture for the body: so shall this spiritual meat be to thy soul. Yea it may be that at one sermon thou shalt hear and remember one sentence, which shall serve thee, as it were, for a passport, a ladder or wings at thy need to conduct thee by, and by comforting & strengthening thee, to lift thee up into heaven. If then, when thou goest to read or hear the word of God, or to communicate at the Lord's supper, thou prayest to God (as thou oughtest daily to do) that he will give thee his spirit, that thou mayest profit: and so doest continue constantly in these spiritual exercises. This disposition, this holy affection & obedience shall serve

thee for sure testimonies of thine adoption, & thou shalt without doubt, feel increase of the graces of God.

Finally, there are some, who having had lively feelings of their faith with comfort & joy in their consciences, walking besides in the fear of God, are afterwards greatly troubled, when these graces seem to be dead in them, falling into doubt & mistrust of their salvation, or into crimes & sins too unworthy the children of God. For Satan hereby endeavoreth to persuade them, either that they never had the true faith, or that God hath cast them off, taking from them the gifts and graces of his holy spirit: but both the one and the other conclusion is as false, as the author of them is a great liar. And indeed, if the trees which have flourished & borne their fruit in summer, are in winter without fruit, without leaves, yea and without appearance of life: doth it follow therefore either that they had not life in summer, or that they are dead in the winter. When men go to bed, they rake up the fire which did burn: if thou mark it very near, there is no appearance either of heat, nor of brightness: doth it follow therefore, that there had been no fire, or that it is then quenched or dead. Contrariwise, having been covered overnight, men kindle again in the morning the same fire that was hid & covered: and the trees that seemed to be dead in the winter, flourish and bear fruit a while after. If thou seest a drunken man, not having for a time the use of reason, nor any feeling of it, wilt thou say therefore, that he never had a reasonable soul, or that having had it, it is now dead? A bide a few hours and thou shalt be convict of the contrary. And so of that, that thou hast not presently the feeling or effects and fruits of faith, can it follow that thou never hast had them, or that having had them, thou hast lost them? When S. Peter renounced Jesus Christ three times, cursing himself, was his faith quenched? On the contrary, Jesus Christ having prayed to God that his faith should not fail, and being without doubt heard, faith remained in him, but very weak and sore beaten, but not destroyed nor quenched. David having committed adultery & murder, acknowledged his sins and offenses, praying to God that he would not take his holy spirit from him. Then he had not lost it, rather it abode in him but as a fire covered with ashes so as it

is said; without having any feeling of it to keep him from such a headlong fall. Faith then may be in a man without kindling: and being kindled, it is not out, although it be not perceived for a time. Yea, but (wilt thou say) the Apostle to the Hebrews showeth that there be some, who having been lightened, having tasted the heavenly gift, having been partakers of the holy ghost, and tasted the good word of God, and the power of the world to come, fall back and lose these graces, yea without hope ever to recover them again. What assurance then can I have that faith abideth in me, and that God will yet make me to feel it hereafter? For as he hath shown mercy unto David, and to Saint Peter; so doth he exercise his just judgments upon other, as upon those of whom the Apostle spake before.

We deny not but that there be reprobates that are greatly lightened in the knowledge of the mysteries of salvation (which the Apostle termeth here to be partakers of the holy ghost) and yet that such apprehensions, tastings and feelings as he proposeth follow not thereof. For, reading or hearing the testimonies and representations of the mercies of God toward his Church, of the love of Jesus Christ towards his elect, and of the excellency and felicity of eternal life, they conceive these things in their understanding, & for the greatness of them, they are after a sort moved: and when they talk of them, they seem to be partakers of them. But the difference that there is between them & the children of God, lieth chiefly in this, that the apprehensions and feelings of the reprobate are such, as a man may have in the reading or telling of an history, which toucheth us nothing at all: but the feelings of the children of God are as of a matter that toucheth themselves.

Let us consider for example the history of Joseph. Who is he that reading attentively, how Joseph was sold of his brethren, carried into Egypt, put in prison: and the sorrow that Jacob had, understanding that he was devoured of a wild beast, that would not be moved with compassion towards Joseph and Jacob? Who is he that reading how Joseph being able to contain himself no longer, made himself known to his brethren, and how weeping and crying out he said unto them: I

am Joseph, is my father yet alive, and causing them to come near unto him, said, I am Joseph your brother whom ye sold, but be not sorry. Shew to my father all my glory: Then throwing himself upon the neck of Benjamin his brother, he wept, and in like manner Benjamin wept upon his neck: after kissing all his brethren he wept upon them. Who is he, I say, which is not touched and weepeth not with them? But because this is a history of the fact of another, these motions & feelings soon pass away, so as having turned the lease or talked of another matter, all these feelings are vanished and gone. So is the feeling of the reprobate, hearing or reading the testimonies of so great a mercy of God towards men, and of the greatness of the happiness of the kingdom of heaven: The understanding & apprehension of these things, causeth some motions or feelings in them, as the Apostle saith. But for as much as these good things appertain not unto them, neither do the feelings that they have, take any seat or root in their hearts, but are easily quenched and vanish away. On the contrary, the feeling that the children of God have, is, as of the good things that appertain unto them, & therefore it may well be cold and drowsy, but not die. As also the feelings that Joseph and his brethren had were such, as although they had them not when they slept, yet when they awaked they returned again. And although that by the death of their father, they were (as it were) interrupted: yet the benefit and the comfort abode by them still. Following this that is above said, we say boldly, that what feelings, what illuminations or apprehensions so ever the reprobate have: so it is that they never feel the holy ghost in them, giving them testimony that they are the children of God. For according to this testimony, they should be, and should abide the children of God: seeing the holy ghost can neither deceive nor lie. As also after that God hath made us once feel by the testimony of his holy spirit that we are his children, we are certain that we cannot perish, but that we are indeed, and shall continue the children of God. For it is the testimony and revelation of the spirit of truth.

Also he that giveth faith, doth not change: & therefore his gifts are without repentance. The second difference may be taken from this

word, taste, which the Apostle useth: To wit, that the reprobate are like to him who having tasted a good piece of wine, making show as if he would buy it, understanding the price, & not willing to give so much, leaveth it there, without buying or drinking of it anymore. So the reprobate having tasted the heavenly good things, finding them good, and praising them exceedingly, after they understand the price, that is, that they must renounce themselves, and bear the cross of Christ, to go to take possession of the kingdom of heaven, which he hath purchased for them with his precious blood. They will none of it at this price, & so renounce these good things without drinking or enjoying them. But the children of God on the other side, having never so little a taste of these heavenly treasures, desire in such sort to have the enjoying of them, that they make resolution to forsake all, to enjoy it. We will add this third reason: That as those that have their stomachs charged with evil humors, cease not to eat sometimes for all that, yea and to find taste in some good meats, but are constrained after (through the evil disposition of their stomach) to cast it up again & to vomit: So some reprobates having within them an evil conscience, may well taste the good heavenly gifts, but this evil conscience, not being able to agree with the true & sure faith of the heart, stoppeth, that these gifts take no root to fructify to salvation, so that finally they cast it off, or let it wither & come to nothing. And this reason with those before, are the principal causes, for the which many, that seemed to be the children of God, do revolt, as we will show hereafter more at large. On the contrary, those who have faith, are assured, that though the graces of the holy ghost are often weak in them, & like fire covered with ashes, & trees in the winter, yet it can never come to naught or die: rather they recover strength at the last, whereby they are certain to be, and to continue the children of God, and heirs of everlasting life. Furthermore, let us remember that these foul and gross faults of David and of S. Peter, & of others are set before us, first that they should be to us as a mirror of the fragility of man, to acknowledge, that if we be exempted, it is by the grace of our God. Secondly, that we should so much the more stand upon our guard. As if in walking thou shouldest see him fall that goeth before thee, thou goest not to fall with him, but thou art to

be so much the more circumspect that thou fall not, as he did. Thirdly, that understanding that faith abideth in them (although very weak & feeble) thou mayest take courage, believing certainly that faith which was once given thee, cannot be quenched nor die. And therefore continue in assurance that thou art the child of God, raising up thyself by their example, and resolving with thyself to walk constantly as the child of God in true holiness and righteousness before him all the days of thy life. See how we ought to be resolved, that although the marks, feelings and testimonies of our adoption set forth here above, be in us but small and weak, and accompanied with great infirmities & conflicts: yet we may and ought to assure our selves that these marks are truly in us, and that therefore we are certainly the children of God, & inheritors of everlasting life.

## **CHAPTER 5.**

That the Apostasy and revolt of some having made profession of the true religion, ought not to make us call in doubt neither our religion nor our adoption.

We have understood here before how we may and ought to resist the doubts of our adoption, proceeding from our selves. Now, we must show how we may overcome the temptations which come from others. There are two things principally, which trouble the consciences of many, to make them doubt whether they be the children of God, and in the way of salvation & of eternal life, or no. First, the horrible offense or stumbling block of those which abandon this church, renouncing the doctrine of it, and returning to the puddle of idolatry: and specially when any persons having sometimes held any honorable place in the Church do revolt, and become persecutors of the doctrine which they have before taught and



maintained. For thereof the devil gathereth two consequences, no less dangerous than false: either that our Church is not the true Church, & so that we are not the children of God: or that there is no assurance of perseverance in the faith, & consequently no certainty of being the children of God, which have had & borne in appearance the marks of adoption. The other offense consisteth in the grievous & long afflictions which we endure: for the prosperity of the wicked, deriding our miseries, & the apprehension of our own troubles, give occasion to doubt whether God care for us, or whither he love us or no. And this ordinary condition to those that make profession of our religion, causeth many to condemn it, & have it in detestation, as the mother & nurse of all calamities. As touching the 1. point, concerning those that revolt, it is a small stumbling block to trouble us: for this was foretold us, and it is a disease wherewith the church hath always been afflicted. Many shall be called, saith Jesus Christ, but few chosen. And the parable of the seed falling in diverse sorts of earth showeth, that with much a do the fourth part of those that shall hear & profess the Gospel, shall continue to the end. S. Paul hath foretold expressly, that in the latter times many shall fall from the faith. And he advertiseth the Ephe. that even from among themselves there should rise up men that should teach perverse things. And the Cor. that there shall be in the church not only divisions, but also heresies.

Saint Peter speaketh yet more largely: As there hath been (saith he) false prophets among the people of Israel, so shall there be false teachers amongst you, which shall secretly bring in damnable errors, and many shall follow their damnable ways, by whom the way of truth shall be blasphemed. Now, we must think the accomplishing of such prophecies so much the less strange, because such hath been the condition of the church of God at all times. What revolt was there in the house of God before the flood, eight persons only being found saved in the Ark, and yet amongst them one hypocrite, who after was cast off and accursed. Now, the church of God being enlarged in the posterity of Sem, again there was seen such a revolt, that the church of God was only found in the family of Abraham, himself being pulled out of idolatry. In the time of Elias the revolt was so great in

Israel, that he thought he had been left alone. At the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Apostasy was so general, that almost all the Church, at the least the principal members of it, lift up themselves against the Son of God, and crucified him. When Jesus Christ had gathered many Disciples, he was forsaken of the most part of them: yea, Judas also the Apostle fell from him, sold him, and betrayed him. Jesus Christ being taken prisoner by his enemies, all his Apostles fled away and forsook him. Saint Peter himself denied him thrice. Saint Paul complaineth, that all they of Asia had revolted, And saith in another place, that all had forsaken him. He noteth Alexander the Copper Smith, Hymenaeus and others, who having been the chief members of the Church, were become heretics, and enemies of the truth, Now it is the same Church, and we must no more be astonished at such revolts, than at a man having rheum's all his life (whereby he casteth out of his body abundance of humors) that should continue in the same disease still even in his old age: Herein rather we ought to acknowledge the holiness of God, wherewith also he would his Church should be adorned. For he purgeth his Church, not being able to endure that hypocrites should any long time keep the place and title of his children approaching to his Majesty. And hereunto we may apply that which Moses saith, when he saw the fire had devoured Nadab and Abihu the sons of Aaron, for offering before the Lord strange fire: This is it which the Lord hath spoken, saying; I will be sanctified in those that approach unto me, & will be glorified in the presence of all the people: showing thereby, that the nearer men approach unto him by honorable offices in his church, and profession of his word, so much the less will he suffer their corruptions, but punisheth them more sharply, to the end, that as the nearer the piece of wax approacheth to the fire, so much the more the heat of it appeareth in melting it. In like manner the holiness of God may better be known in the revolt of hypocrites approaching unto him, & so he may be the more glorified of the people in such judgments. This is also the cause why many, who before they had the knowledge of the gospel, seemed in outward appearance very good people. Afterward being joined to the church, become wicked and dissolute in their lives, & very persecutors. It is

the vengeance of God that pursueth them, punishing their ingratitude, their love of the world and of the flesh, which they brought & nourished in the church, and the contempt of the honor that God did them, when he made them approach unto him, receiving them into his house, speaking to them by the preaching of his word, & presenting unto them upon his holy Table, his own Son Jesus Christ for the food of their souls.

So far off is it then, that we should be troubled for such revolts, that on the contrary, seeing that they are the vengeance of God, we ought so much the more to fear, and to continue the more constantly & holily in the church of God. And indeed if we did at this day see David execute that protestation which he did make of purging his house from vicious and wicked persons, would we (think you) depart from it, doubting of the holiness of it? Shall we not rather be confirmed to tarry there still, desiring to live holily? But more, what damage receiveth the Church in such revolts? The glory of it before God consisteth not properly in the greatness of the number, but in the holiness of them. The health of a man consisteth not in the abundance of humors, which will cause some deadly disease at the last: for even they that are laden with them, take medicines to purge them, that they might be the more whole. This is it which God, having spoken of his Church of Israel, that her silver was turned into dross, & her wine mingled with water, added for a great benefit, that he would take clean away all her scum, and remove all her lead from her: and that having restored the Judges and Counselors, so as they had been at the beginning, it should be called the righteous and faithful City. Experience showeth, that in the prosperity & peace of the church many thrust in themselves, full of avarice, ambition, pride, and of other corruptions and vanities; to be short it happeneth even as in a sweet & rainy season, that many weeds come up amongst the good herbs, which should be choked of them, if the Gardener pulled them not out. Then, when such people depart from the Church, returning to their vomit, it is as if God gave a purgation to it, to make it more holy, & more acceptable to her bridegroom. Let us further consider the causes of revolts. If this happened then when the

Church was in peace & prosperity, it should seem there were more occasion to call into doubt our doctrine: But it is in the time of persecution, that these revolts are seen; & so, it is fear to lose their goods, their dignities, their parents, their country, their lives, that causeth them to revolt. It is then the flesh, it is the world, it is the mistrust of God, and not the allowing of the Papistical doctrine, that maketh them to change their religion. As also S. Paul saith, that Demas had forsaken him, having loved this present world.

And indeed did this miserable John Haren revolt during the prosperous estate of the town of Bruges, wherein he was minister? By no means. But perceiving the danger, although he might yet have exercised his ministry, he began to seek the means as a hireling, to forsake his flock. He knoweth what letters I writ unto him, reprovng his slothfulness, his crafts and evil conscience in the reasons which he put forth, to have some color to withdraw himself. He knoweth also what reproofs he had received by the letters of others, that he should not defile his ministry in intermeddling so earnestly in the matters of war & of policy. After the Town of Bruges was rendered to the enemy, he withdrew himself into Zealand & Holand. Where perceiving that he began (as good reason was) for many considerations to be suspected in our churches, and in no reputation, he got him out of the country. So feeling in his conscience small appearance to be established in his Ministry again, having no hope of preferment in any other vocation, and being pursued by the just judgment of God falling upon evil consciences; he revolted, thinking happily that he should receive some recompense for the offense that he had offered against the holy Ministry, and at the least to enter again into the possession of his goods. This then is not the changing of doctrine, which moved him, but (as we have said) it is the flesh, and the world: it is envy that maketh the Monk. It is ambition the mother of heresy, as saint Augustine saith: It is an evil conscience, the rock that maketh the shipwreck of Faith, as Saint Paul saith, which hath made him to change his profession. To be short, God could no longer suffer such a hypocrite in his church, nor such a filth in his holy temple: he would be sanctified in taking vengeance upon

him, who so inordinately approached unto him. He hath set him forth for an example of his judgments, that those that make profession of Religion, and chiefly the Ministers of the word, may study more and more to walk with a good conscience to keep themselves in their vocation, to renounce the passions of the flesh, & the illusions of the world, and so with fervent prayers to continue constantly in the grace of the Lord.

