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LEAVES

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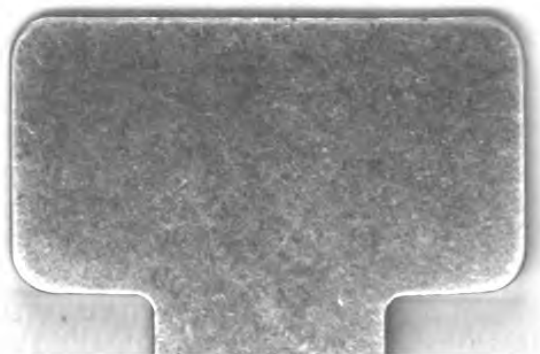
Thoughts upon Self-Denial.

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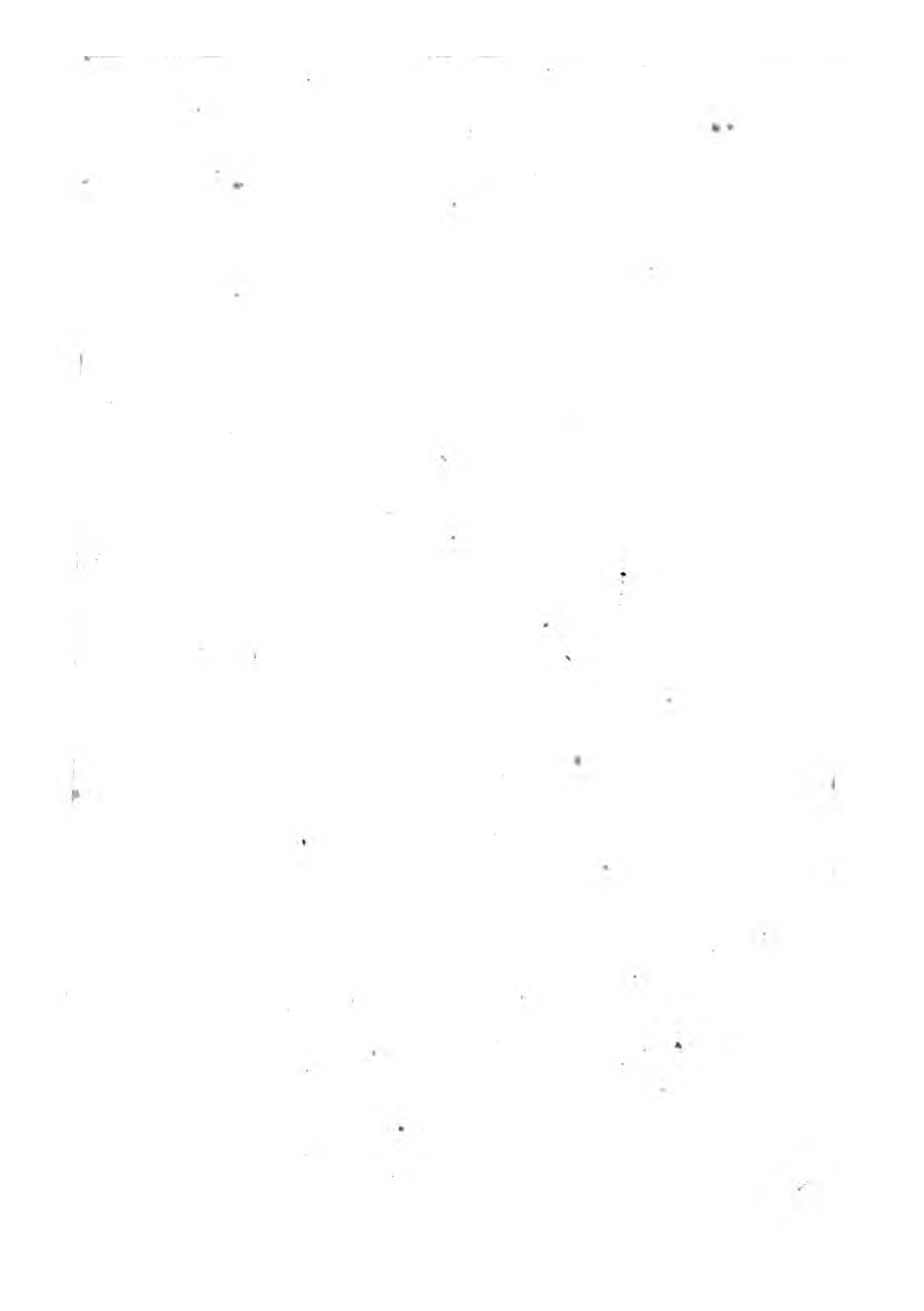
Beveridge

Wesley.









