

THE  
RULE AND EXERCISES

OF

Holy Dying

✓  
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## CHAPTER II

### THE PRACTICE OF PREPARATION FOR A HOLY AND BLESSED DEATH

#### § I. THREE PRECEPTS PREPARATORY TO A HOLY DEATH, TO BE PRACTISED IN OUR WHOLE LIFE

I. **H**E that would die well must always look for death, every day knocking at the gates of the grave; and then the gates of the grave shall never prevail against him to do him mischief. This was the advice of all the wise and good men of the world, who, especially in the days and periods of their joy and festival egressions, chose to throw some ashes into their chalices, some sober remembrances of their fatal period. Such was the black shirt of Saladin; the tombstone presented to the Emperor of Constantinople on his coronation-day; the Bishop of Rome's two reeds with flax and a wax-taper;

the Egyptian skeleton served up at feasts; and Trimalcion's banquet in Petronius, in which was brought in the image of a dead man's bones of silver, with spondyles exactly returning to every of the guests, and saying to every one, that you and you must die, and look not one upon another, for every one is equally concerned in this sad representment. These in fantastic semblances declare a severe counsel and useful meditation; and it is not easy for a man to be gay in his imagination, or to be drunk with joy or wine, pride or revenge, who considers sadly that he must, ere long, dwell in a house of darkness

and dishonour, and his body must be the inheritance of worms, and his soul must be what he pleases, even as a man makes it here by his living good or bad. I have read of a young hermit who, being passionately in love with a young lady, could not, by all the arts of religion and mortification, suppress the trouble of that fancy, till at last, being told that she was dead, and had been buried about fourteen days, he went secretly to her vault, and with the skirt of his mantle wiped the moisture from the carcase, and still at the return of his temptation laid it before him, saying, Behold this is the beauty of the woman thou didst so much desire: and so the man found his cure. And if we make death as present to us, our own death, dwelling and dressed in all its pomp of fancy and proper circumstances—if any thing will quench the heat of lust, or the desires of money, or the greedy passionate affections of this world, this must do it. But withal, the frequent use of this meditation, by curing our present inordinations, will make death safe and friendly, and by its very

custom will make, that the king of terrors shall come to us without his affrighting dresses; and that we shall sit down in the grave as we compose ourselves to sleep and do the duties of nature and choice. The old people that lived near the Riphæan mountains were taught to converse with death, and to handle it on all sides, and to discourse of it as of a thing that will certainly come, and ought so to do. Thence their minds and resolutions became capable of death, and they thought it a dishonourable thing with greediness to keep a life that must go from us, to lay aside its thorns, and to return again circled with a glory and a diadem.

2. "He that would die well must, all the days of his life, lay up against the day of death," not only by the general provisions of holiness and a pious life indefinitely, but provisions proper to the necessities of that great day of expense, in which a man is to throw his last cast for an eternity of joys or sorrows, ever remembering, that this alone well performed is not enough to pass us into paradise, but that alone, done foolishly, is

enough to send us to hell, and the want of either a holy life or death makes a man to fall short of the mighty price of our high calling. In order to this rule we are to consider what special graces we shall then need to exercise, and by the proper arts of the spirit, by a heap of proportioned arguments, by prayers and a great treasure of devotion laid up in heaven, provide beforehand a reserve of strength and mercy. Men in the course of their lives walk lazily and carelessly, as if they had both their feet in one shoe; and when they are passively revolved to the time of their dissolution, they have no mercies in store, no patience, no faith, no charity to God or despite of the world, being without gust or appetite for the land of their inheritance, which Christ with so much pain and blood had purchased for them. When we come to die indeed, we shall be very much put to it to stand firm upon the two feet of a Christian, faith and patience. When we ourselves are to use the articles, to turn our former discourses into present practice, and to feel what we never felt before, we

shall find it to be quite another thing to be willing presently to quit this life and all our present possessions for the hopes of a thing which we were never suffered to see, and such a thing of which we may fail so many ways, and of which, if we fail any way, we are miserable for ever. Then we shall find how much we have need to have secured the Spirit of God and the grace of faith, by an habitual, perfect, unmoveable resolution. The same also is the case of patience, which will be assaulted with sharp pains, disturbed fancies, great fears, want of a present mind, natural weaknesses, frauds of the devil, and a thousand accidents and imperfections. It concerns us therefore highly, in the whole course of our lives, not only to accustom ourselves to a patient suffering of injuries and affronts, of persecutions and losses, of cross accidents and unnecessary circumstances; but also, by representing death as present to us, to consider with what arguments then to fortify our patience, and by assiduous and fervent prayer to God all our life long to call upon