Furthermore, let him make as many shows as he will, let him swear, let him lift up his hands, and his eyes to heaven, let him wear a great pair of beads, let him go oft and devoutly to the mass; yet shall he not easily make the Jesuits (who are cunninger than he) to believe, that he doth it indeed and from his heart. For those who among them have any little more wit than the common sort, understand well enough if they would confess it, that the change of the holy Supper into the Mass, the worshipping of bread in it, the fiery purgatory after death, the opinion of meriting paradise by works, specially those of supererogation; the setting forth of God the father, who is an invisible and eternal spirit, under the figure of an old man: the worshipping of images, the invocation of Saints departed, candles lighted at noon days, & borne in procession, the great beads hanging at their necks, and other such idolatries & superstitions, are either so abominable or so manifestly contrary to the word of God, yea, or so absurd, that he that hath once known them by the light of the gospel can never allow them in his heart. But be it, that by the enchantment of Satan, and judgment of God, he were indeed become a Papist, and that S. Paul himself should revolt, preaching another gospel; we ought, as he himself protesteth, to hold him accursed, and not to be moved to doubt of our faith. For our religion & saith is not founded upon the constancy or steadfastness of men, but upon the truth of our God, and upon the testimony of the holy Ghost in our hearts. If men be unfaithful, saith S. Paul, he remaineth notwithstanding faithful, and cannot deny himself. When Jesus Christ forsaken of his Disciples, should ask us, if we also would leave him: we are taught to answer with the Apostles; Lord, whether shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life. The faithful Pastor must (without being

astonished at the revolt of many) say with Isaiah, Behold I & my children which god hath given me, are for signs and wonders. The horrible and fearful vengeance, which waiteth on, and followeth these cursed apostates at the very heels, should make us to tremble, & to resolve to renounce all that is upon the earth, that we may get and hold fast all that is in heaven: & so leaving these poor revolters to the judgment of God, to cast our eyes upon those, who even in our time have endured so constantly the loss of their goods, reproaches, prisons: to be short, who cheerfully have entered into the flaming fire, & by cruel death mounted into the kingdom of heaven; to the end that such authentic seals of the heavenly doctrine, may confirm our hearts to continue constantly, & cheerfully to follow their steps, and so be their companions in glory. We ought not to be troubled at these revolts, as if we were not assured to continue in the faith, whereby also it shall come to pass, that we shall be in doubt whether we are, or shall continue the Children of God. For as the marks of our adoption set forth here before are of two sorts: the one inward before God, and the other outward before men: they which have the inward marks, which consist in the testimony of the holy Ghost in our hearts, in the peace of our consciences, and in the holy desire of our souls, feel these graces, which assureth them that they are the children of God, chosen to eternal life: yea more certainly than we are assured by the light of the Sun that we see, & by the heat that we feel, that the Sun shineth. And in deed they have the white stone, whereof mention is made in the revelation, & in that stone a new name of the child of God written, which none can know but he that receiveth it. The world, saith Christ, cannot receive the spirit of truth, because it hath not seen him, neither hath known him: but ye know him, saith he to his Apostles, for he abideth with you, and shall be in you. As touching the outward mark of being a member of the visible Church, it is also very certain in respect of God, inasmuch as speaking to us, and sealing his words by the sacraments, he neither will, nor can deceive or lie. But if men hearing his word, & communicating at the Sacraments, reject in their hearts the spiritual graces which are offered unto them, and so abide unfaithful, and wicked within (when notwithstanding they are held for faithful and

the children of god, because of the outward profession:) it is no marvel if God at the last do discover them, & cast them off: showing therein, that they were never his.

And this is it that S. John saith of such; They went out from amongst us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have tarried with us. But this is, that it might appear that all are not of us. They that are once grafted in Christ, cannot perish: for the gifts of God are without repentance. But every plant, saith Jesus Christ, which my father hath not planted, shall be pulled up. The parable of the seed falling into diverse sorts of earth, teacheth us two points to this purpose. First, that many shall hear the gospel, but without fruit. Secondly, that it shall be their own fault. For if entering into the Church, they bring their cares and love to the world, without having will to forsake them, so as it like thorns, choke the good seed of the word. And so having no moisture of the grace of God, they wither at the first sun of persecution; a man may see the cause of their revolt, to wit, because they were not the children of God. Saint Paul having said, that God knoweth who are his, addeth: and whosoever calleth upon the name of Christ, let him depart from all iniquity: showing thereby, that if there be any which join themselves to the Church, calling upon the name of Christ, and do not depart from iniquity; they discover thereby that God never took them for his. Which thing is good to be noted. For many think, that to be of our Church needeth nothing, but to change the mass to the preaching, and to the communicating at the Lord's supper. And when they understand, that to be the child of God, is required to renounce themselves to leave covetousness, ambition, drunkenness, the world, and all pomp's: to be short, that they must put off the old man, and be a new creature: not being disposed to do this, they leave the preaching, and return to the Mass. Now be these the children of God that revolt, that they should make those that are in deed and continue to doubt? Nay, rather they are the children of the world, who having brought the world in with them, have also carried the world away with them. They therefore that have once believed, who also believing, feel a desire to live according unto God, are assured that they cannot

perish. He that beginneth this good work in them, will accomplish it, even unto the day of Christ. And to this purpose saith S. Augustine very well, He which made us good, maketh us also to persevere in goodness: but they that fall and perish, were not of the number of the predestinate. It remaineth, that considering in the fall of hypocrites, the double mercy of God toward us. First, that he hath received us into the number of his children. Secondly, that he will continue this grace towards us even to the end: there remaineth, I say, that we feel our selves double bound to practice the exhortation of S. Paul, beseeching us by the mercies of God, to offer ourselves a living sacrifice, holy & pleasing to God, & not to be fashioned like this wicked world: but rather endeavoring to this, that being transformed by the renewing of our understanding, we may approve and follow, the good and perfect will of God. And let us remember that which S. John saith, That they that have hope to live with Jesus Christ, and to see him as he is, do purify themselves as he is pure.

## **CHAPTER 6.**

That afflictions ought not to make us to doubt of our adoption, but rather confirm us.

Let us now come to that stumbling block and trouble, that proceedeth from our afflictions. What appearance is there (saith the flesh) that we are the Children of God? Our goods are violently taken from us, our possessions are confiscate, and our Offices and Estates are taken away. We are driven out of our Country, yea from Country to Country like vagabonds: we are hated of father and mother, and of our other kinsfolk & friends: we are drawn and kept in prison: we are derided and brought into extreme calamities & miseries: we are as sheep of the shambles, appointed to the sword, to the gallows and to



the fire: To be short, we see nothing but the signs of the wrath and the curse of God upon us. And that which more is, the Church which we have said was the kingdom of Christ, and the house of God, how is it assailed by the mighty men of this world? whom also we see to come to the end of their enterprises, to oppress, tread under foot, rent and scatter this Church, exercising all cruelty against it, as hungry wolves upon a flock of sheep, forsaken of their shepherd. They triumph in their victories, and we hang down the head & weep, bowing down our necks under the yoke of afflictions. They increase in riches, & we consume in poverty: they are advanced to honors and dignities, and we are despised as rebels, & wicked and seditious people. See what the flesh saith: and yet these are but discourses and complaints of great ignorance or infirmity. For what is that which troubleth and offendeth us in this condition and estate. Even that whereby we ought rather to be confirmed, in the assurance that we are the children of God, and indeed happy. First, if God had promised to entreat his Children in this world delicately, and to set them up in riches and high estate, we might have some occasion to doubt whether we were the Children of God, all calamities and afflictions quite contrary falling upon us. But seeing it is so, that the Holy Ghost hath foretold us both often and manifestly, that the children of God should be afflicted, and that those that would live faithfully in the fear of God in Christ, shall suffer persecution; this persecution and affliction ought rather to serve us for a sign that we are the children of God.

Moreover, if the most excellent servants and children of God have always been most afflicted. Afflictions ought not to make us doubt of our adoption and salvation, except we will call in doubt the salvation and felicity of those, whom we confess to be the very blessed children of God: Especially, if afflictions do serve greatly to pull our hearts from the Earth, and to lift them up into Heaven, to purify our faith as gold in the fire, and to fashion us into a true obedience of God. Then the utility and profit which cometh unto us thereby, ought to serve us for a sufficient proof, that in afflictions God showeth himself to be our father, having care of our welfare and salvation. And yet more,

seeing the taking away of our goods temporal, shall bring us forth an eternal treasure in Heaven, the mockeries and reproaches shall be turned unto glory before God, the tears into joy, our sufferings into comforts: Who is he that will not confess, that such afflictions proceed from the very love of God towards us? To be short, seeing that God, strengthening us in the midst of the fires of tribulations, showeth in our infirmity his might and bounty, and seeing (when we suffer for his name) he maketh us witnesses of his truth: our afflictions are (as it were) stages from whence he maketh his own glory to shine, and giveth increase unto ours. So far off is it then, that being afflicted, we should be troubled or offended, that contrariwise those troubles ought to serve us for an assurance, that we are the children of God: whereof that we may be the better resolved, we will treat of these points more at large.

## **CHAPTER 7.**

That the afflictions that happen unto us, have been foretold, and therefore they ought to confirm us in the assurance of our adoption.

The holy Ghost hath at all times foretold and testified by sundry and manifest sentences, that the children of God should be persecuted and afflicted in this life, yea, in such sort, as the first afflictions should be but the beginnings of greater; and that passing one evil, they should prepare themselves to endure others that should follow as the waves in the Sea. God from the beginning of the world, having pronounced, that he would put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the Serpent, hath advertised us, that as long as there shall be devils in the world, and children of God, they must understand, that such enemies will employ all their strength & means to persecute them: As this also is represented in the

Reuelation in that which is said by S. John, that the old serpent not being able to devour the Son of God, nor the body of the church, was very angry, and went to make war with the rest of her seed which kept the commandments of God, and which had the testimony of Jesus Christ. Likewise God having promised seed unto Abraham, and added, that it should be as the Stars of the Heaven. He told him by and by, that it should be afflicted, saying: Knowe thou for a certain, that thy seed shall dwell and serve in a Land that is not their own, and shall be afflicted four hundred years. And that which is more, he confirmeth this advertisement by a vision or notable sign, commanding him to divide in pieces an heifer, a ram, a he goat, a turtle, and a pigeon; and sending a flight of Birds upon the dead carcasses cut in pieces: he shown him, that his seed (by the greatness of afflictions) should be like unto dead carcasses cut in pieces, and exposed for a pray unto the Birds. David in a few words showeth this condition to be common to all the children of God, saying, that the afflictions of the righteous are many. And in howe many sorts, and in how many places have the Prophets foretold of the afflictions that came upon the ten tribes of Israel carried after captives into Assyria? In like manner of the kingdom of Judah, the destruction of the Temple, the sacking of the City, the massacre of a great part of the people, and the captivity of the rest, by the space of seventy years in Babylon. Above all, Jesus Christ, who is the wisdom of God, how often hath he foretold the afflictions of his faithful servants and members of his body? Behold (saith he) to his Apostles, I send you as Sheep amongst Wolves. Ye shall be delivered unto the Consistories, and whipped in the Synagogues. Ye shall be hated of all men for my names sake. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more his servants. I am not come to bring peace upon the Earth, but a Sword. If any will follow me, let him renounce himself, and take up his Cross and follow me. They shall deliver you to be punished, and shall slay you. If they have Persecuted me, they will also persecute you. Again, Verily, verily I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, and the world shall rejoyce. Yea, he compareth the faithful unto a Woman which travaileth of child. True it is, that the wicked are also tormented in their course. But Judgment saith Saint

Peter, must begin at the house of God. And of this judgment it is that Saint Paul doth speak, saying: That we are ordained to be afflicted, which he doth confirm by a Sentence full of comfort, saying: That by many tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Again, all they that will live godly in Christ, must suffer persecution. But above all, that is to be noted that he said in another place: I rejoyce, and fill up in myself that which wanted of the sufferings of Christ: meaning by Christ, all the faithful, with their head, and showing, that God hath ordained a certain measure of passions for this Christ, and consequently to every one of his members his portion, which he must suffer, to accomplish the passions of Christ. Now this is not without great reason, that the Holy Ghost hath so carefully, and in so many sorts and manners foretold, that the children of God should be afflicted. It is to this end, as Jesus Christ himself teacheth his Apostles, that we should not be troubled or offended, when we see the faithful to be spoiled, chased away, imprisoned, mocked, & murdered, that then we should remember that it was told us before. And that it cometh not to pass by fortune or chance, nor by the absolute will of men that we are afflicted. But by the appointment of God the father, and that this is the entertainment which he hath ordained for his servants and children. But our flesh doth Judaize too much in this behalf. For as the Jews in old time, looking for a Messias triumphing in the world, were offended at his humility & base estate, & so at the cross of Jesus Christ, and therefore rejected both him and his doctrine: even so our flesh at this day doth still imagine a gospel of velvet agreeable to their desires, and a kingdom of Christ that were of this world.

See now why it is troubled and offended, deriding a Christ crowned with thorns, bearing his cross upon his shoulders, and laying it upon all those that will be the children of God with him. But if the Jews had well [understood] that which Isaiah foretold of the Messias, That he should grow up as a root out of a dry ground, That he should have in him neither fashion nor beauty to be desired, That he should be despised and rejected of men; a man so afflicted and accustomed to sorrows, that men should hide their faces from him, so much should

he be contemned; That he should be oppressed with injury, afflicted, & led to the slaughter as a Lamb. To be short, that he should be numbered among the transgressors. Also that which Zechariah saith; Behold thy king cometh to thee humble, riding upon an Ass. And that which Daniel saith, That the Christ should be cut off, and should not be. If, I say, the Jews had well weighed these Prophecies, and many other like these, touching the abasement and afflictions of Christ: so far off is it, that they would have rejected him, that on the contrary, they would have known by the accomplishment of those things that were foretold of him, that he was in deed the Messias promised. In like manner, if we would carefully meditate on that which the holy Ghost hath fore spoken of our condition, and that we must be conformable unto the image of Christ, suffer and die with him: the tribulations which accompany the profession of the Gospel, should be unto us signs and testimonies, that we are Christians, and the Children of God.

When the Angel shown unto the Shepards the nativity of Jesus Christ, saying, I show unto you great joy, that this day is borne to you a Savior in the City of David, which is Christ the Lord: He addeth, you shall have these signs, ye shall find the child wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. Now, if these shepherds (being come to Bethlehem,) had found the holy Virgin in an honorable palace, and the Child in a magnificent and royal cradle, had they not had just occasion to doubt of the tidings of the Angel, this estate not agreeing with the sign that he had given? But having found the Child in poor estate in a manger, as the Angel had foretold, they were confirmed to believe, that it was the Messias.

Even so, God having revealed unto us by his Word, that he hath chosen us to be his Children, having sealed it in us by the testimony and effects of the unction of the holy Ghost: and having also given us the marks in this, that he hath made us the members of his Church: he hath foretold, and hath also given one sign more of our adoption, that we shall be reproached & persecuted. If then the world did make much of us, loved and honored us, we might after some sort doubt of

the word of God, and of our election and adoption. But seeing the accomplishment of that, that was foretold us, we ought to be so much the more confirmed in this assurance, that we are not of the world, but appertain to our God. And this is it that Jesus Christ told his Apostles, saying; If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but now because I have chosen you out of the world, the world hateth you. If we ask the way to go to any place, & that one tell us (for a sign of the right way) that it is at the beginning dirty & afterward full of hills, we will leave the other ways which seem straight, dry, fair and easy: and finding in that way which we take, dirt and hills foretold and given us for a sign, we will be so much the more confirmed, that we are in the right way. So the holy Ghost having foretold, that thorough many tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of heaven, and that the way leading to eternal life is narrow and difficult: If we find the way of the Gospel narrow & full of troubles, let us acknowledge that we are in the right way to the kingdom of heaven, & that we ought therefore to be so much the more confirmed in assurance that we are the Children of God.