## **Leaven Leaves.**

*“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”*

GALATIANS v. 9.

Thoughts

UPON

Self-Denial.

BISHOP BEVERIDGE.  
REV. JOHN WESLEY, M.A.



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THOUGHTS  
UPON  
SELF-DENIAL.

*By Bishop Beveridge.*



THE most glorious sight, questionless, that was ever to be seen upon the face of the earth, was to see the Son of God here; to see the supreme Being and Governor of the world here; to see the Creator of all things conversing here with his own creatures; to see God himself, with the nature and in the shape of man, walking about upon the surface of the earth, and discoursing with silly mortals here; and that with so much majesty and humility mixed together, that every expression might seem a demonstration that he was both God and man. It is true,

we were not so happy as to see this blessed sight; howsoever, it is our happiness that we have heard of it, and have it so exactly described to us, that we may as clearly apprehend it as if we had seen it: yea, our Saviour himself hath pronounced those in a peculiar manner blessed, “who have not seen, and yet have believed” (John xx. 29)—that is, who never saw Christ in the manger, nor in the temple; who never saw him prostrate before his Father in the garden, nor fastened by men unto his cross; who never saw him preaching the gospel, nor working miracles to confirm it; who never saw him before his passion, nor after his resurrection;—and do as firmly believe whatsoever is recorded of him, as if they had seen it with their eyes. Such persons our blessed Saviour himself asserts to be truly blessed, as having such a faith as is the substance of things hoped

for, and “the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. xi. 1).

Hence, therefore, although we lived not in our Saviour’s time, and therefore saw him not do as never man did, nor heard him speak as never man spake, we may notwithstanding be as blessed, or rather more blessed than they that did, if we do but give credit to what is asserted of him, and receive and believe what is represented to us in his holy Gospels, where by faith we may still see him working miracles, and hear him declaring his will and pleasure to his disciples, as really as if we had then been by him. And therefore, whatever we read in the Gospel that he spake, we are to hearken as diligently to it, as if we heard him speak it with our own ears, and be as careful in the performance of it, as if we had received it from his own mouth; for so we do, though not immediately, yet by the

infallible pen of them that did so. And seeing he never spake in vain or to no purpose, nor suffered an idle or superfluous word to proceed out of his sacred and divine mouth, whatsoever he asserted, we are to look upon as necessary to be believed, because he asserted it. And whatsoever he commanded, we are to look upon as necessary to be observed, because he hath commanded it; for we must not think that his assertions are so frivolous, or his commands so impertinent, that it is no great matter whether we believe the one and obey the other or no. No; if we expect to be justified and saved by him, he expects to be believed and obeyed by us, without which he will not look upon us as his disciples, nor by consequence as Christians, but as strangers and aliens to him, whatsoever our professions and pretences are.

It is true, we live in an age wherein

Christianity in the general notion of it is highly courted, and all sects and parties amongst us making their pretences to it. Whatsoever opinions or circumstances they differ in, be sure they all agree in the external profession of the Christian religion, and by consequence in the knowledge that they ought to be Christians indeed. But I fear that men are generally mistaken about the notion of true Christianity, not thinking it to be so high and divine a thing as really it is; for if they had true and clear conceptions of it, they would never fancy themselves to be Christians, upon such low and pitiful grounds as usually they do, making as if Christianity consisted in nothing else but in the external performance of some few particular duties, and in adhering to them that profess it. Whereas Christianity is a thing of a much higher and far more noble nature than such would have it;

infomuch, that did we but rightly understand it, methinks we could not but be taken with it, so as to resolve for the future, to the utmost of our power, to live up to it: to which, could I be an instrument of persuading any, how happy should I think myself! Howsoever, it is my duty to endeavour it; and for that purpose I shall now clear up the true notion of Christianity, that we may know, not what it is to be professors of Christianity, but what it is to be real Christians, and true disciples of Christ Jesus, such as Christ will own for his in another world.