Him to give us patience and great assistances, a strong faith and a confirmed hope, the Spirit of God and His holy angels assistants at that time, to resist and to subdue the devil's temptations and assaults; and so to fortify our heart, that it break not into intolerable sorrows and impatience, and end in wretchedness and infidelity. But this is to be the work of our life, and not to be done at once; but, as God gives us time, by succession, by parts and little periods. For it is very remarkable, that God who giveth plenteously to all creatures, He hath scattered the firmament with stars, as a man sows corn in his fields, in a multitude bigger than the capacities of human order; He hath made so much variety of creatures, and gives us great choice of meats and drinks, although any one of both kinds would have served our needs, and so in all instances of nature; yet in the distribution of our time, God seems to be straight-handed, and gives it to us, not as nature gives us rivers, enough to drown us, but drop by drop, minute after minute, so that we never can have two minutes

together, but He takes away one when He gives us another. This should teach us to value our time, since God so values it, and, by His so small distribution of it, tells us it is the most precious thing we have. Since, therefore, in the day of our death we can have still but the same little portion of this precious time, let us in every minute of our life, I mean in every discernible portion, lay up such a stock of reason and good works, that they may convey a value to the imperfect and shorter actions of our deathbed, while God rewards the piety of our lives by His gracious acceptance and benediction upon the actions preparatory to our deathbed.

3. He that desires to die well and happily, above all things, must be careful that he do not live a soft, a delicate, and voluptuous life; but a life severe, holy, and under the discipline of the cross, under the conduct of prudence and observation, a life of warfare and sober counsels, labour and watchfulness. No man wants cause of tears and a daily sorrow. Let every man consider what he feels, and acknowledge his

misery; let him confess his sin, and chastise it; let him bear his cross patiently, and his persecutions nobly, and his repentances willingly and constantly; let him pity the evils of all the world, and bear his share of the calamities of his brother; let him long and sigh for the joys of heaven; let him tremble and fear, because he hath deserved the pains of hell; let him commute his eternal fear with a temporal suffering, preventing God's judgment by passing one of his own; let him groan for the labours of his pilgrimage and the dangers of his warfare: and by that time he hath summed up all these labours, and duties, and contingencies, all the proper causes, instruments, and acts of sorrow, he will find that for a secular joy and wantonness of spirit there are not left many void spaces of his life. It was St. James's advice,<sup>1</sup> "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into weeping;" and Bonaventure, in the Life of Christ, reports that the holy virgin-mother said to St. Elizabeth, that grace does

<sup>1</sup> James iv. 9.

not descend into the soul of a man but by prayer and affliction. Certain it is, that a mourning spirit and an afflicted body are great instruments of reconciling God to a sinner, and they always dwell at the gates of atonement and restitution. But besides this, a delicate and prosperous life is hugely contrary to the hopes of a blessed eternity. "Woe be to them that are at ease in Sion,"<sup>2</sup> so it was said of old; and our blessed Lord said, "Woe be to you that laugh, for ye shall weep;"<sup>3</sup> but "blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."<sup>4</sup> Here or hereafter we must have our portion of sorrows. "He that now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed with him, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him."<sup>5</sup> And certainly he that sadly considers the portion of Dives, and remembers that the account which Abraham gave him for the unavoidable-ness of his torment was, because he had his good things in this life, must, in all reason, with trembling run from a course of banquets

<sup>2</sup> Amos vi. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Luke vi. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. v. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Ps. cxxvi. 6.

and faring deliciously every day, as being a dangerous estate, and a consignment to an evil greater than all danger, the pains and torments of unhappy souls. ¶ If, either by patience or repentance, by compassion or persecution, by choice or by conformity, by severity or discipline, we allay the festival follies of a soft life, and profess under the cross of Christ, we

shall more willingly and more safely enter into our grave; but the deathbed of a voluptuous man upbraids his little and cozening prosperities, and exacts pains made sharper by the passing from soft beds, and a softer mind. He that would die holily and happily, must in this world love tears, humility, solitude, and repentance.