## **CHAPTER 8.**

That the Children of God have always been afflicted, and yet still beloved of God.

This that the Holy Ghost hath fore spoken, that the condition of the Children of God is to be afflicted, hath by experience been found to be true in all ages, whether we consider the people and Church of God in the whole body, or speak of it particularly in the members of it. How long and grievously was the people of Israel afflicted in Egypt? Moses reciteth, that their life was vexed bitterly, thorough grievous servitude, and that all the service wherein they served was

tyrannous, Pharaoh intending to destroy them, and to root them out by travail and excessive labor. And not so being able to come to his purpose, neither yet by the commandment made to the midwives, to slay secretly all the male children which should be borne: at the last he appointed certain of the Egyptians his subjects to be their hangmen openly. Whereby also when Moses was borne, his parents having hid him some time with great fear, they were at the last constrained (for the avoiding of the fury of these hangmen) to put him out into the brink of the river, as abandoning him unto death. Could there be any more barbarous cruelty used to any people? And yet, did they still continue to be grievously afflicted four score years after the birth of Moses. So that it is not without a cause that the Lord called Egypt the house of bondage, and an iron furnace. The which also he confirmeth, appearing to Moses in the midst of a burning bush, saying, I have seen the affliction of my people. They were not so soon in the way to depart out of Egypt, but they were pursued by the Army of Pharaoh, having the sea before them, & the mountains on their sides, and so seeing present death before their eyes. Did they escape the hands of Pharaoh in passing over the sea on dry foot? Then they entered into the horrible and fearful Deserts, and going three days through the Deserts, they found no water, the first that they found was so bitter, that they could not drink it; They were assailed of enemies, vexed with fiery Serpents, and inflammations unaccustomed, and wandered up and down forty years in those Deserts, living by Manna and water.

In the time of the Judges, how often was the people of God brought under the cruel tyranny of diverse enemies? Under the reign of Manasseh King of Judah, there was such persecution against the faithful, that Jerusalem was filled with blood from the one end to the other. But above all, it was unkindly handled both before and during the Captivity of Babylon. The City of Jerusalem was taken and sacked, the Temple of God spoiled, burnt and destroyed. He that escaped the pestilence, famine, and the sword, was transported into Babylon among the Idolators their Enemies, and plunged into all miseries and calamities, and that by the space of three-score and ten

years, as it was foretold. The Prophet Isaiah doth sufficiently set before us their miserable estate, calling the Jews persons despised, an abominable people, servants to Lord's, worms of Jacob, the dead men of Israel, people afflicted, overwhelmed with tempests, without any comfort. Are they returned out of this captivity into Judea? There they were vexed of their enemies: & above all, how many horrible cruelties did they endure by Antiochus, Herod, and other tyrants.

Let us also see what complaints the people of God make of the calamities that befell them by the Assyrians, or (as other think) by this Antiochus, saying: O God the heathen have entered into thine inheritance, they have polluted thy holy temple, and have brought Jerusalem to a heap of stones. They have given the dead bodies of thy servants for meat to the fowls of the air, and the flesh of thy Saints to the beasts of the earth: they have shed their blood like water on every side of Jerusalem, and there was none to bury them. We have been a reproach to our neighbors, and a mockery, and a derision to those that are about us. Again, Thou hast put us (O Lord) far from thee as sheep to be eaten, and thou hast scattered us among the heathen. Thou hast sold thy people without gain, and doest not increase their price. Thou hast smitten us down into the place of dragons, & hast covered us with the shadow of death. Also comparing the church to a vine: wherefore (saith he) hast thou broken down her hedges, that all they that go by pluck of her grapes? The boar out of the wood hath destroyed it, & the wild beasts of the field have eaten it up. It is burnt with fire & cut down. To be short, we may behold the estate of the Church in these words: Let Israel now say, They have often times afflicted me from my youth, they have often times vexed me. The plowers have plowed upon my back, & made long furrows. In like manner, after the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven, hath not the Church been, and that continually, persecuted, and extremely afflicted: as may appear by the book of the Acts of the Apostles, and by the Ecclesiastical histories, in the very which, a man may note ten general persecutions, which were kindled in all the quarters of the earth, by the public decrees of the Emperors, besides those that were



particular, which were made in diverse places by the Governors, or seditious of the people. It is a horrible thing to think, and almost incredible, of the blood which was then shed, & of the desolations of Cities, yea and of some whole Provinces. For as the Church was then spread over all the world, so in all the kingdoms of the earth this fury of persecution was kindled. It was enough for any to confess that they were Christians, and they should be slain by thousands. Among other persecutions made by Hadrian Emperor of Rome in the 9. year of his Empire, he caused ten thousand Christians to be crucified in Armenia. Dioclesian and Maximinian having enterprised to constrain the Christians, by all manner of torments and cruelties, to renounce their religion, and to sacrifice to the Idols, they forced them after a fashion so furious, that in the space of 17 days there were 30,000 put to death, and as many or more chained and carried to the metals, a torment resembling after a sort, the punishment of the gallies at this day.

In those days such cruelty was exercised at Trenios upon the river Mosel, that the river was red with the blood of the Christians being slain. The book entitled Fasciculus temporum, witnesseth that the Christians that were in England, were all put to death. To be short, whole towns were burned with their inhabitants, for the hatred of Christian religion. As touching the variety of the sorts of torments and cruelties, the devil surmounted himself in devising them: Some were cut in pieces: Some were tormented with stripes of rods even to the bones: Some were cast to the Lions, to the Bears, and to the Tigers to be devoured: Some were covered with beasts skins to be torn in pieces of wolves and dogs: Some were burned quick: Some were broiled upon gridirons: Some were crucified: Some had their bodies dropped on with burning pitch and boiling lead: Some were drawn upon the pavement of the streets: Some were dashed against the stones: Some were tumbled down headlong from high places, & into rivers: Some they smothered with smoke proceeding from a small fire: Some had their entrails pierced with sharp stakes: Some were thrown into the Lime kills: Some were slain with the stripes of staves and lead: Some had sharp reeds thrust between their nails and

their flesh: Some had red burning plates put under their armpits: Some were scorched quick, and then sprinkled with vinegar, or powdered with salt: Some were set up quick upon forks, and suffered to die of hunger or thirst. And those that could escape into the deserts & mountains, either they died of hunger, or of thirst or of cold: or they were devoured of wild beasts, or slain of thieves, or carried away slaves to the Barbarians. Now, although these examples ought to suffice to make us understand what the condition of the Church hath always been, and so consequently of the children of God: we will yet notwithstanding, set forth some particular examples of those that have been the most excellent servants and children of God. Abel having offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, and so receiving the testimony that he was just, was mischievously & traitorously murdered by his brother. Among the Patriarchs, let us consider the afflictions of Jacob beloved of God: After he had been long time in fear of the threatening's of his brother Esau, at the last he was constrained to forsake his fathers house: Being with Laban his uncle, he served him the space of 20 years, feeding his flocks, enduring the cold of the night, and the heat of the day: In the meantime he received so many injuries at the hands of his uncle, that he resolved with his wives the daughters of Laban, to steal away from him, and to depart without bidding him farewell. He being thus (as it were) fled, he was pursued of Laban provoked to anger, & determining to use him violently, if God (as himself confesseth) had not forbidden him. Having escaped his hand, he fell into a new and horrible fear, for the coming and meeting of his brother Esau, fearing (as he showeth by the prayer which he made to God) least he would slay both him, with his wives and children. His eldest son committed adultery, and that not with a strange woman, but with his fathers own concubine. His daughter is ravished and defiled. His children profane circumcision the sacred seal of the covenant of God, making it to serve to murder, as they did, all the inhabitants of Shechem, who asked nothing of them but friendship. By this cruelty more than barbarous, they exposed their father, themselves, and all their house, to manifest danger of utter rooting out by their neighbors, if God had not held them back. His own

children having sold their brother Joseph, they made their father believe that he was devoured of wild beasts. Being pressed with famine, he sent his sons into Egypt to get corn: whereby Simeon being kept prisoner, he understood that there was no hope of his delivery, but in sending his youngest son Benjamin: which was, as it were, to take away his soul. What manner of life then is this of the good Patriarch, but continual anguishes and afflictions, as himself confesseth, saying unto Pharaoh, that the days of his pilgrimage were few and evil?

Among the Prophets let us take Moses, to whom God shown himself more familiarly. When he was yet a little infant, he was put forth and abandoned unto death: being after come to the age of forty years, and feeling that God had ordained him to deliver his people Israel, he began to exercise his vocation in slaying the Egyptian: whereupon he was constrained to forsake the Court of Pharaoh, and to fly. And withdrawing himself into the land of Madian, he served Jethro, feeding his sheep the space of forty years: He, I say, that was taken for the son of Pharaoh's daughter, that might have enjoyed the riches and pleasures of Egypt. Being after returned into Egypt by the commandment of God, to deliver the people of Israel, incontinently so soon as he began to exercise his charge in speaking to Pharaoh, the Israelites being more afflicted than before, took occasion to murmur against him. Having conducted the people to the red sea, again they rose against him with dangerous complaints. And finally, having retired themselves into the desert, he was in continual trouble, anguish and torment, for the plaints and murmuring of the people, for the envy of his own brother and sister: but above all, for the vengeance that God executed upon his people, and specially for their sins, as when they made the golden Calf: And this having continued the space of 40 years, at the last he died in the desert without entering into the land of promise. We may to this purpose set down many other notable examples, as of Job, David, and others. But as everyone may note their great and sundry afflictions by the reading of the sacred Histories, so it shall suffice to set forth this which the Apostle writeth to the Hebrews, speaking of diverse of the

faithful, and servants of God: Some (saith he) were racked, & would not be delivered, to the end that they might obtain a better resurrection. Other were tried with mocking's and stripes: yea and by bands and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were hewn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword, they wandered up and down in sheep skins and in goat's skins, being destitute, afflicted and tormented, of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts and in mountains, and in deep pits and caves of the earth. As touching the examples of the children and servants of God, which have been since the coming of Christ in the flesh, he alone may and ought to suffice, for as much as we must be fashioned like to his image, and follow his steps. Now, this Prince of glory making his entrance into this world, created and maintained by him, found no place in the Inn, it pleased him to be borne in a stable, and to be laid in a manger instead of a cradle. By and by after Herod sought to slay him: for the which cause he was carried into Egypt by Joseph and Marie. And what poverty (trow ye) endured he there? Is he returned into Judea? there he passed his life until he was 30 years old, in the abject and base estate of a Carpenter: Did he begin his charge? after he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry, and had not whereof to eat in the desert. During these forty days and forty nights, he was assailed of Satan and tempted, and finally endured those three mighty assaults recited of the Evangelists. He suffered poverty, not having one pillow to rest his head on, and lived by alms.

He was violently pressed with injuries, being called glutton, drunkard, deceiver, and one possessed with devils. He was carried violently to the top of a mountain to throw him down headlong. He was betrayed of one of his own Apostles: He was taken prisoner, spat on, buffeted, beaten, mocked, scourged, crowned with thorns. He was condemned to die, and hanged upon a cross between two thieves. And besides these persecutions and outward torments, what anguishes did he feel, when he sweat blood and water for distress and fear? When he cast his face upon the earth, & when he cried on the cross, My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?

Let us add to this example, that of S. Paul, that vessel of election. When he was converted, Jesus Christ said unto him, that he would show him what he should suffer for his name. And so it came to pass, as he himself doth briefly recite, making comparison of his own person, with some of the false Apostles: Are they the ministers of Christ? I am above them, in travails more abundant, in stripes more than they, in prisons more, in deaths often. Of the Jews I have received (saith he) five times forty stripes saving one. I have been three times beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I suffered shipwreck: night and day have I been in the deep sea, in journeys often, in perils of floods, in perils of thieves, in perils of mine own nation, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the City, in perils in the deserts, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in labor & travail, in watching often, in hunger & in thirst, in fasting often, in cold and in nakedness: besides the things that happen to me without, there is that which combereth me every day, even the care that I have of all the Churches. Now, let us apply these examples to our purpose. When the Church is persecuted, and the members thereof afflicted, the flesh calleth in doubt, whether we be the true Church and children of God, or no. But what afflictions endure we, that the most excellent servants and children of God have not suffered before us, as it appeareth by the examples here before alleged. And where is it that we find, that troubles & the cross are marks of the false Church, and of the children of the world, and not rather the contrary, as it hath been shown above? The people of Israel being so grievously afflicted in the captivity of Babylon, and that for their sins, God by Isaiah calleth them, his well-beloved one, and his elect: and protesteth that he can less forget them, than the mother her child. And that he had them graven in his hands, having them always before his eyes. And speaking of them to Ezekiel, he saith: Thy brethren, thy brethren, the men of thy kindred. He contenteth not himself to call them once his brethren, but doubleth the word, saying: Thy brethren, thy brethren, and addeth, men of thy kindred, that he should not think, because they were in this miserable condition, that they were cast off of God, but that he should acknowledge them for his brethren.

In like manner, the Holy ghost speaking of those that were murdered and cast to wild beasts, calleth them the servants of God and his faithful ones. The Apostle to the Hebrews speaking of the faithful which were tormented and afflicted after sundry manners, and cruelly put to death, saith: That the world was not worthy of them. It is as if he should say, that they being the well-beloved children of God, and brethren of Jesus Christ, the world full of abominable people, was not worthy that they should be conversant and be anymore among them. And so far off was it that S. Paul entered into doubt of himself for his troubles, that contrariwise he alleged them to prove that he was a more excellent servant of Christ than the others, having endured more than they all. And if this sentence pronounced by the father touching Jesus Christ: This is my well-beloved son in whom I am well pleased, be true, even then when he sweet blood & water for distress, and then when he thought he was forsaken of God, so as being in this hell, he continued still the dearly beloved son of God: what occasion have we then, when we are afflicted with our head, to doubt of our adoption? Let us set before us the great number of faithful which were before the throne & in the presence of the Lamb, clothed with long white robes, holding palms of victory in their hands: and let us understand by the testimony of the holy Ghost, who they be. These are they (saith he) which are come from great tribulation, and have washed their long robes, & have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple. And he which sitteth upon the throne will over shadow them: they shall neither have thirst nor hunger, and the Sun shall beat upon them no more, neither any heat: for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall govern them, and lead them to the fountains of living waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. When S. Peter exhorted his disciples to constancy, saying: That they knew well, that the same afflictions were accomplished in the company of their brethren which were in the world. And when Jesus Christ said to his Apostles: ye are happy when you suffer injuries and reproaches, for so have they persecuted the Prophets which were before you. The intention neither of Christ nor of Saint Peter was to

set before them the comfort of miserable persons, as it is said, to have companions in their miseries, but rather to show them, that the afflictions which they endured were proper to the servants and children of God, and that therefore they ought to comfort themselves, being honored with the livery of their other brethren and members of Christ, yea, the most excellent servants of God, as the Prophets were. And indeed seeing those whom God had foreknown, those he hath predestinate to be fashioned like unto the Image of Christ. Let us not doubt (for so Saint Paul saith) that it is a true saying, that if we die with him, we shall live also with him, and if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him. Let us remember the saying of Christ to his Apostles: The servant is not above his Master, If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you, if the world hate you, know that they have hated me before you. And this should be a thing monstrous to see, under a head crowned with thorns, members handled delicately. Shall we doubt then of our adoption, being called unto the same condition which the well-beloved Son of God took upon him going to the enjoining of his glory? Will we refuse to follow him, ascending up by the cross into his Kingdom? He hath suffered (saith Saint Peter,) Leaving us an example that we should follow his steps. Let us not then think it strange, as he faith in another place, when we are as in a furnace, for our trial, as if an unwonted thing had come unto us. But rather in as much as we communicate with the afflictions of Christ; Let us rejoice, that when his glory shall appear we also may rejoice with gladness. Now let us understand how he addeth, that suffering injury for Christ's sake, we are happy, forasmuch as the spirit of God, which is the spirit of glory resteth in us, and the feeling which we have, causeth us to glorify him, though of the blind world he is evil spoken of. Seeing then the heavenly father hath vouchsafed us such love, that we are called the sons of God, although the world persecute us, because it knoweth neither the Father, nor us: Let us say boldly with S. John, We are now the children of God: And although it doth not yet appear what we shall be, yet we know (as he also addeth) that when Christ shall appear we shall be like unto him, for we shall see him as he is. Let us be contented to be dead in this world, and to have our life hid with

Christ in God, being assured, that when Christ our life shall appear, we shall also appear in glory. If the Devil will gather of our afflictions, that we are not the children of God; let us say boldly that he is a liar, or let him first pluck out of the rank of God his children, the Martyrs, the Apostles, the Prophets, and other of the best and most approved children and servants of God, which have been afflicted as well as we, and more than we: Even the holy Virgin and Christ himself. But rather seeing that we bear their livery, let us acknowledge ourselves the children of God with them, and let us say (with a holy resolution) with Saint Paul, that there is neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature which can separate us from the love of God, which he beareth us in Jesus Christ our Lord.