Now, to know whom Christ will accept for his disciples, our only way is to consult Christ himself, and to consider what it is that he requires of those that follow him, in order to be his disciples—a thing as easily understood as it is generally disregarded; for nothing can be

more plain, than that Christ requires and enjoins all those that would be his disciples to observe not only some few, but all the commands that he hath laid upon us. "Ye are my friends," saith he, and therefore my disciples, "if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John xv. 14). So that, unless we do whatsoever he commands us, we are so far from being his disciples, that we are indeed his enemies. Nay, they that would be his disciples, must excel and surpass all others in virtue and good works. "Herein," saith he, "is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples" (Ibid. xv. 8); yea, and continue in them too (Ibid. viii. 31). He tells us, also, that they that would be his disciples "must love him above all things;" or rather, hate all things in comparison of him (Luke xiv. 26): and "that they love one another, as he hath



loved them ” (John xiv. 35). To name no more, read but St Matthew xvi. 24, and there you may see what it is to be a Christian indeed, or what it is that Christ requires of those who would be his disciples: “ If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” Did we but understand the true meaning of these words, and order our conversation accordingly, we should both know what it is to be true Christians, and really to be so ourselves. For I think there is nothing that Christ requires of those who desire to be his disciples, but we should perform it, could we but observe what is here commanded: which, that we may all do, I shall endeavour to give the true meaning of them, and of every particular in them as they lie in order.

For saith he, “ If any man will come after me”—that is, if any man will be

my disciple; for masters, ye know, use to go before scholars, and disciples to follow after. And our Saviour here speaks of himself under the notion of a master that hath disciples coming after him; and saith, if any man would be one of his disciples so as to go after him, "he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow him." So that here are three things which our blessed Saviour requires of those that would be his disciples, and by consequence of us who profess to be so; for I daresay there is none of us but desire to be a Christian, or at least to be thought so; for we all know and believe Jesus Christ to be the only Saviour of mankind; that none can save us but he, and that there is none of us but he can save; and that all those who truly come to him for pardon and salvation, shall most certainly have it: hence it is that we would all be thought at least so wise,

and to have so much care of our own souls, as to go after Christ and be his disciples. I hope there are but few but who really desire to be so. Yet I would not have any think that it is so easy a matter to be a disciple of Christ, or a real and true Christian, as the world would make it. No; we may assure ourselves, that as it is the highest honour and happiness we can attain unto, so we shall find it the hardest matter in the world to attain unto it; not in its own nature, but by reason of its contrariety to our natural temper and inclinations. For here we see what it is our blessed Saviour requires of those that would go after him, even nothing less than to deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow him. All which are far greater things than at the first sight or reading they may seem to be.

For first, saith he, "If any man will

come after me, let him deny himself,”— which being the first thing which Christ requires of those that go after him, it is necessary that we search more narrowly into the nature of it. For if we fail in this, we cannot but fail in all the rest. And therefore, for the opening of this, I shall not trouble the reader with the various expositions and the divers opinions of learned men concerning these words, but only remind him in general, that the self-denial here spoken of is properly opposed to self-love, or that corrupt and vicious habit of the soul, whereby we are apt to admire and prefer our own fancies, wills, desires, interests, and the like, before Christ himself, and what he is pleased either to promise to us, or require of us. And therefore, when he commands us to deny ourselves, his will and pleasure in general is this, that we do not indulge or gratify ourselves in any-

thing that stands in opposition to, and comes in competition with, his interest in the world, or ours in him, howsoever near and dear it may be unto us. But to deny ourselves whatsoever is pleasing to ourselves, if it be not so to God and Christ too, so as not to live to ourselves, but only unto him that died for us, to live as those who are none of our own, but are bought with a price, and therefore should glorify God both in our souls and in our bodies, which are his (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). But seeing this is not only the first lesson to be learned by Christ's disciples, but that which is necessarily required in order to whatsoever else he commands from us, I shall show you more particularly what it is in yourselves that you are to deny.