## II. DAILY EXAMINATION OF OUR ACTIONS

HE that will die well and happily must dress his soul by a diligent and frequent scrutiny; he must perfectly understand and watch the state of his soul; he must set his house in order, before he be fit to die. And for this there is great reason, and great necessity.

### *Reasons for a Daily Examination.*

I. For if we consider the disorders of every day, the multitude of impertinent words, the great portions of time spent in vanity, the daily omissions of duty, the coldness of our prayers, the in-

difference of our spirit in holy things, the uncertainty of our secret purposes, our infinite deceptions and hypocrisies, sometimes not known, very often not observed by ourselves, our want of charity, our not knowing in how many degrees of action and purpose every virtue is to be exercised, the secret adherences of pride, and too-forward complacency in our best actions, our failings in all our relations, the niceties of difference between some virtues and some vices, the secret indiscernible passages from lawful to unlawful in the first instances of change, the perpetual mistakings of permis-

sions for duty, and licentious practices for permissions, our daily abusing the liberty that God gives us, our unsuspected sins in the managing a course of life certainly lawful, our little greedinesses in eating, our surprises in the proportions of our drinkings, our too great freedoms and fondnesses in lawful loves, our aptness for things sensual, and our deadness and tediousness of spirit in spiritual employments; besides infinite variety of cases of conscience that do occur in the life of every man, and in all intercourses of every life, and that the productions of sin are numerous and increasing, like the families of the northern people, or the genealogies of the first patriarchs of the world; from all this we shall find that the computations of a man's life are busy as the tables of sines and tangents, and intricate as the accounts of eastern merchants; and therefore it were but reason we should sum up our accounts at the foot of every page, I mean that we call ourselves to scrutiny every night, when we compose ourselves to the little images of death.

2. For if we make but one

general account, and never reckon till we die, either we shall only reckon by great sums, and remember nothing but clamorous and crying sins, and never consider concerning particulars, or forget very many; or if we could consider all that we ought, we must needs be confounded with the multitude and variety. But if we observe all the little passages of our life, and reduce them into the order of accounts and accusations, we shall find them multiply so fast, that it will not only appear to be an ease to the accounts of our deathbed, but by the instrument of shame will restrain the inundation of evils; it being a thing intolerable to human modesty to see sins increase so fast, and virtues grow up so slow; to see every day stained with the spots of leprosy, or sprinkled with the marks of a lesser evil.

3. It is not intended we should take accounts of our lives only to be thought religious, but that we may see our evil and amend it, that we dash our sins against the stones, that we may go to God, and to a spiritual guide, and search for remedies, and apply them. And indeed no

man can well observe his own growth in grace, but by accounting seldomer returns of sin, and a more frequent victory over temptations; concerning which every man makes his observations, according as he makes his inquiries and search after himself. In order to this it was that St. Paul wrote, before receiving the holy sacrament "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat." This precept was given in those days when they communicated every day; and therefore a daily examination also was intended.

4. And it will appear highly fitting, if we remember that, at the day of judgment, not only the greatest lines of life, but every branch and circumstance of every action, every word and thought, shall be called to scrutiny and severe judgment; inso-much that it was a great truth which one said, **V**oe be to the most innocent life, if God should search into it without mixtures of mercy. And therefore we are here to follow St. Paul's advice, "Judge yourselves, and you shall not be judged of the Lord." The way to prevent God's anger is to be angry

with ourselves: and by examining our actions, and condemning the criminal, by being assessors in God's tribunal, at least we shall obtain the favour of the court. As therefore every night we must make our bed the memorial of our grave, so let our evening thoughts be an image of the day of judgment.

5. This advice was so reasonable and proper an instrument of virtue, that it was taught even to the scholars of Pythagoras by their master: "Let not sleep seize upon the regions of your senses before you have three times recalled the conversation and accidents of the day." Examine what you have committed against the Divine law, what you have omitted of your duty, and in what you have made use of the Divine grace to the purposes of virtue and religion; joining the judge, reason, to the legislative mind or conscience, that God may reign there as a lawgiver and a judge. Then Christ's kingdom is set up in our hearts: then we always live in the eye of our Judge, and live by the measures of reason, religion, and sober counsels.

The benefits we shall receive by practising this advice, in order to a blessed death, will also add to the account of reason and fair inducements.