## **CHAPTER 9.**

That the faithful have the common afflictions of the children of Adam, because of the excellent fruits of them, testimonies of their adoption, and of the love of God toward them.

To be yet better confirmed in this truth, let us now consider how the afflictions themselves, even those that are common to the children of Adam serve for our profit and salvation. First, for as much as the relics of sin abide still, even in the most perfect in this life, which maketh them hardened in their faults, and inclined to offend God: We have need of helps, to be waked, to be humbled, and drawn from our sins, to keep us in the time to come, and so to dispose us to a perfect obedience, holy, and acceptable unto God. And to this end tend the afflictions of the children of God, which for this cause are called chastisements, corrections, and medicines of our souls. The



children of Jacob having committed a detestable crime in selling their brother Joseph, but they never thought of it, until that being in Egypt pressed with reproaches and imprisonment, they called to mind their sin, saying one to the other, surely we have sinned against our brother: for we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear him, and therefore is this trouble happened unto us. Manasseh. King of Judah having set up Idolatry again, persecuted those that would purely serve the Lord, so as Jerusalem was full of blood, and having shut his ears to the admonitions of the Lord, at the last was taken by the army of the king of the Assyrians bound with manacles, fettered in chains, and carried prisoner into Babylon. Then, being in affliction, he was exceedingly humbled before God, he prayed to the Lord, and was heard; and carried back unto Jerusalem. Then he pulled down all Idolatry, reformed the service of God, and commanded Judah to serve the Lord the God of Israel. Yea, the poor pagane mariners, of whom the history of Jonah maketh mention, seeing the continuance of the tempest, concluded to cast lots to know who was the cause of that affliction; and God making it to appear that it was the sin of Jonah; thereof is come a common Proverb in a dangerous tempest; that there is some Jonas in the ship. And this proceedeth of a feeling and apprehension of the providence and justice of God: this little spark yet still remaining in man of the image of God, whereby we think, that it is he that afflicteth, that he is just, & doth nothing but justly, and so, that afflictions are corrections of our sins. Therefore Jeremiah justly reproveth the blockishness of the people of Israel in this, that being afflicted, no man said what have I done? See now why God, to make us more lively feel his judgments, & to the intent to wake us up, & to convert us unto him, sendeth us oftentimes afflictions, which after a sort answer, & have some conformity to our sins. As for example, Ezechias king of Judah sinned by ambition or vain confidence, in showing all his treasures to the Ambassadors of the king of Babel: and God told him by the Prophet Isaiah, that all his treasures should be transported into Babel.

David offended God in committing adultery, and in putting to death Uriah, and God chastised him in this, that Amnon his son defiled his sister Tamar; and that Amnon was slain by his brother Absalom, that Absalom lay publicly with his fathers Concubines, according to that which God had said unto him: Thou hast done it in secreete, and I will do it in the sight of all the people. The child borne in adultery died, & he was threatened, that the Sword should not depart from his house. Now as the afflictions bring us to the feeling of our sins, to wake us up, and to humble us; so thereof riseth the resolutions and protestations to fall into them no more, but to amend them. And this is it that is seen in those that by tempest of sea, or some grievous disease, are in manifest danger of death. They examine their conscience, their sins & infirmities then come before them: they ask pardon, and make protestations to live better in time to come. The same also we see in children that are beaten of their fathers. This is it which the Apostle to the Hebrews teacheth us saying, That no chastisement for the time seemeth pleasant, but grievous: but after it bringeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. And before he had said, That God chastiseth us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. The goodness of God (saith S. Augustine) is angry with his children in this world, that he may not be angry with them in the life to come: and by his mercy he useth some temporal severity, to exempt them from everlasting vengeance. According unto this, S. Bernard made this prayer unto God; Lord burn and cut in this temporal life, that thou mayest be merciful to me in the life that is everlasting. And it is the same that S. Paul teacheth saying; When we are judged and afflicted, we are nurtured of the Lord, that we might not be condemned with the world. And to this purpose David protesteth, that before he was afflicted he went wrong: but now (saith he) I keep thy commandments. A game, It was good for me that I was afflicted, that I might keep thy statutes. Medicines are given either to heal diseases, or to prevent them, and therefore are very requisite for the health and life of man. Now what be these afflictions, but medicines of our souls? as also S. Augustine saith, This which thou so lamentest, is thy medicine, and not thy punishment, As in a house where there are many children, the rod is

necessary: & as in a City subject to diverse diseases, & where there is an evil air, Physicians are needful: so in the house of god, where there are many children inclined to evil, the rod is many times more necessary than bread: and in such an hospital full of diseases and sores, as the Church is (for out of it they are dead) it is a great fault if there be not Physicians and Surgeons to heal the corruptions of our souls, & to keep us from offending God, & from falling into death. Many accustomed to delicate meats, have their mouths out of taste, & after falling sick, they take bitter drinks to recover again the health of their bodies: let us cheerfully do the same for the health of our souls. And indeed, behold the difference between a mad man, and one that is sick of a corporal disease; The mad man is angry with the Physician, chaseth him away, and throweth away the medicine: but the other sendeth for a Physician, taketh drink at his hand, thanketh him, yea and giveth him a reward: So when God the sovereign Physician of our souls, visiteth us and giveth us wholesome medicines, let us not be like mad men rejecting the hand of God, but receiving the medicine, let us give him thanks and bless him, after the example of Job.

Furthermore, howsoever the goods and other commodities of this life ought to be helps to lift up our hearts to the spring from whence they come, that is to the goodness and power of God, to praise him: our corruption and affection to the world doth turn them quite contrary to thorns and hindrances, so as God oftentimes cutteth them off, or taketh them away, or minglenth them with afflictions, to turn us from evil, to draw us unto him, and the better to dispose us to his service. Experience showeth, that in banquets and feasts men talk of the world: but where sickness, death and burials are, they talk of everlasting life. It is also seen that riches lift us up in pride and insolency, and that poverty bringeth us down and humbleth us: that in prosperity we triumph, and feel not the force of the spiritual instructions and teachings: but being afflicted with sickness or any other way, then we are godly people, we confess that all flesh is but grass, and that we have here no abiding City. To be short, our infirmities tending unto death, make us to lift up our understanding

and affections to a better life. Then God, who is good, and doing well unto men, who taketh not pleasure in our evils, afflicteth us not, but to wake us the better, & to sanctify us in his obedience, purifying our affections, and by the sorrows of troubles maketh us to abhor our corruptions, the very cause of them. He doth as the good keeper of a vine, who cutteth his vine, that it may bear more and better fruit, not suffering it to grow wild, in leaving too many boughs on it. And as we cut the wings of hens and other birds, that they should not fly away and be lost: so God cutteth off from us the commodities of the flesh to keep us down, that we lift not up and destroy our selves with vain confidence & pride. We see also that the corn shut within the chaff cometh not forth, if the ear be not beaten: and that it tarrieth still in the chaff if it be not fanned. The like happeneth to the children of god if they be not beaten and fanned by tribulations, to be separated from the chaff of the world, and the pleasures & impediments that be in it. The Prophet Oseas when he would show how God would turn away his people from following idolatry. I will hedge (saith he) thy way with thorns: wherein he giveth us to understand, that as the beasts that go by the way, & see on the side of them fair fields, assaying to go to them, & running upon the hedges of thorns, if they feel the sharp pricks, they go back and return into the way: So, when the children of God go out of the right way to heaven, to go to the fields of this world & of the flesh, God maketh them to come upon the thorns of afflictions, to the end that by their pricking's they may turn back again. When a Mother willing to wean her child shall say unto him night and day, My child, it is time to wean thee, thou art grown great enough, and I am with child, my milk is corrupt, it will make thee sick; yet he is so fond of the breast that he cannot forsake it: but if the Mother put worm wood or mustard upon the breast, the child sucking it and feeling the bitterness, he quite forsaketh it without sucking anymore. Even so, though the preachers preach unto us, and exhort us to forsake the corrupt milk of the world and of the flesh, yet we seem deaf still and are always backward, until God put upon these cursed teats the mustard and wormwood of afflictions to wean us.

We have also of our own nature too much confidence in ourselves, & in human means, so as we know not what it is to hope in God against hope, & to trust to him without gage in the hand. So the riches estates, traffics, the leaning upon men, on the husband to the wife, on the father to the children, on the good Prince to the Subjects, are unto us as veils, that keep down our sight upon the earth, and as staves for us to lean upon. Now, our God taking away these veils and carnal leaning stocks, maketh us to feel the weakness of our faith to humble us, and to constrain us to look unto him with a pure eye, to cleave unto him alone, and wholly to depend upon him. According to that Saint Paul saith, That he had received the sentence of death in himself, that he might have no confidence in the flesh, but in him that raiseth up again the dead.

This is it also which Saint Peter teacheth by the similitude which he proposeth in the first chapters of his first Epistle and the seventh verse, comparing the afflictions to fire, & faith to the gold, for as gold is put into the fining pot and furnace, not to consume it, but to try and purify it: so our faith is tried and purified in the fire of tribulations. For as it happeneth to him that is quiet and at his ease, that he falleth soon asleep, and having an apple or any other thing in his hand, it falleth, or is easily taken from him: so the ease of the flesh bringeth us a sleep in the world, & causeth us to lose the spiritual good things and to suffer them to fall to the ground. On the contrary side, the more one forceth to take away a staff which I hold in my hand while I am awake: so much the faster I shut it in, & hold it the harder, that it may not be taken away from me. Even so the more the devil endeavoreth to take faith from us by tribulations, so much the more do we meditate on the promises of God to hold it fast: and the more he thrusteth at us to overturn us, so much the more strongly we lean upon the staff of faith, to overcome his assaults. From hence also proceedeth this excellent fruit of invocation of the name of God. And surly in the time of prosperity, when we are at our ease we pray not ordinarily, but of custom and for fashion, but being pressed with necessity, being assailed on all sides, finding no comfort in the earth, and feeling that we perish if God do

not strengthen, aide and deliver us: Then it is, that with all our hearts, we cry unto the Lord, that we protest that he is our father and savior, and that our trust is in him: as the feeling of our diseases is it that maketh us run to the Physician. The history of the book of Judges showeth by many examples that the people of Israel being in peace grew corrupt, but after being afflicted they had recourse to God, asking of him deliverance. When God slew them (saith David) then they sought him, & turned themselves, and rose early in the morning to seek after God, and then they remembered that God was their rock, and that the high and mighty God was their redeemer. I will go (saith the Lord by his Prophet Osea) and return to my place, until they confess their fault, and seek my face: They shall seek me diligently in their trouble, saying: Come, let us return unto the Lord, for it is he that hath spoiled us, and he will heal us, he hath stricken us, and he will cure us. So long as the prodigal son had means, he continued in his disorders: but being brought to extreme poverty, he remembered his fathers house, and returned unto him. Furthermore, our patience is proved and augmented by troubles, as S. Paul teacheth: and by the experience of God his assistance, our hope groweth, in so much as making us (in the time of need) to feel his goodness, his power, and his truth, in strengthening and sustaining us in assaults and conflicts, and in delivering us out of our afflictions: he sealeth in us the assurance of this his promise, that whosoever calleth upon him shall be saved. And he that shall put his trust in him, shall never be confounded. For this cause S. Paul teacheth us to rejoice in our tribulations: adding, that tribulation bringeth patience, and patience experience, and experience hope. And S. James exhorteth us to count temptations for matter of great joy, forasmuch as the trial of our faith engendereth patience. By the same means he trieth our obedience and fashioneth us. For when God entertaineth us in prosperity according to the flesh, it is easy to submit ourselves to so sweet handling, and to frame ourselves according to his will, with acknowledging of his goodness and love towards us. But when he afflicteth us with sickness, poverty, reproach and other calamities. Then to feel that he loveth us, to like this handling, to subject ourselves to this his will: herein consisteth true obedience. Then, he

afflicteth us to try us and to fashion us in this obedience, in as much as working in us his children by his spirit, he maketh us to commit ourselves to his government, to depend upon him, & to suffer ourselves to be guided by his hand, offering ourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, considering that it is reasonable, that we being his, by right of creation and redemption, he may dispose of us as it pleaseth him.

And herein there are two things to be considered. First, in as much as he is our creator, we ought to practice that which David saith: Lord I have held my peace, and have not opened my mouth, because it is thou that hast done it: showing thereby, that whether he tie us to our bed by sickness, or bring us to poverty, or driving us from place to place, he bring us to many discommodities, or even make us to languish in prison, or pass through the sword or fire, we must think and say, Lord I hold my peace and will not murmur against thee: but render thee obedience, because it is thou that hast done it: for thou hast all authority over me, in as much as I am thy creature. And indeed if after the similitude of a potter, who is able to make of the self-same lump of earth, some vessels of honor, and others of dishonor, Saint Paul showeth, that God hath authority to choose some to salvation, and to reject others, so as they that are rejected to be damned eternally, have no cause to reply or murmur: how much more ought we to hold our peace & obey, when he disposeth that we shall be afflicted but for a little time, and that in the body only? But that in this obedience we may feel indeed that we are happy, we must mark another point: that he which doth afflict us, is not only our creator, but also our redeemer: not only God, but also our God and father. And that same assureth us, that according to the love that he beareth us, and according to his infinite wisdom, he will dispose nothing of us, which shall not be to his glory, and to our benefit and salvation. It is well known that fathers & mothers take no pleasure to afflict their children, and to make them to weep. And although they have power to beat them, to appoint them their diet, and to put them abroad, either to school, or to serve some other, yet when they do this, men do not only confess that they have authority so to do: but

also everyone believeth, that it is for the benefit of the children, whose duty also it is to like well of it, and to render unto them willing obedience. Now, properly God only is our father, as Jesus Christ saith: Call ye no man father upon the earth: ye have but one father, which is in heaven. What injury then do we to this only true father, that we being afflicted by his hand, after what manner soever, do not sanctify his name, conforming ourselves to his will, thinking and confessing, that all proceedeth from his goodness and love, to his glory, and our benefit and salvation? See how, in the school of affliction, we learn what it is properly to obey God: and that is very necessary for us. For, if Jesus Christ being the son, notwithstanding learned obedience, by the things which he suffered: how much more had we need to learn to submit our hearts and our necks by afflictions, to the guiding of our God, as children yielding themselves peaceably to the government of their father, saying with Job: The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken, his name be blessed: And with David persecuted of Absalom: If God say to me, thou pleasest me not, behold I am here, let him do unto me whatsoever pleaseth him. And being ready to sacrifice our own children with our own hands unto God, when he shall command us, as Abraham did in old time. To be short in following God, as the old proverb is, in what condition or estate soever it shall please him to call us. If then afflictions serve, to awake us out of sin, to humble us, to correct the infinite corruptions that are in us, to pull us from the world, to cleave unto God, & to draw our hearts from the earth, to lift them up to heaven, to fashion us in the obedience of God, to give us increase in patience and faith. To be short, to make us so much the more fervently to pray unto God; it resteth that we conclude, that indeed they proceed from the love of God toward us, & of the care that he hath of our salvation, and so, that in afflicting us, he showeth himself indeed our father: as the Apostle to the Hebrews doth also teach us, saying: That God chastiseth those whom he loveth, and correcteth every child whom he receiveth: If you endure (saith he) chastisement, God offereth himself unto you, as unto his children. For what child is it whom the father doth not chastise? Then, if ye be not under chastisement, whereof all are partakers, ye are bastards and not sons. Rods then



are testimonies, that he accounteth us his lawful children, and not bastards. And nature itself teacheth it us. For, if we see two children strive together, and a man coming by, taketh the one of them and beateth him, leaving the other, we will judge by and by that this man is the father of him that he did beat, and that the other appertained not unto him. And this is it that S. Peter meaneth, saying: that judgment beginneth at the house of God: showing that they are his children and household servants, which are afflicted in this life. The which thing a good ancient father did think and well express, calling his afflictions, bitter arrows shot from a sweet and amiable hand. Therefore as, when we see the Carpenters strike with their hatchets upon pieces of wood to pare it, or plane it: and Masons to polish stones with the strokes of an hammer; we gather that these are stones and timber, which the master would employ to some building: Even so let us conclude of ourselves, that if God lift up upon us the hatchets and hammers of afflictions to polish us: It is a manifest and sure testimony, that he hath chosen us to put in the building of his temple. And that so, we are his children both well-beloved and happy. But let us pass to another consideration of singular comfort.