1. You must deny your own reasons in matters of divine revelation, so as to use them no further than only to search

into the grounds and motives that we have to believe them to be revealed by God. For this being either proved or supposed, we are not to suffer our reasons to be too curious in searching into them, but believe them upon the word and testimony of God himself, who is the supreme truth, or verity itself.

For we, who by all our art and cunning cannot understand the reasons of the most common and obvious things in nature, must not think to comprehend the great mysteries of the Gospel, which, though they be not contrary to our reasons, are infinitely above them: "For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. ii. 14). So that, to the understanding of the things of the Spirit, or which the Spirit of God hath revealed to

us, there is a great deal more required than what we have by nature, even the supernatural assistance of the Spirit himself that revealed them. And therefore, “if any man amongst us seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise” (1 Cor. iii. 18)—that is, he that would be wise unto salvation, must look upon himself as a fool, as one incapable by nature of understanding the things that belong unto his everlasting peace, without both the revelation and assistance of God himself; and therefore must not rely upon his own judgment, but only upon God’s testimony in what he doth believe, not believing what his reason, but what God’s Word tells him; looking upon it as reason enough why he should believe it, because God hath said it.

I know this is a hard doctrine to flesh and blood. For, as Job tells us,



“vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild afs’s colt” (Job xi. 12). Though by nature we be never so foolish, vain, and ignorant, understanding the great mysteries of the Gospel no more than a wild afs’s colt doth a mathematical demonstration, yet howsoever we would fain be thought very wise men; yea, so wise as to be able to comprehend matters of the highest, yea, of an infinite nature, within the narrow compass of our finite and shallow capacities. But this is that which we must deny ourselves in, if we desire to be Christ’s disciples, so as to acquiesce in his Word, and believe what he asserts, only because he asserts it, without suffering our reason to interpose; but looking upon his Word as more than all the reasons and arguments in the world besides.

2. You must deny your own wills. Our wills, it is true, at first were made



upright and perfect, every way correspondent to the will of God himself, so as to will what he wills—that is, what is really good; and to nill what he nills—that is, what is really evil. But being now perverted and corrupted with sin, our wills are naturally inclined to the evil which they should be averse from, and averse from the good which they should be inclined to. So that, instead of choosing the good and refusing the evil, we are generally apt to choose the evil and refuse the good. Yet, for all that our wills are thus crooked and perverse, we cannot endure to have them crossed or thwarted in anything, but would needs have our own wills in everything, so as neither to do anything ourselves, nor yet have anything done to us, but just as ourselves will, who will usually just contrary to what we should. But now they that would be Christ's

disciples must not be thus self-willed, but deny themselves the fulfilling of their own wills, when it doth not consist with the will of God to have them fulfilled. This our Lord and Master hath taught us by his example as well as precept, saying, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will but thine be done" (Luke xxii. 42). Where we may observe, that our blessed Saviour, as man, could not but have a natural averfeness from death, as all men by nature have, and that without sin. And though Christ's will, as man, was never so pure and perfect, yet he only submits it to the will of God. He manifested, indeed, that it was the will of that nature which he had assumed not to suffer death, saying, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" but he shows, withal, that the will of man must still be subject to the will of God;

and that man, even as man, must deny his own will, whensoever it runneth not exactly parallel with God's—saying, “nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.”

And if Christ himself denied his own pure and perfect will, that his Father's might be accomplished, how much more cause have we to deny our wills, which by nature are always contrary to his will, yea, and to our own good too, preferring generally that which is evil and destructive to us, before that which is truly good and advantageous for us? And verily a great part of true Christianity consisteth in thus resigning our wills to God's, not minding so much which way our own inclinations bend, as what his pleasure and command is. A notable instance whereof we have in old Eli, who questionless could not but be very willing that the iniquity of his sons might

be forgiven, and his family prosper in the world; yet, howsoever, when God had manifested his pleasure to him, that his house should be destroyed, he submitted his own wholly unto God's, saying, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good" (1 Sam. iii. 18). And whosoever of us would be Christ's disciple indeed, must be sure thus to deny and renounce his own will, whensoever it appears to be contrary unto God's, so as even to will, that not his own will but God's be fulfilled, as our Lord and Master himself hath taught us each day to pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." And whosoever hath learned this art of making his own will bow and stoop to God's, hath made a very good progress in the Christian religion, especially in that part of it which requires us to deny ourselves.