*The Benefits of this Habit.*

1. By a daily examination of our actions we shall the easier cure a great sin, and prevent its arrival to become habitual. For to examine we suppose to be a relative duty, and instrumental to something else. We examine ourselves, that we may find out our failings and cure them; and therefore if we use our remedy when the wound is fresh and bleeding, we shall find the cure more certain and less painful. For so a taper, when its crown of flame is newly blown off, retains a nature so akin to light, that it will with greediness rekindle and snatch a ray from the neighbour fire. So is the soul of man when it is newly fallen into sin; although God be angry with it, and the state of God's favour and its own graciousness is interrupted, yet the habit is not naturally changed: and still God leaves some roots of virtue standing, and

the man is modest, or apt to be made ashamed, and he is not grown a bold sinner; but if he sleeps on it, and returns again to the same sin, and by degrees grows in love with it, and gets the custom, and the strangeness of it is taken away, then it is his master, and is swelled into a heap, and is abetted by use, and strengthened by newly-entertained principles, and is insinuated into his nature, and hath possessed his affections, and tainted the will and the understanding. And by this time a man is in the state of a decaying merchant, his accounts are so great and so intricate, and so much in arrear, that to examine it will be but to represent the particulars of his calamity: therefore they think it better to pull the napkin before their eyes, than to stare upon the circumstances of their death.

2. A daily or frequent examination of the parts of our life will interrupt the proceeding and hinder the journey of little sins into a heap. For many days do not pass the best persons in which they have not many idle words or vainer thoughts to sully the fair whiteness of their souls; some indiscreet

passions of trifling purposes, some impertinent discontents or unhandsome usages of their own persons or their dearest relatives. And though God is not extreme to mark what is done amiss, and therefore puts these upon the accounts of His mercy, and the title of the cross; yet in two cases these little sins combine and cluster; and we know that grapes were once in so great a bunch, that one cluster was the load of two men; that is, (1.) When either we are in love with small sins; or, (2.) When they proceed from a careless and incurious spirit into frequency and continuance. For so the smallest atoms that dance in all the little cells of the world are so trifling and immaterial, that they cannot trouble an eye, nor vex the tenderest part of a wound where a barbed arrow dwelt; yet when, by their infinite numbers (as some philosophers fancy,) they danced first into order, then into little bodies, at last they made the matter of the world: so are the little indiscretions of our life; they are always inconsiderable if they be considered, and contemptible if they be not despised,

and God does not regard them if we do. We may easily keep them asunder by our daily or nightly thoughts, and prayers, and severe sentences; but even the least sand can check the tumultuous pride, and become a limit to the sea, when it is in a heap and in united multitudes; but if the wind scatter and divide them, the little drops and the vainer froth of the water begin to invade the strand. Our sighs can scatter such little offences; but then be sure to breathe such accents frequently, lest they knot and combine, and grow big as the shore, and we perish in sand, in trifling instances. "He that despiseth little things, shall perish by little and little;" so said the son of Sirach.<sup>1</sup>

3. A frequent examination of our actions will soften our consciences, and make them tender, so that they shall be impatient of any rudeness or heavier load; and he that is used to shrink, when he is pressed with a branch of twining osier, will not willingly stand in the ruins of a house when the beam dashes upon the pavement. And provided that our nice and

<sup>1</sup> Ecclus. xix. 1.

tender spirit be not vexed into scruple, nor the scruple turn into unreasonable fears, nor the fears into superstition; he that, by any arts, can make his spirit tender and apt for religious impressions, hath made the fairest seat for religion, and the unaptest and uneasiest entertainment for sin and eternal death, in the whole world.

4. A frequent examination of the smallest parts of our lives is the best instrument to make our repentance particular, and a fit remedy to all the members of the whole body of sin. For our examination, put off to our death-bed, of necessity brings us into this condition, that very many thousands of our sins must be (or not be at all) washed off with a general repentance, which the more general and indefinite it is, it is ever so much the worse. And if he that repents the longest and the oftenest, and upon the most instances, is still, during his whole life, but an imperfect penitent, and there are very many reserves left to be wiped off by God's mercies, and to be eased by collateral assistances, or to be groaned for at the terrible day of judg-