## **CHAPTER 10.**

Of the afflictions for the name of Christ. and of their fruits.

True it is that God being just, doth never afflict us unjustly, which thing we ought always to think and confess, to humble ourselves, and to give glory unto God. Nevertheless, God doth not always take occasion of our sins to punish us, but often times he showeth this favor to his children to dispose that the cause and title of their afflictions should be honorable, calling them persecutions and sufferings for righteousness sake, for the Gospel, for the Church, for

the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and for the love of God. And this cometh when we are persecuted of men, because we will not approve iniquity, or false doctrine, nor defile ourselves with idolatries and superstitions, but serve God purely and holily according to his word. To be short, when we will live in the fear of God in Jesus Christ, as Saint Paul speaketh, who speaking of these afflictions saith: To you it is given of God not only to believe, but also to suffer for his name: wherein he showeth, that such afflictions are the gifts of God proceeding from good will & love towards us: And see why Jesus Christ said, Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: Also, Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, & speak all manner of evil against you, lying of you for my sake: rejoice ye, and be glad. Whereunto Saint Peter agreeth, saying: If ye suffer wrong for the name of Jesus Christ, ye are happy.

Now, if we have no other foundation than the only testimony of Jesus Christ to assure us, that being persecuted for his name, God loveth us, and will make us blessed, were it not an intolerable impudency for the devil, and an incredulity inexcusable for us, to call that in doubt, which he, who is the truth itself, doth affirm? Notwithstanding, to the end that we may the more lively feel this felicity than when we are persecuted for his name: let us consider the reasons which the holy ghost giveth us. First, when Jesus Christ had said: blessed are they which suffer for righteousness sake, he addeth as a reason: For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They that through zeal and charity employ themselves to maintain the innocence and right of another, and above all the truth of God, incur ordinarily the hatred of the world, lifting up itself against them, to bring them to ruin. But let them comfort themselves: for what can they lose, seeing the kingdom of heaven is theirs, and cannot be taken from them? Yea farther, seeing these persecutions assure them, and prepare them to come thither, Jesus Christ addeth that we are blessed, and that we ought to skip for joy when any injury is offered us, either in word or deed, lying on us for his names sake. For your reward (saith he) is great in heaven. Note that he saith in heaven: for it shall be specially in the life to come, that we shall receive it. Yet notwithstanding, in

another place he promiseth recompense in this present life. For mark what he speaketh to his Apostles: Verily I say unto you, that there is none that shall forsake house, or brethren, or sisters, fathers, mothers, or wife, or children, or lands, for the love of me, and of the Gospel, which shall not now in this world receive an hundred fold as much, houses, brethren, sisters, fathers, mothers, children and lands with persecution, and in the world to come life everlasting.

Now, the purpose of Jesus Christ is to teach us, that when by persecution it shall happen that we shall be constrained to forsake father, mother, brothers, sisters, and lands, he will give unto us, in that poor, vile and base estate caused through persecution, more joy, contentment and happiness, than if we had recovered an hundred fathers for one, and an hundred times as much lands and possessions, as was taken from us. And experience maketh the faithful to feel the truth of this promise. And we should feel it much more abundantly, if the mouth of our faith were greater. But yet in this weakness of faith, do not we know, that the wicked in their abundance are poor, and we in our poverty are rich. Their covetousness is insatiable, and like unto fire, which, the more wood you put on, the greater it is. As for us, we find contentment and rest in the providence of God, which never forsook those that put their trust in him. In the time of Elijah, many had greater store of food than the widow of Sarepta, unto whom he was sent: but she having this blessing of the Lord, that the oil failed not in the cruse, nor the flower in the barrel, she had more than the richest in the country: As he that hath a spring of running water in his house, may say, that he is more assured, and hath more plenty of water, than he that hath it in a cistern, and that all broken. Besides, this great happiness that we feel our selves to be the children of God, that being pilgrims in this world, the end of our voyage is to come to heaven, which also we see open, and Jesus Christ reaching out his hands unto us to gather us into his glory, giveth us more contentment without comparison, in eating of bread, and drinking of water, than the unfaithful have in all delicates, having nothing in their hearts but the world and the earth;

and living, or rather languishing in continual fear to be suddenly deprived of all that, wherein they set their whole felicity.

This is it which David noteth, saying: A little that the righteous hath is more worth, than the great abundance of the wicked. Yea, the very ordinary experience teacheth us, that God provideth for our necessities both more abundantly than ever we looked for, & also by such means as we never thought, accomplishing in his children persecuted, that which Saint Paul saith: That godliness hath the promise of this present life, and of the life to come. If then (as it is said) the contented be rich, and that it is not the abundance which giveth this contentment, but the feeling that we are the children of a father that is almighty, which loveth us with a love incomprehensible, in his beloved son, who hath taken upon him to make us happy. It must needs follow, that even in this life we recover an hundred times as much, as we have lost through persecution. And who is he that can doubt if he carefully meditate this sentence of Saint Paul? He that hath loved us so much, as he gave his own and only son unto the death for us, much more shall he give us all other things with him. And indeed, seeing we are the members & brethren of him, whom God hath appointed the universal heir of all things: let us not doubt but that all things are ours. As also the goods of the house appertaineth to the pupils, although the Tutor govern it, and giveth it them by portion: and that which is more, he shall sometimes appoint to everyone his diet, according to that which by the counsel of the Physician shall be thought fit. And indeed if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, Let us not doubt, following the promise of Jesus Christ, but that all other things shall be added. In the mean time we must especially lift up our understanding to the reward promised in the life everlasting. For true it is, that besides this contentment whereof we have spoken: God (to show that it happeneth not for lack of power to enrich his children, that poverty and other afflictions do often follow and accompany the profession of the Gospel) doth oftentimes dispose, that they which have forsaken father, mother, & their worldly goods for the name of Jesus Christ, find afterwards many, which serve them for fathers and mothers,

and obtain after greater possessions in following the Gospel, than they had before. Always this is not the purpose of Christ to have us to rest upon so bare recompense, as to give us goods which are common to the wicked and the infidels. Saint Paul proposeth to the bondslaves of men, for recompense of their faithful service, the inheritance of Heaven. The children then of the house of God, should do themselves great wrong, to look for at the hands of a Father, so mighty, so rich, & so liberal, earthly and transitory riches, & other commodities of the flesh. He esteemeth it not agreeable to his greatness, nor to the anguishes and travails of those which have forsaken father, mother, their goods and their life for his service, to give them things so vain: to the end, that they should not set their minds thereon, thinking that their felicity lay in them.

The Master of a house, who keepeth his inheritance for his Son, doth not think that he doth anything for him, to clothe him with the livery of his servants: as also when any one shall be received for a Prince into any country, he may well cast some pieces of gold or silver, amongst the people, to show his liberality, but the honors and dignities are distributed among his favorites. God will not feast our bodies with the service of our souls. He is liberal and just, & therefore will recompense Spiritual conflicts with Spiritual Crowns, and accept our labors, not according to the vileness of our hearts, but according to the dignity of his greatness: seeing also, that he crowneth not in us, our works, but properly his own. Of one and the self-same service, there is one recompense of a King, and another of a Merchant; so as when we would content ourselves with earthly goods, God might answer with better reason than (in old time) Alexander the great, that it were enough in regard of us that should receive it, but not in regard of him that should give it us. They that know the vanity of worldly things, have no contentation but in heavenly things, yea, and will say with Saint Augustine; Lord, if thou shouldest give me all that thou hast created in the world, that should not suffice thy servant, except thou gave me thyself. As also he saith in another place, All abundance, which is not my God, is to me scarcity. We must then set before us the reward promised in the

eternal life, wherewith (without all doubt) Moses was lively touched in his heart, when he refused to be called the son of Pharaohs daughter, choosing rather to be afflicted with the people of God, than to enjoy for a small season, the pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. For (saith the apostle) he had respect to the reward, which also he received, not in this present life, wherein he was afflicted until his death; but in heaven, whither he lifting up his eyes, feared not the fury of the King, but held fast, as if he saw him, that is invisible. The same Apostle writing to the Hebrews that believed, showeth very well, that they also did understand this reward. For he beareth them witness, that they had taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing, that they had a better riches in heaven, which abideth forever. Wherein also he confirmeth them, adding this exhortation: Then cast not off your confidence, which hath great reward. Now although, as touching ourselves, we cannot comprehend what this reward shall be, yet ought we certainly to believe it, that it is most certain, because Jesus Christ hath promised it; and most excellent: seeing that Saint Paul affirmeth, that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy of the glory to come, which shall be revealed in us. As also he saith in another place: That our transitory afflictions which endure but a small time, and are gone in a moment, shall bring forth in us an eternal weight of glory marvelous excellent. And to give some taste in waiting for the full revelation, and enjoining of it, let us note in this last sentence of Saint Paul, the comparison that he maketh of our afflictions that are swift, and passing in a moment, and the eternal weight of glory marvelous excellent, which they bring forth. For true it is, that our outward man decayeth, as he said, meaning thereby the loss of health, of riches, honors, friendships, alliances, and other such aides and commodities of this life, and the life itself: but in the meantime the inward man is renewed every day, by an happy and excellent change, in goods and honors that are spiritual, heavenly, and eternal.

And indeed what is all that which we suffer and lose here for Jesus Christ, in respect of the infinite and incomprehensible good things,

which we shall recover in heaven, whereof also we have a feeling in this present life? Are we constrained to forsake a fleshly father? Behold the heavenly father which offereth himself at hand, who alone properly is our Father, as is said before. What lost the man borne blind being cast out of the Synagogue, and refused of the Scribes and Pharisees, when Jesus Christ met him and received him? If any spoil our worldly goods, God offereth us the Kingdom of heaven. If the earth will not bear us, the heavens open to receive us. If the people of the world drive us away, the Angels offer their presence, acknowledging us their companions in glory: If men curse us, those words are but wind; and God in the meantime doth bless us, & turneth even the curses of our enemies into blessings as David speaketh. If we be thrust out of our offices or dignities, Jesus Christ giveth us things more excellent, making us kings and priests to God his father: If our parents disdain us, & will not know us, Christ is not ashamed to avow us, and call us his brethren. If we be deprived of the succession & inheritance of our parents, Christ acknowledgeth us the heirs of God his father, and fellow heirs with him. Do any make us weep for sorrow? Christ presenteth himself to wipe away our tears, & to turn our sorrows into perfect joy. Are we not received into any town to be an inhabitant there? God giveth us freedom in heaven, to dwell in that heavenly Jerusalem, the streets whereof are paved with sine gold, the walls are made of precious stones, the gates are pearls, whereof the son of God is the temple & the sun. Are we put to death? it is to enter into a better life, full of joy and glory. And indeed let us consider here the wonderful goodness of God. A she knoweth that we are too much tied to goods, dignities, and other commodities of the flesh, that instead of willingly laying up our treasure in heaven, we lay it up in earth: he so disposeth that we shall be persecuted for his name, & doth therein, as a good & faithful Tutor, who taking the money of his pupil, putteth it out to profit, or buyeth for him good rents with it. And hereunto tendeth that which David saith: Thou hast numbered my fleeting's, do then put my tears in thy bottle, are they not noted in thy register? This being true, how much more will he put the drops of blood which we shed for his name into his barrel, and in his Register the reproaches, the flitting's,

the losses of father, mother, lands and other goods, the imprisonments, the other afflictions; and above all, the deaths which we endure for his service and glory? As also it is written, Right dear in the sight of God is the death of his Saints. And to what end serve these registers? They shall be laid before, not only the persecutors, to make them feel so much the more horrible judgment and vengeance: but especially before us, to make us feel an incomprehensible increase of glory and of joy, in showing us what we have suffered for his name, and in accepting us before his Angels. But let us now consider how our afflictions are of small continuance, and passing away as in a moment, in respect of the weight of the eternal glory which they bring. And first let us say boldly, that our troubles are short, because our days are short; & that the glory is of long continuance, because there shall be no end of it. But for the better understanding of the shortness of our afflictions, we must consider according to the instruction of S. Paul, the things invisible, that are eternal. For in respect of them, we shall find, that the visible things which concern this life, are temporal, that is to say, during a little time.

The Patriarch Jacob being demanded of Pharaoh of his age, he answered, that the years of his pilgrimage had been few and evil. And how were they few, seeing he had lived 130 years? surely in comparison of 800 or 900 years which his forefathers had lived, as also he addeth, that his years had not attained to the years of his fathers. How then are not our days short, not coming at the most but to 70 or 80 years, & that in those that have the strongest or mightiest bodies, as the song of Moses importeth. God speaking of the captivity of Babylon which continued 70 years, saith thus: I have for a little while as in a moment of mine indignation hid my face from thee. How? 70 years, are they a little time, is that but a moment of indignation? yea, in respect of the comforts and everlasting happiness, which he would communicate to his people: as he addeth, That he would have compassion on them with everlasting mercy. This also is the cause why S. John calleth the time following Christ's coming in the flesh, the last hour: as if he would divide the



continuance of the world into 3 or 4 hours, whereof the last should be after this coming of Jesus Christ until the end of the world: so this last hour should now have continued 1587 years, and these 1587 years should not be yet a whole hour finished. This seemeth strange to us. But let us set before us 2 eternities of times: that which was before the foundation of the world, & that is an infinite time (if a man may call that time) and a swallowing up of the understanding of man: and the eternity of time which shall be after the end of the world, and behold again an incomprehensible infiniteness of time. Now let us consider the continuance of the world between these two eternities. When it shall continue 7.8. or 9000. years, this should not be, in respect of these 2. eternities, 2. or 3. hours no not one hour: it should be yet less than one grain in respect of all the sand in the world: for, as touching the sand the number is finite, but in eternity there is no end. And here unto tendeth that which S. Peter saith, That before God, 1000 years are but as one day, and a day as 1000 years, forasmuch as before the eternity of God, there is no numbering of time; for there is no time at all. According unto this, Moses saith, that 1000 years before God are as a day that is past. If then 1000 years are but as a day past, or an hour, 60 or 80 years are but as one minute of time: so the longest continuance of our afflictions should be but one minute; & yet there are some that accomplish not that. And when do we begin this minute of tribulations? seeing that a great part of our life passeth before we suffer anything for the name of Christ; & yet there is some intermission in them, if it were but in sleeping. Then, we do now see how true it is, that S. Paul saith, that our afflictions pass in a moment. And what is that which this moment of afflictions bringeth us? An eternal weight (saith he) of glory, as we have largely shown here before. And in deed there shall be no end saith the Angel, of the kingdom of Christ. And we are the house of Jacob, over whom he shall reign for evermore. And S. Paul saith, that being risen again, and ascended into heaven, we shall be with Jesus Christ everlastingly. For whosoever believeth in him hath everlasting life. If God for the full measure of our felicity shall be all in all, when we have him in us, who is eternal and immortal, we shall enjoy a glorious immortality: as also S. Paul saith. That he hath

brought to light, life and immortality by the gospel. To be short, S. Matthew having set forth unto us the last judgment, saith, That the sheep that shall be at the right hand of Jesus Christ, shall go into everlasting life. Even so, when he promiseth us a perfect joy, heedeth, that it shall never be taken from us. Now, what comparison is there between one moment of affliction, & a glory, a life, and a joy, that shall last eternally and without end? Then when we think that our cross is long & heavy to bear, let us set before us the excellency and the eternity of the incomprehensible glory, whereunto we ascend by it, whereof also we feel the earnest penny & beginnings in our hearts, waiting for the full feeling, and thorough enjoying of this felicity, when we shall be lifted up, and put in possession of the kingdom of heaven. Now this reward is certain and assured to all those which shall suffer for the name of Jesus Christ. Such afflictions then are seals of the love of God towards us, & testimonies that he taketh us into the number of his best beloved children, and that he will make us indeed & everlastingly happy.