And seeing we must deny our wills,

we must needs deny our affections too, which are indeed nothing else but the several motions of the will towards good and evil; but usually they are so disorderly and irregular, as to place themselves upon objects directly opposite to what they were designed for; for that we ordinarily love what we ought to hate, and hate what we ought to love; desire what we ought to abhor, and abhor what we ought to desire; rejoice in those things which we ought to grieve for, and are grieved at such things which we ought to rejoice in: so that, if we suffer our affections to move according to their natural tendency and corrupt inclinations, we shall be so far from going after Christ, that we shall continually be running from him. And therefore it must be our great care and study to bridle our affections, deny them their unlawful, and fix them upon their proper objects; yea, and

to deny ourselves, too, the lawful use of such things as our affections are apt to be unlawfully placed upon. As, for example, it is lawful—yea, our duty—to love our relations; but if our love to them becomes exorbitant, so as to love them more than God, our love to them must be turned into hatred, in comparison of our love to him (Luke xiv. 26). And whatsoever lawful thing it is that we take pleasure in, if once we find that our pleasure in that extinguisheth, or but damps, that pleasure which we used, or ought, to have in God, we are to deny ourselves such pleasures as these are, and rather despise ourselves than God.

Yea, we must deny ourselves, moreover, the use and enjoyment of our estates and earthly possessions, whensoever they come into competition with his glory; so that, if it comes to that point, that we must either leave our

estates to enjoy Christ, or leave Christ to enjoy our estates, we must be willing and ready, without any more ado, to abandon and renounce whatever else we have, rather than our interest in Christ. For indeed he is not worthy to be Christ's disciple that doth not prefer him before all things else; neither he that loves the world at all in comparison of Christ: "For if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (John ii. 15). And therefore he that would be Christ's disciple indeed, must fix his heart so fast on Christ, that it must hang loose and indifferent as to all things here below, being no more proud of them, no more delighted in them, no more concerned about them, than as if he had them not. So that, though he have all things beside Christ, he must have nothing but him, or at least in comparison of him; yea, be ready



to part with all, that he may gain Christ. And though many of us may think this a hard saying, we may assure ourselves it is no more than what we must do, if we desire to be Christ's disciples (Luke xiv. 33).

Furthermore, we must deny ourselves those sins especially and lusts which we have or do still indulge ourselves in; for thus the Gospel teacheth you in a particular manner "to deny ungodliness and worldly lust" (Titus ii. 12). And therefore we in vain pretend to be true Christians, so long as we live in any one known sin with any love unto it or delight in it. I suppose none of my readers guilty of all sins; and I fear there are few but live in some. No man but may be naturally averse from some sins, but it is very rare to find one that is inclined to none; for ordinarily every man hath his darling, his beloved sin, his own sin, as



David himself once had, though he afterwards kept himself from it (Psalm xviii. 23). So I fear none of my readers but have some sin, which he may in a peculiar manner call his own, as being that which his thoughts run most upon, and his desires are carried most into, which he labours most after, and takes most pleasure in, which he is most loth to be reprov'd for, and most easily overcome by. Now this and whatsoever other sins any of us are addicted to, we must wholly leave and utterly renounce, if ever we desire to be Christ's disciples. And therefore, so long as any of us live in any known sin, as in pride and prodigality, in oppression or covetousness, in malice or uncleanness, in drunkenness, uncharitableness, or any other sin whatsoever, we must not think ourselves to be Christians indeed—Christ will never own us for his disciples; for so long as

we live in any known sin, it is that sin, not Christ, that is our master; and therefore, if we would list ourselves into his service, we must be sure to deny ourselves whatsoever we know to be offensive to him.

There is still another thing behind wherein we must deny ourselves, if we desire to go after Christ; and that is, we must deny and renounce all our self-righteousness, and all hopes and confidence from ourselves, and from what we have done; which I look upon as a very great piece of self-denial; for naturally we are all prone to sacrifice to our own nets, to burn incense to our own drags, to boast of our own good works, and to pride ourselves with the conceit of our own righteousness. Though we be never so sinful, we would not be thought to be so, but would very fain be counted righteous, not only by men, but by God

himself, for something or other which ourselves do; though, when all comes to all, we know not what that should be; but howsoever, the pride of our hearts is such, that we are loth to go out of ourselves to look for righteousness, to be beholden to another for it. And this is the reason that justification by faith in Christ hath had so many adversaries in the world; mankind in general being so much in love with themselves, and doting upon what themselves do, that they cannot endure to renounce and vilify their own obedience and good works, so much as to think they stand in need of any other righteousness besides their own, as if their own righteousness was so perfect that God himself could find no fault with it, nor make any exceptions against it, but must needs acknowledge them to be just and righteous persons for it.