ment; it will be but a sad story to consider that the sins of a whole life, or of very great portions of it, shall be put upon the remedy of one examination, and the advices of one discourse, and the activities of a decayed body, and a weak and an amazed spirit. Let us do the best we can, we shall find that the mere sins of ignorance and unavoidable forgetfulness will be enough to be entrusted to such a bank; and if that a general repentance will serve towards their expiation, it will be an infinite mercy; but we have nothing to warrant our confidence, if we shall think it to be enough on our death-bed to confess the notorious actions of our lives, and to say, "The Lord be merciful unto me for the infinite transgressions of my life, which I have wilfully or carelessly forgot;" for very many of which the repentance, the distinct, particular, circumstantial repentance, of a whole life would have been too little if we could have done more.

5. After the enumeration of these advantages, I shall not need to add, that if we decline or refuse to call ourselves frequently to account,



and to use daily advices concerning the state of our souls, it is a very ill sign that our souls are not right with God, or that they do not dwell in religion. But this I shall say, that they who do use this exercise frequently will make their conscience much at ease, by casting out a daily load of humour and surfeit, the matter of diseases and the instruments of death. "He that does not frequently search his conscience, is a house without a window," and like a wild and untutored son of a fond and undiscerning widow.

But if this exercise seem too great a trouble, and that by such advices religion will seem a burden, I have two things to oppose against it.

1. One is, that we had better bear the burden of the Lord than the burden of a base and polluted conscience. Religion cannot be so great a trouble as a guilty soul; and whatsoever trouble can be fancied in this or any other action of religion, it is only to inexperienced persons. It may be a trouble at first, just as is every change and every new accident: but if you do it frequently, and accustom your spirit to it, as

the custom will make it easy, so the advantages will make it delectable; that will make it facile as nature, these will make it as pleasant and eligible as reward.

2. The other thing I have to say is this, that to examine our lives will be no trouble, if we do not intricate it with businesses of the world and the labyrinths of care and impertinent affairs. A man need have a quiet and disentangled life who comes to search into all his actions, and to make judgment concerning his errors and his needs, his remedies and his hopes. They that have great intrigues of the world have a yoke upon their necks, and cannot look back: and he that covets many things greedily, and snatches at high things ambitiously, that despises his neighbour proudly, and bears his crosses peevishly, or his prosperity impotently and passionately; he that is prodigal of his precious time, and is tenacious and retentive of evil purposes, is not a man disposed to do this exercise; he hath reason to be afraid of his own memory, and to dash his glass in pieces, because it must needs

represent to his own eyes an intolerable deformity. He therefore that resolves to live well, whatsoever it costs him; he that will go to heaven at any rate, shall best tend his duty by neglecting the affairs of the world in all things where prudently he may. But if we do otherwise, we shall find that the accounts of our death-bed and the examination made by a disturbed understanding will be very empty of comfort and full of inconveniences.

6. For hence it comes that men die so timorously and uncomfortably, as if they were forced out of their lives by the violences of an executioner. Then, without much examination, they remember how wickedly they have lived, without religion, against the laws of the covenant of grace, without God in the world: then they see sin goes off like an amazed, wounded, affrighted person from a lost battle, without honour, without a veil, with nothing but shame and sad remembrances: then they can consider, that if they had lived virtuously all the trouble and objection of that would now be past, and all that

had remained should be peace and joy, and all that good which dwells within the house of God and eternal life. But now they find they have done amiss and dealt wickedly they have no bank of good works, but a huge treasure of wrath, and they are going to a strange place, and what shall be their lot is uncertain (so they say, when they would comfort and flatter themselves): but in truth of religion their portion is sad and intolerable, without hope and without refreshment, and they must use little silly arts to make them go off from their stage of sins with some handsome circumstances of opinion: they will in civility be abused, that they may die quietly, and go decently to their execution, and leave their friends indifferently contented, and apt to be comforted; and by that time they are gone awhile they see that they deceived themselves all their days, and were by others deceived at last.