## **CHAPTER 11.**

Other fruits of the afflictions for the name of Jesus Christ.

Besides these, both excellent & eternal good things, which the sufferings for the name of Jesus Christ doth bring us, there is yet the honor that he doth us, to bring us forth to be witnesses of his truth. In regard whereof, although all they that preach the Gospel are called witnesses of Jesus Christ, yet this title of Martyr or witness, is after a more particular manner, and by excellency attributed unto such, as to maintain the truth of the doctrine of the Gospel, suffer constantly persecution, and especially unto death. So we read that S. Paul gave to S. Stephen this title of honor, calling him the Martyr of Jesus

Christ. And S. John maketh mention of Antipas, whom he calleth a faithful Martyr of Christ. And in the same book of the Revelation, he saith, that he saw the great whore drunk with the blood of the Saints, & with the blood of the Martyrs of Jesus. In like manner the apostle to the Hebrews, having recited how many faithful had been mocked, scourged, cut in pieces, stoned, & otherwise persecuted, he addeth, that in them we have as it were a cloud of martyrs or witnesses compassing us round about, and exhorting us to follow constantly their example. The Apostles did well understand and confess this honor, who after they had been publicly whipped for the name of Jesus Christ, they went before the council, rejoicing that they had this honor to suffer reproach for his name. And indeed when we endure persecution, to maintain the glory, the authority, and the truth of Christ, against Antichrist and his supposts, it is as if Jesus Christ should borrow our goods, our renown, our blood, our life, to serve for authentical seals, & most sure witnesses that cannot fail, of the right and the glory that appertaineth unto him. And what are we poor worms of the earth, that the eternal Son of God, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lord's, shall do us this honor, to put his glory (as it were) into our hands, to be the keepers and defenders of it, against those that would spoil him of it? And here let us consider the incomprehensible wisdom and goodness of God towards us. The most perfect offend God daily, and one only sin, be it never so little to our judgment, deserveth death, and everlasting condemnation, then it is yet more than the loss of our goods, & the corporal life. Now instead of exercising his just judgments upon us, he doth us this honor, that it which we endure (which is not the thousand part of that we have deserved) changeth the nature, and instead of being the punishment of sin, God imputeth it, as a most excellent service for the maintenance of his glory. But yet there is more. For what are we to suffer willingly? The love of riches, ambition, the pleasure of fleshly commodities, the affection toward father, mother, wife, children, & above all to this life, is so strong and vehement in us, that instead of renouncing them for Christ, we renounce Christ, and his Kingdom to entertain us.

And experience showeth this too much. We are also so very impatient and dainty when there is any question of suffering, that if we should but only snuff a candle with our fingers, we wet them with our spittle, that we might not feel the fire of that small snuff, which yet we throw from our fingers in all haste: and how then should we abandon our bodies to the death, entering quick into the fire to be there consumed, if God did not strengthen us supernaturally? How should we maintain his truth against the supposts of Antichrist, if the spirit of his father, the which he promised us, did not work mightily in us? Then when we see these vessels so frail and weak, to surmount the threatening's of kings, the apprehension of fire, the assaults of Antichrists supposts, and the temptations proceeding from father, mother, wife, and children; are not these so many testimonies of a wonderful and mighty grace and power of God, which fortifieth them, and maketh them victorious against Satan, the world and the flesh? I can do all things (saith Saint Paul) through Christ who strengtheneth me. And in another place, I rejoyce (saith he) in infirmities, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in anguishes for Christ. For when I am weak, then am I strong, even thorough the might and power of Christ, which shown itself, and was made perfect thorough his weakness, as he had said before. So then this constancy, this faith, this zeal, & other virtues which God communicateth (by his free goodness) to his elect, are manifest by persecutions, which otherwise should be hid. As in running the course, the agility or swiftness of the horse is known, the strength of a man in the combat, the savor of many drugs, in rubbing, or bruising of them, or casting them into the fire, as we see in the incense. The Stars (saith Saint Bernard) which appear not by day, shine in the night, so the virtue that is hid in prosperity, showeth itself in adversity. Now, this which we have said of the power of God, showing itself in the infirmity of his children to his glory, is seen also in the body of the Church, which ordinarily is so poor, so weak, so little holpen, at the hands of men, that if God did not sustain it, it should quickly be swallowed up. Then when we see it so mightily assailed, by the potentates of this world, conspiring her ruin, by so many forces and slights, and by so many heretics, doth not God in the guiding, delivering and preserving of it,

show that it is he himself, and he alone, which maintaineth and defendeth it? And that his power and wisdom is wonderful, in preserving it against so many enemies, and that his truth is certain, in accomplishing that, which he hath promised us, of being with his Church until the end of the world? And that it is he which is the stone cut out without hand, which hath broken, and doth still break the great image representing the empires, and kingdoms of the world: Which to show unto us more lively, oftentimes he so disposeth, that leaning upon the strength of men, she hath been thrown down, and being thrown down, God hath lift her up again without means, and beyond all hope of man, that all men may know, that the preservation of the Church is not the work of Man, but indeed the very work of God. As also the Lord declareth to Gideon this his intent, commanding him to abate his army. There is too many people with thee (saith the Lord) that I should give Madian into their hands, least peradventure Israel would glory in themselves against me, saying: My hand hath delivered me. See also howe it cometh to pass, that when the Devil thinketh quite to overthrow the Church by persecution, God quite contrary, hath advanced and increased it: Saint Luke having recited that the high Priests and the chief rulers of the Temple, & the Sadducees laying hands upon the Apostles, put them into prison, he addeth by and by, that many of those that heard the word, believed, and the number was about five thousand persons.

When Saint Stephan was put to death, the Church at Jerusalem was quite dispersed: but by the faithful dispersed, there were as many more new Churches set up. And it is as if God took, at the hands of his enemies, corn into his Garner to sow, whereof should follow a goodly and plentiful harvest. It is a fruit that Saint Paul noteth in his afflictions, saying, Brethren, I would have you to understand, that the things which happened to me, came to the advancement of the Gospel: so as my bands were made famous in Christ, through all the Judgment hall, and in all other places: And many of the brethren (made bold by my bands) durst speak of the word more freely. Justin in his communication with Triphon writeth that the same thing happened in his time. It may appear (saith he) every day, that we

which believe in Christ, cannot be astonished nor daunted of any, if they cut off our heads, if they crucify us, if they cast us unto wild beasts, or into fires, or unto any other torment; the more they torment us, so much the more increaseth the number of the Christians, neither more nor less, than as men cut their Vines, to make them the more fruitful. So the Devil is greatly beguiled. For in persecuting those which profess the Gospel, he thinketh to stop men from believing in Jesus Christ, to be saved. But it falleth out quite contrary. For the poor ignorant men seeing the constancy of the Martyrs: gather two pointes, first, that there is no hypocrisy in them, nor any fleshly passion which maketh them to follow this doctrine, which to maintain they utterly abandon all the commodities of the flesh, the honors of the world, and life itself. Next, they are induced to think, that the doctrine for which they suffer, is of God, seeing it is by no human, but by very divine power, that they suffer constantly and willingly so many reproaches, discommodities and cruelties. And so is this Sentence so famous verified: That the blood of the Martyrs is the seed of the Church. In like manner those that have already the knowledge of the doctrine, are confirmed as well to persevere in it, as to take courage and strength to suffer in like manner for the maintenance of it. For, seeing that God forsaketh not his servants in the conflict, but is with them, and in them, making them victorious: we take thereof assurance, that God will also overcome in us all temptations, threatening's and torments: And beholding them, thorough death to enter into life, and by the Cross to ascend into the Kingdom of Heaven, we feel our selves inflamed with desire to be their companions both in the troubles, and in the triumph of glory. The which thing maketh us to persevere constantly in the truth of the doctrine, which setteth (as it were) before our eyes this sovereign felicity, even the heavens open, and Jesus Christ stretching out his hand, to draw us up into the fellowship of his joy, and glory incomprehensible and eternal.

The people of the world cannot understand these so excellent fruits of the afflictions for the name of Christ, which we have set down here above, being therein like to the Philistines the companions of

Sampson, which could not comprehend this proposition that he made them; Out of the eater came meat, and out of the fierce came sweetness: But we, that are taught in the School of Christ by his Spirit, we understand and believe that as Sampson having vanquished the Lion, found in the body of it honey, so we having constantly overcome all the persecutions and troubles of this life, which are like unto fierce and cruel Lions, ready to devour us, we shall find this honey so excellent of the fruits of the cross of Christ, which shall make us blessed for evermore. Seeing then, that the persecutions and afflictions that we suffer, serve so abundantly and so many ways and manners to the glory of God, and the edification of our neighbors, & do also turn to so great good and honor unto us: let us conclude boldly, that we being so afflicted for the name of Jesus Christ, ought to be confirmed in the assurance that we are the members of the true Church, and that God counteth us for his well-beloved Children.

## **CHAPTER 12.**

An exhortation to persevere constantly in the truth of the Gospel in the time of persecution, not to fear death, to keep us from apostasy and dissimulation, to use the holy Ministry, to walk in the fear of God, and to pray to him.

By this that is said above, it appeareth that it is so far off, that we have any matter to complain or to be offended at our afflictions, that rather we have just argument to rejoice, & to comfort ourselves. And indeed, behold the counsel of God, who hath ordained that such should be the way which leadeth us to glory. When any run in a race, all run, but he only beareth away the prize, which shall run best. They then run uncertainly, but we run with assurance to obtain the

prize, although other run better than we: only let us run constantly unto the end. Likewise we strive, not in doubt as those that beat the air, but it is with the good fight of faith, assured of the victory, & by the victory of a crown, not of leaves that fade in three days, but incorruptible forever. And we be not as they that are mad or superstitious, suffering at all adventure without knowing wherefor. We know that it is for the truth, we know that this truth appertaineth unto us, we know that God hath created and lightened us, to maintain this truth and grace of God to his glory. How many Martyrs hath there been in old times past, that had not so much knowledge as we. If we go back, they shall be our Judges: their zeal and constancy shall condemn our careless knowledge, and unthankfulness unto God. God hath not called us to fight and to suffer, leaving us wandering without a captain: Jesus Christ himself is our head, Captain & guide, bearing his cross before us & crying, He that loveth me, let him follow me. Himself hath not refused this condition, but hath beaten & made the way, to draw & lift up his own into his kingdom. All the Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, and blessed servants and children of God are gone thither before us. The work itself of our salvation calleth us thither, and the glory of God requireth it. Ought we to dispute, whether we ought to obey? Should we doubt whether we will be fashioned like his Image, and wear the livery of the children of God? Let us boldly enter into this straight way, at the end whereof we shall find the gate of heaven. Let us give our necks to Jesus Christ to receive his yoke, and the honor of his order.

How many great Lords of the world travail all their life to come to this honor, to be Knights of the Order of any Prince? And having attained to it, they account themselves happy men. And what be the ensigns or such Orders? The one shall have a Fleece, the other a Garter: and the ensign of the Order of Christ, is prison, banishment, loss of goods, reproaches, beatings, death. This is the Order that Saint Paul received, and whereof he gloried, saying, I bear in my body the marks of Jesus Christ. Now although that a Fleece & a Garter, are in themselves vile or base things, yet are they honorable and to be desired in the world, because princes take them for the



ensign of their Order, acknowledging and calling them brethren that wear them. The ensign then that Christ the King of kings hath taken for his order, shall not it be honorable? Shall we not account ourselves happy to attain unto it. Let us follow cheerfully this glorious troupe marching before us with triumph; honored with this Order of the Prince of Glory, JESUS Christ.

Let us suffer ourselves to be guided by him, who is infinitely wiser than we, and loveth us better than we love our selves. And let us receive this favor of God, that so serving his glory, our glory may also be advanced. Let us not be troubled nor shaken with fear, when we see the persecutors come to the end of their enterprises, and the children of God afflicted. That is to them (saith Saint Paul) a manifest token of destruction, and to us of salvation. There is no greater curse (saith Saint Augustine) than the prosperity and felicity of the wicked, because it is as a strong wine to make them drunk in their iniquities, and to make a heap and treasure (as it were) of the wrath of God upon them. It seemeth to us that the world goeth to confusion and disorder, when the wicked triumph, and the children of God weep. But on the contrary, that is to us a manifest token of the just judgment of God, as Saint Paul saith, That we are also made worthy of the kingdom of God, for which also we suffer. For it is a just thing (saith he) with God, to render affliction to those that afflict us, and to us that are afflicted, deliverance; then, when the Lord Jesus shall show himself from heaven with the Angels of his power, and with the flame of fire to do vengeance upon those that did not know God, & obeyed not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, the which shall be punished with an everlasting punishment from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his Saints, & to be made wonderful among all the faithful. We are so impatient, so hot, or so foolish, that we consider nothing but the beginning of the works of our God: but we must join them together, and consider the accomplishment of them, as S. James teacheth us, Ye have heard the patience of Job, and have seen the end which the Lord made, and that the Lord is very merciful and full of pity. He that shall set himself to consider in his mind how poor

Joseph was handled, & sold of his brethren, & how (refusing to consent to the shameful and detestable request of his Mistress) he was cast into prison, and kept there 2 years, surly a man would take pity on him, as on a miserable person: but let us see the accomplishment of the work of God: let us consider him (by this means) exalted to the government of all the Kingdom of Egypt, & then we shall count him happy. Above all, if we behold Jesus Christ, mocked, scourged, crowned with thorns, crucified between 2 thieves, who would not be offended, that the Prince of glory & Savior of the world should so be handled? But let us behold him risen again, ascended into heaven, & sitting at the right hand of God, above all principalities & power, enjoining a glory incomprehensible, and we will admire and praise the work of God. So if we behold his members persecuted, banished, mocked, spoiled, imprisoned, entering into the fire: what (will we say) is this a father, which handleth his children in this sort? But if we join to the cross the glory, & the resurrection to the death: to be short, if we behold them in that estate, wherein we shall be, when Jesus Christ meeting us in his majesty & glory shall lift us up above all the heavens, into the house of God his father, to live with him everlastingly, and that the Cross shall be to us as a ladder to go up upon, to the enjoining of such a glory.

Who is he then among us that would not shout out for joy, seeing this wonderful work of God? Who is he that would not count himself happy? Who is he that would have been more daintily handled? Who is he that would not be ravished with the bounty, wisdom & love of God towards his children? He that never saw a harvest, seeing the plowman taking so much pain to till the earth, to spread it with dung, and after to cast fair wheat into the field so tilled, he would think that this man were mad, & that a child were to be whipt that should do such a thing: but seeing after the harvest that should come of it, he would change his mind, and acknowledge, that the husbandman had done an excellent work. Now, this is the time to till, to dung & to sow, the harvest shall follow. Let not us change the course of the seasons: neither yet let us separate them the one from the other, but let us join the time of the death with the day of the resurrection: and let us

assure our selves, as it is written in the Psalms, that having sowed with tears, we shall reap with joy. He that in old time had seen poor Lazarus full of sores at the gate of the rich man, & the rich man at the table in all delights and pleasure, he would not have chosen to be Lazarus, but the rich man. But if tarrying a while, he saw the soul of Lazarus carried straight, by the Angels, into heaven, and the rich man's soul go to the fire of hell, he would change his mind and would desire to be Lazarus. Let us then detest the glistening state of cursed riches, and let us count, the poor and afflicted condition of the Lazarusses of our time, waiting to be carried up into everlasting glory, happy. The wicked have nothing in heaven, nor we in the world. Blessed is the man (saith David) whom the Lord instructeth by the power of his spirit, and by the doctrine of his law, to have contentment and rest in the time of adversity, while the grave is digged for the ungodly, for an end of his felicity. Yea, if we were called to suffer death for the name of Jesus Christ. What other thing is this death, but (after a long conflict) the day of victory, the birth of a blessed soul after a great travail, the haven desired after so furious tempests, the end of a dangerous and troublesome voyage, the healing of all wounds and sickness, the deliverance from all fear and terror, the accomplishment of our sanctification, the gate of heaven, the entrance into paradise, the taking possession of the inheritance of the father, the day of our marriage with the Lamb, the enjoining of our desires? Who is it then among us, who feeling with S. Paul the bondage of sin, would not cry out with him: Alas wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? And feeling the good that death bringeth unto us, will not also say with him, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ. If death wherewith God threatened our first parents is a feeling of the wrath of God in the soul, & in the body because of sin. We may well say that death and life are two twins united and knit together, until the separation of the soul and the body: and this separation, which is commonly called death, is rather the deadly stroke of death, the body being then exempt from pain, and the soul from vice & corruption, waiting until the rest of death be swallowed up in victory at the day of the resurrection. It is then an abuse to call life a continual death, and to

call that, death, which is the end of a thousand deaths, and the beginning of the true life. It is then also against reason, that we have horror of that which we ought to desire, and desire the continuance of that, the only end whereof bringeth us to eternal felicity.