Whereas, alas! there is not the best action that ever a mortal did, but, if examined by the strict rules of justice, it is as far from being good, yea, so far, that God himself may justly pronounce it evil, and by consequence condemn the person that did it for doing of it. And therefore I cannot but wonder what it is that any man doth or can do, for which he can in reason be justified before God, our very righteousness being, as the prophet tells, "but as filthy rags," and our most holy performances fraught with sin and imperfection, and therefore, so far from justifying us, that we may justly be condemned for them. But this mankind doth not love to hear of, the pride of our hearts being such, that by all means we must have something in ourselves whereof to glory before God himself. But wo be to that person who hath no other righteousness but his own

wherein to appear before the Judge of the whole world; for, however specious his actions may seem to men, they will be adjudged sins before the eternal God.

He, therefore, that would come to Christ, although he must labour after righteousness to the utmost of his power, yet, when he has done all, he must renounce it, and look upon himself as an unprofitable servant: "For Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matt. ix. 13); that is, he came not to call such persons as think they have righteousness enough of their own to serve their turns, for such persons think they have no need of him, and therefore it would be in vain to call them; but he calls sinners, such as may perhaps be as righteous as the others, but they do not think themselves to be so, but look upon themselves as undone for ever, unless they have something else

to trust to than their own good works and obedience to the moral law. Such persons, therefore, Christ came to call; and if they come to him, they cannot but find rest and righteousness in him; and if any of us desire to go after Christ, so as to be his disciple, we must be sure to look upon ourselves as sinners, as deserving nothing but wrath and vengeance for whatsoever we have done; we must renounce all our own righteousness, and be so far from depending upon it, as to think we have none to depend upon, for so really we have not. And when we have laid aside all thoughts of our own righteousness, as to the matter of justification before God, then, and not till then, shall we be rightly qualified to embrace another's, even that righteousness which is by faith in Christ. Thus St Paul, though he had as much, yea, more, reason to trust in the flesh or in

himself than others, for himself faith, "that as touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless;" "yet," faith he, "what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord. For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. iii. 6-9). Thus, therefore, it is, that all those must do who desire to be, as St Paul was, real disciples of Jesus Christ: as we must forsake our sins, so we must renounce our righteousness too. It is true, this is a great and difficult part of self-denial thus to deny ourselves all that pride,



pleasure, and confidence which we used to take in the thoughts of our own righteousness and obedience to the law of God; but we must remember that the first thing which our Saviour enjoins those that come after him is, to deny themselves.

Thus I have shown what it is in ourselves that we must deny, and how it is that we must deny ourselves, if we desire to go after Christ. We must deny ourselves the curiosity of searching too much into the mysteries of the Gospel, by the light of our own clouded reason; we must deny our self-conceit, our self-love, self-interest, self-confidence, and whatsoever proceeds from and terminates in our sensual and sinful selves, so as to have no delight in, nor dependence upon, ourselves; yea, we must so deny ourselves, as to be quite taken off of our former selves, and become other crea-



tures than what we were. Thus St Ambrose explains these words, saying, "Let a man deny himself to himself, so as to be wholly changed from what he was." \* But, then, you will say, what need is there of all this trouble? what reason can be given that a man must deny himself before he can be a true Christian?

To this I answer, it is reason enough that Christ hath commanded us to do it; and surely he best knows whom he will accept of as his disciples, and what is necessary to be done in order to our being so: and he hath said in plain terms, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself"—implying, that he that doth not deny himself cannot go after him.