Let us make it our own case: we shall come to that state and period of condition in which we shall be infinitely comforted if we have lived well; or else be amazed

and go off trembling, because we are guilty of heaps of unrepented and unforsaken sins. It may happen, we shall not then understand it so, because most men of late ages have been abused with false principles, and they are taught (or they are willing to believe) that a little thing is enough to save them, and heaven is so cheap a purchase that it will fall upon them whether they will or no. The misery of it is, they will not suffer themselves to be confuted till it be too late to recant their error. In the interim, they are impatient to be examined, as a leper is of a comb, and are greedy of the world, as children of raw fruit; and they hate a severe reproof as they do thorns in their bed; and they love to lay aside religion, as a drunken person does to forget his sorrow; and all the way they dream of fine things, and their dreams prove contrary, and become the hieroglyphics of an eternal sorrow. Such is the condition of those persons who, living either in the despite or in the neglect of religion, lie wallowing in

the drunkenness of prosperity or worldly cares: they think themselves to be exalted, till the evil day overtakes them; and then they can expound their dream of life to end in a sad and hopeless death. I remember that Cleomenes was called a god by the Egyptians, because when he was hanged a serpent grew out of his body, and wrapped itself about his head; till the philosophers of Egypt said it was natural that from the marrow of some bodies such productions should arise. And indeed it represents the condition of some men, who being dead are esteemed saints and beatified persons when their head is encircled with dragons and is entered into the possession of devils, that old serpent and deceiver. For indeed their life was secretly so corrupted, that such serpents fed upon the ruins of the spirit and the decays of grace and reason. To be cozened in making judgments concerning our final condition is extremely easy; but if we be cozened we are infinitely miserable.

## § III. THE PRACTICE OF CHARITY

**H**E that would die well and happily must in his lifetime, according to all his capacities, exercise charity; and because religion is the life of the soul, and charity is the life of religion, the same which gives life to the better part of man, which never dies, may obtain of God a mercy to the inferior part of man in the day of its dissolution.

1. Charity is the great channel through which God passes all his mercy upon mankind. For we receive absolution of our sins in proportion to our forgiving our brother. This is the rule of our hopes, and the measure of our desire in this world; and in the day of death and judgment the great sentence upon mankind shall be transacted according to our alms, which is the other part of charity. Certain it is, that God cannot, will not, never did, reject a charitable man in his greatest needs and in his most passionate prayers; for God Himself is love, and every degree of charity that dwells in us is the participa-

tion of the Divine nature: and therefore, when upon our deathbed a cloud covers our head, and we are enwrapped with sorrow; when we feel the weight of a sickness, and do not feel the refreshing visitations of God's loving-kindness; when we have many things to trouble us, and looking round about us we see no comforter; then call to mind what injuries you have forgiven, how apt you were to pardon all affronts and real persecutions, how you embraced peace when it was offered to you, how you followed after peace when it ran from you: and when you are weary of one side, turn upon the other, and remember the alms that, by the grace of God and His assistances, you have done, and look up to God, and with the eye of faith behold Him coming in the cloud, and pronouncing the sentence of doomsday according to His mercies and thy charity.

2. Charity with her twin-daughters, alms and forgiveness, is especially effectual for the procuring God's mer-

cies in the day and manner of our death. "Alms deliver from death," said old Tobias;<sup>1</sup> and "alms make an atonement for sins," said the son of Sirach:<sup>2</sup> and so said Daniel,<sup>3</sup> and so say all the wise men of the world. And in this sense, also, is that of St. Peter,<sup>4</sup> "Love covers a multitude of sins;" and St. Clement in his Constitutions gives this counsel, "If you have anything in your hands, give it, that it may work to the remission of thy sins; for by faith and alms sins are purged." The same also is the counsel of Salvian, who wonders that men, who are guilty of great and many sins, will not work out their pardon by alms and mercy. But this also must be added out of the words of Lactantius, who makes this rule complete and useful: "But think not, because sins are taken away by alms, that by thy money thou mayest purchase a license to sin; for sins are abolished if, because thou hast sinned, thou givest to God," that is, to God's poor servants, and His indigent

necessitous creatures: but if thou sinnest upon confidence of giving, thy sins are not abolished. For God desires infinitely that men should be purged from their sins, and therefore commands us to repent; but to repent is nothing else but to profess and affirm (that is, to purpose, and to make good that purpose) that they will sin no more.