And to this end Saint Chrysostom saith very well, that it, which is called life and death, have deceivable visors. Life deformed, and accompanied with many miseries & calamities, hath a fair pleasant visor which maketh it to be desired: and Death, so fair, happy, and to be desired, hath one deformed and fearful. Let us put off then, saith he, these visors, & we will change our minds, when we shall find under the fair visor of life, nothing but matter of heaviness and displeasure, and under the soul & hideous visor of death, such a beauty and felicity, as we shall incontinently be taken with her love. So long as we live we have cruel enemies, which never cease making war with us, whom we can never vanquish, but by death. And indeed we cannot make the world to die in us except we die ourselves. Sin which is in us, liveth in us, and fighteth against us, until we, dying, it also die with us. And by death alone, the deadly assaults of Satan our chief enemy, die forthwith. But yet why should we fear it, which cannot come unto us, but by the will of him who is our heavenly father, yea and at such a time as he appointeth? As David said: Lord my times, that is to say, all the minutes of my life are in thy hands. There is no creature more enemy to man, nor more able to hurt, than the devil. And indeed he is called, the enemy, the murderer, and the roaring Lyon seeking whom he may devour. But the history of Job showeth plainly, that God holdeth him bridled, so as he can attempt nothing, nor go either forward or backward, more than God will permit him. And this which is more, he hath not power to enter so much as into the swine, without the leave of Christ. What is this then that we should fear men? Are not they also under the providence, power and government of our God? It is God, saith Hannah the mother of Samuel, who weigheth their enterprises, so as they cannot pass one ounce of the weight ordained of God. It is he that slayeth and maketh alive again: which bringeth down to the pit, and lifteth up again: he maketh poor, and maketh rich: he abaseth and exalteth.

To be short, It is he alone, as David saith, which doth whatsoever he will.

Now, we doubt not, but he will do that which he hath promised us, and we know that he hath promised us, yea and that he hath taken upon him to make us happy. If then, the doctrine of the providence of God importeth, that he hath not only ordained in his eternal counsel the end and issue of his work (which is his glory, and the salvation of his elect) but also the fit means, according to his infinite wisdom, and requisite for the execution and accomplishment of it: let us be assured that there is no creature that can let or alter his will, as Saint Paul saith: If God be for us, who shall be against us. Let us also be assured, that whatsoever happen unto us, is the way whereby he hath ordained to lead us to life and everlasting glory. Saint Paul, speaking of Jesus Christ, saith, that all creatures are of him, stand by him, and are for him. As also he saith in another place, that of him, and by him, and for him all things are. Wherefore then do we fear our enemies, seeing even this, that they are, is by the power and will of him, who is our head and savior; for as much as they can neither enterprise, nor consult, neither yet be alive one moment without the will of Christ? And besides this, seeing their life and being, is for him, and for his service, that they might be to his members, as fire to purify them, a rod to correct them, medicines to heal them, a bridge for them to pass upon over the desert of this world, into the land of promise, ladders to help them to ascend into heaven, instruments to glorify them, & as a knife that cutteth the cords by which we are held in the earth, & hindered to go unto God, & to be where Jesus Christ our head is? Also, what threatening can the most mighty of the world threaten us with more horrible, to make us turn from the service of God, than those wherewith God threateneth all those that turn away from him? Fear not, saith Jesus Christ, those that can kill the body (and yet so, and when God will, and the body, which within a very little after must needs die) and can do nothing more: but fear him, who after he hath killed the body, hath power to throw both soul and body into everlasting hell fire: him I say unto you, fear indeed. In like manner, what promises can the world make us greater, or more

certain, to draw us unto it, than those which our God hath made us, to keep us in his service, and in his house, promising us everlasting life? Now, the Church is his house, and this good God hath called you (my brethren) thither, and hath received you. He hath nourished you in it sometime. He hath there given you the seal of your adoption. He hath begun to clothe you with the livery of his children, and hath fashioned you like to the image of Jesus Christ.

A great part of your way is past. In this your travail of childhood you have passed many torments. If the greatest torments come, the happy deliverance approacheth. He that shall continue unto the end, shall be saved. They that are revolted, and do revolt, make you to feel in their unhappiness, how happy you are, to be the children of God elected to eternal life. For it is upon this election, and so, upon the good pleasure of God, that your perseverance doth depend. Acknowledge in it both his infinite mercy, supporting you, and pardoning you daily so many faults and sins, and also his incomprehensible goodness leading you, as it were by the hand, to the enjoining of eternal life. Abhor you and detest that miserable, yea cursed and unhappy state of these Apostates, that ye may also hate and detest the ambition and the pride, the evil conscience, the despising and abuse of the gifts of God, the love of the world and those other vices, which threw them headlong into ruin. And on the contrary, love, search and follow all that which God hath ordained to nourish godliness, faith, charity, humility in us, and other gifts and graces which proceed from the election, and are means ordained by the providence of God, to guide us to the happiness promised to those which shall continue unto the end. Keep yourselves hereafter from these false Nicodemites, who to avoid the cross, will abandon (by a sacrilege intolerable) their bodies to idolatry, and so consequently to the devil, in reserving, as they say, their hearts unto God. Will the most careless husband among them, content himself, if his wife, giving over her body to whoredom, should say unto him, that she keepeth nevertheless her heart unto him? Ye are not your own, saith S. Paul, ye are bought with a price: Then glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which both appertain unto God. Again,

cleanse yourselves from all filthiness both of body and spirit, finishing your sanctification in the fear of God. Persevere constantly in the Church, which is your mother, that you may be the heirs of the father. It sufficeth not to keep your souls from poison, ye must nourish them, that they may live. Rather than we will suffer our bodies to die of hunger, we will sell all to get bread: and we would run through the fire in such a case to save it. At the least, let us follow those that in the time of famine, forsake their Countries to find food. The soul is more precious than the body. And therefore must we labor more to have the bread abiding unto eternal life, than for it that perisheth. Always think with yourselves our souls must live, and it is to tempt God to desire to live without food. Therefore we must seek food, that we may live.

Now, true it is, that to read and meditate the word of God in the house, and to keep there the family, is a holy exercise, and very profitable for the nurture of the soul. It is commanded of God, and such as are negligent in this duty, show that they have no care of the life of their souls: yet this doth not suffice. We must confess the name of God, and call upon him in the assembly: We must hear the sermons, and communicate at the holy Sacraments: we must join and keep our selves united with the Church, which is the pillar and sure ground of truth, and the mother of the children of God. This only title of mother given to the Church, teacheth us, that there is no entrance into the life that lasteth ever, except we be conceived in the womb of this mother, that she bear us, and bring us forth, & give us suck of her breasts: finally, except she hold and keep us under her conduct and government, until (being unclothed of this mortal flesh) we be made like unto the Angels. In ancient time the faithful were called disciples. For the Church is also called the school of Christians, wherein (according to the infirmity that is in us) we must be the disciples of Christ all the days of our life. This Church is also often signified by a Temple: and the holy ministry is ordained of God to build it. Therefore whosoever despiseth it, cannot be built in this Temple to be there a living stone. This Church is the house of God: the faithful, his household servants & children. Therefore whosoever

doth not enter, and abide in the Church, cannot call himself the child or household servant of God. The preaching of the Gospel is the ministry of the holy ghost, of life & of glory: whosoever refuseth to hear it, hath not the spirit of Christ, and consequently pertaineth not unto him, & so abideth in death and everlasting shame. See how ye must think in yourselves of the benefit, utility, yea and the necessity of the holy ministry, to say with David: O Lord of hosts how amiable are thy tabernacles? My soul desireth greatly, yea and longeth after the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God. Blessed are they which dwell in thy house, and praise thee continually.

Let the taste and need of this spiritual food cause those that are now deprived of it, to say with David: Like as the Hart desireth the water brooks, so longeth my soul after thee O God: My soul is a thirst for God, yea even for the living God, saying: Alas when shall I come to appear before the presence of God? When we shall be deprived of our country, wife, husband, traffic, goods, dignities, and other things pleasant to the flesh: let all these be nothing to us: but let us say with David, I have asked one thing of the Lord, which I will still require, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and carefully to visit his temple. If David, a man excellent in faith and all virtue, a prophet, and as an Angel amongst men, confesseth so roundly, and so often, the need that himself had to be in the Temple of the Lord, feeling himself as it were ravished with a most fervent desire of this benefit, what ought we to feel in ourselves, who are yet so ignorant, so weak, so corrupt, in the midst of so many dangers? Say then from the heart with the same David: O Lord I love the habitation of thy house, & the place where thine honor dwelleth: And that good God and almighty father, who hath care to nourish our bodies, yea and provideth for the nourishment of the little birds, will without doubt hear your desire, and will provide for the nourishment of your souls.

Moreover, (accomplishing his promise made by Isaiah, of pouring out of waters upon the dry ground) he will make you to grow as the



grass, and as the willows by the river sides, for the joy and comfort whereof, one shall say, I am the Lord's, another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, another shall subscribe with his hand, I am the Lord's, and shall call himself by the name of Israel. But understand farther, that the Gospel whereof ye make profession, is a doctrine not to fly about in the understanding, but to take seat in the heart; not in the tongue to talk only, but in the life and holy works. Then be ye doers of the word, & not only hearers deceiving yourselves. God hath adopted you for his children, but on this condition, that the image of Christ may shine in you. God hath chosen and called you to be his Temples, and to dwell in you by his holy spirit: Remember ye that the temple of God is holy, and that it is not lawful to defile it, nor to put holy things to profane uses. God hath created you for his glory, and Christ hath redeemed you, that ye might be his: Remember then that you must be consecrated and dedicated unto God, neither to think, say nor do anything but to his glory. Ye are dead to sin, but living to God by Jesus Christ: Apply not then your members to be instruments of iniquity to sin, but apply you unto God, as being of dead, made alive, and your members to be instruments of righteousness to God. Ye are made free from sin by Christ, but it is to be servants to righteousness. Remember that which S. Paul saith, that if ye live according to the flesh ye shall die: but if by the spirit ye mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live: they that are of Christ, have crucified the flesh with the concupiscence's of it. If ye live in the spirit, walk also in the spirit. As out of fire proceedeth inseparably heat and brightness: in like manner if ye have received Christ for justification, ye must have him also for sanctification. If ye have hope to see Christ as he is, purify yourselves as he is pure, following peace with all men, and holiness, without which none shall see God. Remember what the faithful soul saith, I have washed my feet, how shall I file them again.

The band between God and us is holiness, inasmuch as it appertaineth to his glory, that he which is holy, have no acquaintance with iniquity and uncleanness. Be ye then holy, for I am holy saith the Lord. What participation is there, saith Saint Paul, of righteousness with unrighteousness? what fellowship hath light with

darkness? what agreement hath Christ with Belial, or what part hath the believing with the infidel? or what agreement hath the Temple of God with Idols? For ye are the Temple of the living God; wherefore depart from amongst them, and separate yourselves, saith the Lord, and touch not any unclean thing. The end of our regeneration is, that there may appear in our life, a holy melody and consent between the righteousness of God and our obedience. Ye have understood here before, that the desire of the heart to consecrate yourselves to God, is a mark of your election and adoption. But see ye that this desire may show itself by the works of godliness and charity. If you make profession that ye know Christ: know ye according to the doctrine of S. Paul, that ye have not known him as ye ought, if ye mortify not the old man, and put on the new, walking in righteousness and true holiness. God hath drawn you out of the power of darkness, and hath transported you into the kingdom of his beloved Son. Walk ye then, as the children of light: Renounce this cursed bondage of Satan: Shew that ye are faithful and not traitors to Jesus Christ: Be ye without reproach and single hearted. The children, I say, of God unreprouvable in the midst of this crooked and perverse nation. Among whom ye shine as lights in the world, which bear before you the word of life. Shew yourselves to feel the wholesome grace of God, which teacheth you to renounce all infidelity and worldly lusts, to live soberly, justly, and godly. Think in yourselves, that the friendship of the world is enmity to God. And that ye cannot be friends to the world, but that ye must needs be enemies to God. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them, so as your holy conversation may serve for a reproof and check to such as walk disorderly. Remember what God said to man, The fear of the Lord is true wisdom, & to depart from evil is understanding. Let the favor of God be our treasure: walk, as it were, before him, as he commanded Abraham. Think that ye are not your own, to live for yourselves according to your own wisdom & pleasure, but that ye appertain unto God, that ye might live unto him, and according to his wisdom and will revealed unto us in his word. That man hath much profited, who knowing that he is not his own, hath taken away from himself, and his own reason all lordship & dominion, to resign it to

God, & to suffer himself quietly to be guided according to his pleasure.

There is no vice more common, more pernicious, or more hard to cure than the love of ourselves: and therefore there is no lesson more necessary than it, which Jesus Christ taught his apostles: That to be of the number of his disciples, we must renounce ourselves. Renouncing then yourselves, hate ye that which is evil, and cleave unto that which is good, inclined by brotherly charity to love one another. Procure things that are good, not only before God, but also before men. If it be possible, so much as in you lieth, have peace with all men. Be ye as the elect of God, holy and beloved, clad with the bowels of compassion, of kindness, of humility, of meekness, of longsuffering, forbearing one another: and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel with another, even as Christ hath forgiven you Love one another, as God hath loved you. For herein is the difference between the children of God, and the children of the devil, & wherein ye may be known to be the true disciples of Christ. Ye are all members of one body, let there be no division or parts-taking among you, but feel the afflictions of those that weep, to weep with them, and to comfort them, & rejoice with those that rejoice, to praise God with them. If ye be the Citizens of the City Jerusalem, & will have a sure dwelling in it, walk in integrity, labor to deal justly, speak the truth from your hearts, keep you from slandering, covetousness, and all other corruption. Acknowledge in all men the image of God, whereunto you owe honor & love: and in your brethren acknowledge the renewing of this image, and the brotherly conjunction in Christ, in doing good to all men, love, honor, and help especially, those that are of the household of faith. Ye are debtors to your neighbors of all that ye have, or are able to do, to be disposers of it with condition, that ye render to God an account. Honor the graces of God in your brethren, and cover their infirmities by charity, be quick to hear, but slow to speak, and slow to wrath. For the wrath of man worketh not that which is righteous in the sight of God. Do not desire, hope, or imagine any other means to prosper by, that by the blessing of God. And do not look, that he should advance by the aid

of his blessing, that which he hath accursed by his mouth. So go forward in the amendment of your lives, that this day may pass yesterday. Seal to the purity of the doctrine, with the holiness of your life, that the ignorant seeing your blameless conversation, & esteeming you by your good works, may glorify God, and embrace the gospel with you, when it shall please God to call them. Have mind of that great curse pronounced by the high Judge, against such as offend any of the very least. Furthermore, rejoice in the Lord, endeavor to be perfect, be comforted, be of one consent, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you. But as it is God which worketh in us both to will, & in work to accomplish according to his good pleasure. So above all things employ yourselves to pray fervently & continually. Prayer (saith Chrysostom) is the soul of our souls. For it also is the soul which quickeneth all the actions of the children of God. It was the lifting up of Moses hands to heaven, which strengthened Joshua & his army, & gave him victory over the Amalekites.