But, besides that, there is an impossi-

\* *Seipsum sibi homo abneget et totus mutetur.*

bility in the thing itself, that any one should be a true Christian, or go after Christ, and not deny himself, as may be easily perceived, if they will but consider what true Christianity requires of us, and what it is to be a real Christian. A true Christian, we know, is one that lives by faith, and not by sight; “that looks not at the things which are seen, but at those things which are not seen;” that believes whatsoever Christ hath said, trusteth on whatsoever he hath promised, and obeyeth whatsoever he hath commanded; that receiveth Christ as his only priest to make atonement for him, as his only prophet to instruct, and as his only Lord and Master to rule and govern him. In a word, a Christian is one that gives up himself and all he hath to Christ, who gave himself and all that he hath to him; and therefore the very notion of true Christianity implies and supposes the de-

nial of ourselves, without which it is as impossible for a man to be a Christian, as it is for a subject to be rebellious and loyal to his prince at the same time; and therefore it is absolutely necessary that we go out of ourselves before we can go to him, we must strip ourselves of our very selves before we can put on Christ; for Christ himself hath told us that “no man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other” (Matt. vi. 24). We “cannot serve God and mammon”—Christ and ourselves too; so that we must either deny ourselves to go after Christ, or else deny Christ to go after ourselves, so as to mind our own selfish ends and designs in the world.

Wherefore I hope I need not use any other arguments to persuade any to deny themselves in the sense already explained;

I dare say there is none amongst us but would willingly be what we profess, even a real Christian, and so go after Christ here as to come to him hereafter. But we have now seen how Christ himself told us, that “we must deny ourselves,” if we desire to serve and enjoy him: and verily it is a hard case if we cannot deny ourselves for him who so far denied himself for us, as to lay down his own life to redeem ours. He who was equal to God himself, yea, who himself was the true God, so far denied himself as to become a man, yea, “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” for us: and cannot we deny ourselves so much as a fancy, a conceit, a sin, or lust for him? How then can we expect that he should own us for his friends, his servants, or disciples? No, he will never do it; neither can we in reason expect that he should give himself and all the merits of

his death and passion unto us, so long as we think much to give ourselves to him, or to deny ourselves for him. And therefore, if we desire to be made partakers of those glorious things which he hath purchased with his own precious blood for the sons of men, let us begin here, indulge our flesh no longer, but deny ourselves whatsoever God hath been pleased to forbid. And for that end, let us endeavour each day more and more to live above ourselves, above the temper of our bodies, and above the allurements of the world, live as those who believe and profess that they are none of their own, but Christ's;—his by creation—it was he that made us; his by preservation—it is he that maintains us; and his by redemption—it is he that hath purchased and redeemed us with his own blood. And, therefore, let us deny ourselves for the future to

our very selves, whose we are not, and devote ourselves to him whose alone we are; by this we shall manifest ourselves to be Christ's disciples indeed, especially if we do not only deny ourselves, but also take up our cross and follow him; which brings me to the second thing which our blessed Saviour here requires of those who would go after him, even "to take up their cross."

Where, by the cross, we are to understand whatsoever troubles or calamities, inward or outward, we meet with in the performance of our duty to God or man, which they that would go after Christ must take up as they go along, without any more ado, neither repining at them, nor sinking under them; for we must not think that Christ invites us to an earthly paradise of idleness or outward pleasure, as if we had nothing to do or to suffer for him: for even as men we can-

not but find many crosses in the world; but as Christians we must expect more; for Christ himself hath told us "that in the world we shall have tribulation" (John xvi. 33). And therefore, whatsoever we meet with is no more than what we are to look for; especially if we walk uprightly in the way that leads to heaven, we cannot but expect to meet with many a rub; for God himself hath told us that it is "through many tribulations" that we must "enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Acts xiv. 25). And therefore, we must not think to be carried up to heaven with the breath of popular applause, nor to swim through a deluge of carnal pleasures into the haven of everlasting happiness. No; we must look to be tossed to and fro in this world, as in a raging and tempestuous ocean, and never look for perpetual calmness and tranquillity until we have got above



the clouds, yea, even above the sun and stars themselves. This world was always a world of trouble, and ever will be; its very friends, and they that have their portion here, can find no quiet nor satisfaction in it; but the disciples of Christ, "they are not of this world," as Christ himself tells us (John xvii. 14). And therefore, no wonder if the world frowns more upon them than others; the way they walk in is opposite to the world—it is enmity itself to the flesh; and therefore, no wonder if they meet with so much enmity and opposition here; the way wherein they go after Christ is a cross way; it is cross to sin, cross to Satan, cross to the world, cross to our very selves as we are by nature, and, by consequence, cross to all men in the world but Christ's disciples; and therefore, it is no wonder they meet with so many crosses in it. But howsoever, if