Now, alms are therefore effective to the abolition and pardon of our sins, because they are preparatory to, and impetratory of, the grace of repentance, and are fruits of repentance; and therefore St. Chrysostom affirms, that repentance without alms is dead, and without wings, and can never soar upwards to the element of love. But because they are a part of repentance, and hugely pleasing to Almighty God, therefore they deliver us from the evils of an unhappy and accursed death; for so Christ delivered His disciples from the sea when he appeased the storm, though they still sailed in the channel: and this St. Jerome verifies with all his reading and experience, saying, "I do not remember to have read that

<sup>1</sup> Tob. iv. 10; xii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ecclus. iii. 30.

<sup>3</sup> Dan. iv. 27.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 8; Isa. i. 17.

ever any charitable person died an evil death." And although a long experience hath observed God's mercies to descend upon charitable people, like the dew upon Gideon's fleece, when all the world was dry; yet for this also we have a promise, which is not only an argument of a certain number of years (as experience is), but a security for eternal ages. "Make ye friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations." When faith fails, and chastity is useless, and temperance shall be no more, then charity shall bear you upon wings of cherubim to the eternal mountain of the Lord.

I do not mean this should

only be a death-bed charity, any more than a death-bed repentance; but it ought to be the charity of our life and healthful years, a parting with portions of our goods then, when we can keep them: we must not first kindle our lights when we are to descend into our houses of darkness, or bring a glaring torch suddenly to a dark room that will amaze the eye, and not delight it or instruct the body; but if our tapers have, in their constant course, descended into their grave, crowned all the way with light, then let the death-bed charity be doubled, and the light burn brightest when it is to deck our hearse. But concerning this I shall afterwards give account.

#### § IV. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS TO ENFORCE THESE PRACTICES

THESE are the general means of preparation in order to a holy death: it will concern us all to use them diligently and speedily; for we must be long in doing

that which must be done but once: and therefore we must begin betimes, and lose no time; especially since it is so great a venture, and upon it depends so great a state.

Seneca said well, "There is no science or art in the world so hard as to live and die well: the professors of other arts are vulgar and many;" but he that knows how to do this business is certainly instructed to eternity. But then let me remember this, that a wise person will also put most upon the greatest interest. Common prudence will teach us this. No man will hire a general to cut wood, or shake hay with a sceptre, or spend his soul and all his faculties upon the purchase of a cockle-shell; but he will fit instruments to the dignity and exigence of the design: and, therefore, since heaven is so glorious a state, and so certainly designed for us if we please, let us spend all that we have, all our passions and affections, all our study and industry, all our desires and stratagems, all our witty and ingenious faculties, towards the arriving thither; whither if we do come, every minute will infinitely pay for all the troubles of our whole life; if we do not, we shall have the reward of fools, an unpitied and an upbraided misery.

To this purpose I shall re-

present the state of dying and dead men in the devout words of some of the fathers of the Church, whose sense I shall exactly keep, but change their order; that, by placing some of their dispersed meditations into a chain or sequel of discourse, I may with their precious stones make a union, and compose them into a jewel: for though the meditation is plain and easy, yet it is affectionate and material, and true and necessary.

*The Circumstances of a Dying Man's Sorrow and Danger.*

When the sentence of death is decreed and begins to be put in execution, it is sorrow enough to see or feel respectively the sad accents of the agony and last contentions of the soul, and the reluctances and unwillingnesses of the body: the forehead washed with a new and stranger baptism, besmeared with a cold sweat, tenacious and clammy, apt to make it cleave to the roof of his coffin; the nose cold and undiscerning, not pleased with perfumes, nor suffering

violence with a cloud of unwholesome smoke ; the eyes dim as a sullied mirror, or the face of heaven when God shows His anger in a prodigious storm ; the feet cold, the hands stiff, the physicians despairing, our friends weeping, the rooms dressed with darkness and sorrow, and the exterior parts betraying what are the violences which the soul and spirit suffer ; the nobler part, like the lord of the house, being assaulted by exterior rudenesses, and driven from all the outworks, at last, faint and weary with short and frequent breathings, interrupted with the longer accents of sighs, without moisture but the excrescences of a spilt humour—when the pitcher is broken at the cistern, it retires to its last fort, the heart, whither it is pursued, and stormed, and beaten out, as when the barbarous Thracian sacked the glory of the Grecian empire. Then calamity is great, and sorrow rules in all the capacities of man ; then the mourners weep, because it is civil, or because they need thee, or because they fear : but who suffers for thee with a compassion sharp as is thy pain ?