And in deed, without the grace of God, the which we obtain by prayer, all that we do is but vanity. Faith is the key that openeth the coffers of the treasures of our God. Prayer is the hand to draw it out to enrich our selves. Prayer lifteth up our hearts from earth to heaven; it reneweth the memory of the promises of God to confirm us; it assureth us against all that we can fear, it obtaineth all that we can desire. It giveth rest and contentment to our souls. It keepeth and strengtheneth the fear to offend God. It increaseth the desire to go unto him, whom in praying we feel to be the spring and heap of all good things. It engendereth in us a steadfast despising of the world, and renouncing of the flesh: it representeth unto us the heavenly and everlasting felicity, that we may aspire to the enjoining of them. There is nothing to be more desired, than to be conversant with him, without whom we cannot be happy. But he that will always be with God, he must always either pray or read. For when we pray we talk with God: and when we read, God talketh with us. The more we are exercised in prayer to God, the more we increase in godliness. Therefore also we may not be weary or faint-hearted in prayer,

although the Lord defer to make us feel the fruit of our prayers, For we have a promise of him that cannot lie, that whatsoever we ask of God in the name of Jesus Christ, it shall be given us. If he defer, for some time, to make us feel the fruit of our prayers, it is for our greater benefit. Let us continue still and weight, knowing assuredly, that he, who according to his fatherly love & bounty, desireth our good, can (according to his infinite power) give that which we ask of him, and according to his truth will hear us: he also according to his wisdom knoweth the fittest time, as is before said, and the means most apt to make us feel the fruit of our prayers. When we ask of God (saith S. Bernard) even those things that concern this present life: our prayers are not so soon gone out of our mouth, but they are written in his book: and we ought (saith he) to be assured, that he will either give the thing it self which we have asked, or other things which he knoweth to be more profitable for us.

To conclude, Prayer is the most mighty and fruitful work of charity, seeing by it we help our neighbors present & absent, known and unknown, great and little, and that both with spiritual and corporal good things, drawing by our prayers the blessing of God upon them. And in this confidence my very dear and worshipful Brethren, I will continue in this duty and office of charity, earnestly to pray to God for you, and particularly I will water with my prayers to God this Exhortation, which I have directed unto you, beseeching him with all my heart, that being comforted and strengthened thereby, in the doctrine of the truth, which ye have received, ye may continue constantly in it, sealing it by the works of godliness and charity, comforting yourselves in the Lord, in that ye are his well-beloved Children in Jesus Christ: and surmounting all temptations and assaults, to the end, that by the power of the holy Ghost departing Conquerors out of all conflicts, ye may attain at the last, to the crown of glory, which God hath prepared to all his children, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Now the God of peace sanctify you throughout, and preserve your whole spirit, and soul, and body blameless, until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He that hath called you is faithful, who also will do it. I also beseech you (my brethren) to employ

yourselves more and more in fervent and continual prayers, for the preservation, prosperity and advancement of his Church, so mightily assailed on all sides; and particularly to be mindful of me in your prayers, that it may please the Father of light, from whence all good gifts do come, to continue his mercies towards me, and to guide me always with his holy spirit, with the increase of his gifts and graces to accomplish the rest of my life, serving faithful and holily to his glory, & the advancement of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

## **CHAPTER 13.**

Holy meditations and prayers.

O Lord God almighty, all good and all wise, we are confounded before thy holy majesty, not (O Lord) for the troubles and extreme calamities wherewith we are oppressed in these days full of tribulations, anguishes and tears: but forasmuch as we have offended thee, & for as much as our sins, our ingratitude, & rebellions have kindled this wrath against us: and chiefly forasmuch as the wicked and infidels, take occasion by thy just judgments & corrections to blaspheme thy holy name. Alas Lord, we yield ourselves guilty before thee, confessing that we are inexcusable, and unworthy to be named thy children: yea, we are worthy to be rejected of thee, we are worthy of hell, & to be creatures accursed forever. For (O our good God) when we were the children of wrath, thine enemies, abandoned to all evil, thou hadst pity upon us poor and abominable sinners. Thou hast cast the eyes of thy favor upon us. Thou hast given thy well-beloved Son Jesus Christ to the shameful and cursed death of the cross for us. Thou hast given us thy holy gospel, that blessed and joyful tidings of our salvation: Thou hast accompanied it with thy spirit to lighten us, to draw us unto thee, to make us partakers of the

treasures of thy Kingdom & of eternal life. Thou hast stretched out thy hand from heaven to the depth of hell, to pull us back, and to make us thy happy children. Thou hast done according to the good pleasure of thy will, inasmuch as thou showest mercy on whom thou wilt show mercy. Alas Lord, ought not we to acknowledge the day of thy visitation, and the time of salvation? Ought not we to feel the abundant riches of thy incomprehensible grace towards us, to love, serve, praise, and adore thee? to renounce ourselves, the world and the flesh, and all that which is contrary to thy glory: yea to abhor all that doth displease thee? to walk as the children of light, and to consecrate ourselves unto thee, to bring forth fruits worthy of thy Gospel, and becoming the Children of such a Father: to be as bright lights in this dark world, to give light to the poor ignorant ones, to draw them with us into the way of salvation. But alas, O Lord our God, we (quite contrary) having brought into thy Church the world and the flesh, have kept in our selves these enemies of thy glory, these plagues of our souls, & have served them. Our infidelity & our flesh have made us love the earth more than the heaven, the world more than thy kingdom, the filthiness and dust of vain riches, more than the treasures of heavenly and eternal good things, the smoke of human honors, more than the glorious estate to be thy children, & brethren of thy son Jesus Christ. Covetousness the root of all evil, hath hardened our hearts to despise thy poor ones, even Jesus Christ in his members. We have slandered thy holy Gospel by frauds, deceits, & robbing's: occupying our traffic and doing our affairs, as people having no knowledge of thee. The air in the Cities where thy word hath been preached, hath been stinking & infected, with the whoredoms, adulteries, and other infamous acts that there have been committed. Gluttony & drunkenness have made brutish those, that for thy blessings and bounty ought to have praised thee. Every man thinking only how to profit & advance himself in this world, to the despising of thy holy service, & the building of thy Church. The profession of thy holy religion hath served many, but for the cloak of their iniquities. We have put out trust in the arm of flesh, & in broken reeds, seeking comfort for thy Church of the enemies of it, in forsaking the fountain of living waters, and the almighty. Crimes,

trespasses, blasphemies and iniquities have been winked at & supported, in defiling the seat of thy justice, without punishment: thy threatening's & promises rejected as vanities, the holy Ministry of thy Word despised, the chastisements which thou hast exercised on our brethren neglected, without thinking what our selves have deserved. We have not felt sorrow for the afflictions of thy children, to mourn with them, and to fear thy judgments. And what shall we say more, ô Lord? Our iniquities are as mountains, our ingratitude and rebellions, as the great deep, our whole life, before thee, being nothing else but a continual sin and despising of thy holy Majesty. If they who never heard speak of thy son Jesus Christ, and that have not known thy will, are justly punished in thy wrath; what judgment, what condemnation, what hells and curses have we deserved, having so villainously, so long, so obstinately, despised thy holy instructions, thy promises, thy threatening's, and the examples of thy judgments, which thou hast exercised before our eyes.

Also the voice of our ingratitude is ascended before thee: our iniquities have, and do cry vengeance against us. These are the procurers and advocates of thy justice, soliciting these judgments against us. Our sins have strengthened our enemies, & have made them conquerors over us. We have sown iniquity, and we have reaped afflictions: as thou seest, O Lord our God, that thy children are banished, spoiled, and impoverished, that they are cruelly dealt withal, trodden under foot, and exposed to the laughter of thine enemies. Our persecutors make a scorn of those, over whom thy name is called on, & they make their boast of the evil that they do: They scatter thy flocks: They throw down the scepter of thy son Jesus Christ: They deprive thy children of the pasture of thy word. Those temples (O Lord) those temples where not long since, thy praises did sound, in which thy holy Gospel was preached, the Sacraments purely ministered, thy name religiously called on: These temples, O Lord, are now defiled with Idols and idolatry, the abominable Mass is established again, false tales and lies are preached. These temples where thy people assembled in so great number to praise thee, and to behold thy loving countenance, are now filled with people



blaspheming thy holy name, and treading under their feet the blood and glory of thy son Jesus Christ. This youth of orphans, fondling's, and others that went to school, being brought up in the knowledge of thee, & nourished in thy fear, is now given up to the enemies of thy truth, to be instructed in the damnable doctrine and service of Antichrist. O good God, our sun is turned into darkness, the Moon into blood, our health into sickness, our life into death: And yet, if thou shouldest punish us yet more rigorously, than hitherto thou hast done, & that for one stripe we should receive an hundred. If thou shouldest transport the kingdom of thy son from us, to the Turks, and the Jews: If thou shouldest send such a famine of thy word, as running through the forests to have some refreshing, and finding none, our souls should faint: Yea Lord, if thou shouldest throw us down into hell: we confess that it were very right, and yield ourselves guilty, acknowledging that we have well deserved it. Notwithstanding, O good God and father, there is mercy with thee, yea thy mercies are infinite to swallow up the multitude and grievousness of our sins.

Thou art a God gracious & pitiful, slow unto wrath, abounding in mercy and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, pardoning iniquity, transgression & sin. Thou hast said that thou wilt not the death of a sinner, but rather that he turn and live. Convert us then, O Lord, that we may be converted, and that we may live before thee. We are poor sinners, we confess it: but yet thy son Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Behold us then, O Lord, not in our selves (for we are unworthy of thy grace) but behold us in the face of thy son Jesus Christ, and for his sake, be at tone with us, and be merciful and favorable unto us: that in the multitude of our sins the greatness of thy grace may shine: if thou regard our iniquities, who is he that is able to stand before thee? We have been unfaithful, but thou remainest still faithful. Thou canst not renounce thy mercy and goodness: we have forsaken thee, but thou hast promised not to forsake us. We have forgotten thee, but thou hast said, that though a mother should forget her child, yet wouldst not thou forget us. Thou hast made a covenant with us, wherein thou hast promised to pardon

our sins, and to remember our iniquities no more. Thou hast promised, that though our sins were as red as scarlet, thou wouldest make them as white as wool: if they were as red as crimson, that they should be made as white as snow. We are heavy laden, and labor with our iniquities. But Jesus Christ hath called us to him, and hath promised to refresh us. Have pity then on us, O Lord, have pity upon us. Let our miseries move the bowels of thy mercy. Forgive us (O our God) forgive us for thine own sake, for the glory of thy name, and for thy son Jesus Christ's sake: Impute unto us the goodness that is in him, that the evil that is in us may not be imputed. Thou hast punished the just, that thou mightest pardon the wicked: Accept thou the merits of his death and passion, for satisfaction of all that is in us, worthy of thy wrath and indignation: and make us to feel the fruits of our reconciliation with thee. If thou wilt afflict our bodies, have yet pity of our souls. If thou wilt impoverish us on the earth, deprive us not yet of the riches of heaven. If thou wilt take away the bread of our bodies, yet leave us the spiritual bread of our souls. Though we be in reproach among our enemies, yet let not thy name be blasphemed. Though we be accursed of the world, yet let us be blessed of thee. Though the world hate us, yet let thy love abide upon us.

O Lord we are thine, forsake us not. Thou hast said, I am the Eternal, this is my name, I will not give my glory unto Images, nor my praise unto another. For thine own sake then, even for thine own sake have mercy upon us. For why shall thy name be blasphemed for our sakes? Not unto us Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory and honor, in showing forth the riches of thy graces, of thy truth, and of thy might. Thou art the God of glory, sanctify thy name, in drawing light out of our darkness, and lift out of death, making perfect thy power in our infirmity, and thy great grace in our unworthiness, to thy praise and glory. Hear the blasphemies of thine enemies, boasting themselves in their counsels and their forces, triumphing and rejoicing in our confusion: as if we were not thy people, thy children, thy Church: as if we were cast off of thee: as if thou were not able to help or keep us. Nevertheless, thou art our

creator, and we are the work of thy hands: Thou art our shepherd, we are thy flock: Thou art our father, we are thy children: Thou art our God, we are thine inheritance: Thou art our redeemer, we are the people whom thou hast bought. It is thou also (O our God) who by thy word alone, hast created the heaven and the earth, the sea and all that is in them: it is by thee that all things live, be, and have their moving: it is of thee, by thee and for thee, that all things are. It is thou which doest whatsoever thou wilt. And there is neither counsel, wisdom, nor strength against thee. Repress then, O Lord, the rage and fury of thine enemies, break their forces, dissipate their counsels, confound them in the bold enterprises which they have taken in hand against thee, and thy son Jesus Christ. Maintain the rest of thy flock, which thou hast kept until this day. Establish again the Churches that are ruined and dispersed. Suffer not the memory of thy name to be abolished from the earth: rather let thy word sound, and thy Gospel be preached, where it hath not yet been heard, to gather thine elect unto thee, and to magnify thy name: And that so we may see it flourish more & more, and the kingdom of thy son Jesus Christ our Lord to be advanced forever more. Amen.

## **THE NECESSITY AND BENEFIT OF AFFLICTION.**

Great trouble and vexation

the righteous shall sustains

By God's determination,

whilst here they do remain:

Which grievous is and irksome both

for flesh and blood to bear.

Because by nature we are loath

to want our pleasure here;

And eke because our enemy

that ancient deadly foe

Satan, with cruel tyranny

the worker of our woe,

Doth still provoke the wicked sort

in sin which do delight,

To please themselves & make great sport,

to vex us with despite.

Yet do the righteous by the cross

more blessed things obtain,

Than any way can be the loss,

the dolor, or the pain.

The loss is that, which in few days

would pass, fade and decay

Even of itself: the gain always

can no man take away.

All earthly estimation

the cross may clean deface,

But heavenly consolation

the soul doth then embrace.

Afflictions worldly pleasures will

abandon out of mind:

Then is the soul more earnest still

the joys of heaven to find.

These worldly riches, goods and wealth,

by troubles may depart:

Then inward joys and saving health

may wholly rule the heart.

In trouble friends do start aside,

as clouds do with the wind:

But God's assistance doth abide

to cheer the troubled mind.

If we should feel these losses all,

at once, by sudden change:

We may not be dismayed withal,

though it seem very strange.

Job lost his friends, he lost his wealth,

and comfort of his wife:

He lost his children and his health,

yea, all but wretched life.

When all was gone, the Lord above

did still with him remain,

With mercy, kindness and with love

asswaging all his pain:

Teaching him by experience,

that all things fickle be

(Which subject are to human sense)

and yield all misery.

But godliness within the heart

remaineth ever sure.

In wealth and woe, it is her part,

true comfort to procure.

Affliction turn'th these worldly joys

to greater pain and woe,

Because the love was linck'd with toys:

religion is not so.

For when man's heart doth most delight

in pleasure, wealth, and pride:

Religion then will take her flight,

she may not there abide.

Where by our souls in woeful plight

continually remain:

Yet have not we the grace or might

from such lusts to refrain.

In which estate most willingly

(though tending right to hell)

We count our chief felicity,

and love therein to dwell.

Therefore the Lord which is above,

regarding us below

With mercy, pity, grace and love,

that always from him flow,

Doth mix with grief these earthly things

wherein we do delight:

Which to our souls all sorrow brings,

or else removeth them quite.

Then doth the holy word of God

most comfortable seem:

Which we (before we felt the rod)

mere folly did esteem.

The world which erst most pleasant was

now loathsome seem'th to be:

It doth appear (as in a glass)

all fraught with misery.

Then fear we hell, then fly we sin,

then seek we heaven the more:

To use good means we then begin,

which we despised before.

Then can we pray, then can we call

to God for strength and grace:

Which things before might not at all

with us have any place.

Then hear we with attentiveness,

then read we with all care:

Then pray we with great ferventness,

no travail then we spare.

Then shall we see, feel and confess



the state wherein we dwelt,

To be nothing but wretchedness:

though worldly joys we felt.

Because the soul by godliness

more comfort doth receive

In one day, than by worldliness,

forever it can have.

Then we with David shall confess,

that God from heaven above

(By humbling us) doth well express

his mercy and his love.

For ere we felt the scourging rod,

we er'de and went astray:

But now we keep the law of God,

and wait thereon always.

Then for religion love the cross,

though it do bring some pain:

The joy is great, small is the loss,

but infinite the gain.

FINIS.

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