Then the noise is like the faint echo of a distant valley, and few hear, and they will not regard thee, who seemest like a person void of understanding and of a departing interest. Great and terrible indeed is the mystery of death. But these accidents are common to all that die ; and when a special Providence shall distinguish them, they shall die with easy circumstances ; but as no piety can secure it, so must no confidence expect it, but wait for the time and accept the manner of the dissolution. But that which distinguishes them is this :

He that hath lived a wicked life, if his conscience be alarmed, and that he does not die like a wolf or a tiger, without sense or remorse of all his wildness and his injury, his beastly nature, and desert and untitled manners ; if he have but sense of what he is going to suffer, or what he may expect to be his portion—then we may imagine the terror of their abused fancies, how they see affrighting shapes, and, because they fear them, they feel the gripes of devils, urging the unwilling souls from the



kinder and fast embraces of the body, calling to the grave and hastening to judgment, exhibiting great bills of uncancelled crimes, awaking and amazing the conscience, breaking all their hope in pieces, and making faith useless and terrible, because the malice was great, and the charity was none at all. Then they look for some to have pity on them, but there is no man. No man dares be their pledge ; no man can redeem their soul, which now feels what it never feared. Then the tremblings and the sorrow, the memory of the past sin, and the fear of future pains, and the sense of an angry God, and the presence of some devils, consign him to the eternal company of all the damned and accursed spirits. Then they want an angel for their guide, and the Holy Spirit for their Comforter, and a good conscience for their testimony, and Christ for their Advocate ; and they die and are left in prisons of earth or air, in secret and undiscerned regions, to weep and tremble, and infinitely to fear the coming of the day of Christ ; at which time they shall be brought forth to change their

condition into a worse, where they shall for ever feel more than we can believe or understand.

But when a good man dies, one that hath lived innocently, or made joy in heaven at his timely and effective repentance, and in whose behalf the holy Jesus hath interceded prosperously, and for whose interest the Spirit maketh intercessions with groans and sighs unutterable, and in whose defence the angels drive away the devils on his death-bed, because his sins are pardoned, and because he resisted the devil in his life-time, and fought successfully, and persevered unto the end ; then the joys break forth through the clouds of sickness, and the conscience stands upright, and confesses the glories of God, and owns so much integrity, that it can hope for pardon, and obtain it too : then the sorrows of the sickness, and the flames of the fever, or the faintness of the consumption, do but untie the soul from its chain, and let it go forth, first into liberty, and then to glory ; for it is but for a little while that the face of the sky was black, like the preparations

of the night, but quickly the cloud was torn and rent, the violence of thunder parted it into little portions, that the sun might look forth with a watery eye, and then shine without a tear. But it is an infiniterefreshment to remember all the comforts of his prayers, the frequent victory over his temptations, the mortification of his lust, the noblest sacrifice to God, in which He most delights, that we have given Him our wills, and killed our appetites for the interests of His services : then all the trouble of that is gone ; and what remains is a portion in the inheritance of Jesus, of which he now talks no more as a thing at a distance, but is entering into the possession. When the veil is rent, and the prison-doors are open at the presence of God's angel, the soul goes forth full of hope, sometimes with evidence, but always with certainty in the thing, and instantly it passes into the throngs of spirits, where angels meet it singing, and the devils flock with malicious and vile purposes, desiring to lead it away with them into their houses of sorrow : there they see things which they never

saw, and hear voices which they never heard. There the devils charge them with many sins, and the angels remember that themselves rejoiced when they were repented of. Then the devils aggravate and describe all the circumstances of the sin, and add calumnies ; and the angels bear the sword forward still, because their Lord doth answer for them. Then the devils rage and gnash their teeth ; they see the soul chaste and pure, and they are ashamed ; they see it penitent, and they despair ; they perceive that the tongue was refrained and sanctified, and then hold their peace. Then the soul passes forth and rejoices, passing by the devils in scorn and triumph, being securely carried into the bosom of the Lord, where they shall rest till their crowns are finished, and their mansions are prepared ; and then they shall feast and sing, rejoice and worship, for ever and ever. Fearful and formidable to unholy persons is the first meeting with spirits in their separation. But the victory which holy souls receive by the mercies of Jesus Christ, and the conduct of angels, is a

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joy that we must not understand till we feel it ; and yet that which by an early and a persevering piety we

may secure. Yet let us inquire after it no further, because it is secret.