we desire to go after Christ, he hath told us beforehand what we must expect; as he hath borne the cross before us, he expects that we now bear it after him; yea, we must not only bear it, but take it up too. Not that we should run ourselves into danger, but that we should balk no duty to avoid it, so as to be willing and ready to undergo the greatest suffering rather than commit the least sin, and to run the greatest danger rather than neglect the smallest duty. If, whilst we are walking in the narrow path of holiness, there happens to lie a cross in the way, we must not go on one side nor on the other side of it, out of the path we walk in, neither must we kick and spurn it, but we must patiently take it up, and carry it along with us; if it be a little heavy at first, it will soon grow lighter, and not at all hinder, but rather further our progress towards heaven.

But here we must have a great care to understand our Saviour's meaning, and so our own duty aright; for we must not think that every trouble we meet with in the world is the cross of Christ; for we may suffer for our fancy or humour, or perhaps for our sin and transgression of the laws of God or men; and if so, it is our own cross, not Christ's, which we take upon us; we may thank ourselves for it; I am sure Christ hath no cause to thank us: "For this is thank-worthy," saith the apostle, "if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully" (1 Peter ii. 19, 20). And therefore, the duty which our Saviour here imposeth on us in few terms is this—that we be ready not only to do, but to suffer what we can for the glory of God, and the furtherance of the Gospel; and that we omit no duty, nor commit any sin, for fear of suffering; nor

think so much of any trouble that befalls us for Christ's sake, but rather to rejoice at it, even as the apostles rejoiced, that "they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts v. 41). Which was a clear instance of their performing the duty here enjoined both them and us, under the name of "taking up our cross."

And I hope there is none of us can take it ill, that Christ hath imposed so severe a duty upon us; for we may assure ourselves he requires no more of us than what himself hath undergone before, so that we can suffer nothing for him but what he hath suffered before for us. Have we grief and trouble in our hearts? So had he (Matt. xxvi. 38). Have we pains and tortures in our bodies? So had he (Matt. xxvii. 29, 30). Are we derided and scoffed at? So was he (Matt. xxvii. 31). Are we arraigned

and condemned, yea, do we suffer death itself? It is no more than what our Lord and Master hath done before. And let us remember what he told us when he was upon the earth: "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord" (Matt. x. 24). If we be Christ's disciples, we cannot expect to fare better in the world than Christ himself did, neither indeed can we fare so bad; for it is impossible that we should undergo so much for him as he hath undergone for us, ours being only the sufferings of men, his the sufferings of one who was God as well as man; whereby sufferings in general are sanctified to our human nature, it having already undergone them in the person of the Son of God; so that it can be now no disparagement at all to undergo any trouble, as hatred, reproach, poverty, pain, yea death itself, or any other cala-

mity whatsoever in this world, seeing the Son of God himself, he that made the world, underwent the same while himself was in it. And therefore, we need not think it below us to stoop down and take up the cross of Christ, as considering that Christ hath borne it before us, hath so blessed and sanctified it unto us, that it is now become an honourable and advantageous, yea, and a pleasant, cross, to them that bear it patiently, thankfully, and constantly, as they ought to do, especially seeing it is such a cross as leads unto a crown; whatsoever we can do or suffer for Christ here, will be fully recompensed with glory hereafter; and therefore, instead of being troubled to take up our cross, we are rather to rejoice that we have any to take up.

Thus we see, in a few words, what it is which our Saviour commands us, when he enjoins us to deny ourselves and take

up our crosses; even that we do not gratify ourselves in anything that is ungrateful unto him, nor grudge to take up any crosses, or suffer any trouble we meet with in the world for his sake, thinking nothing too dear to forsake, nor anything too heavy to bear, for him who thought not his own life too dear, nor the cross itself too heavy to bear for us. What now remains, but that, knowing our Saviour's pleasure, we should all resolve to do it? There is none of us but hope and desire to be saved by him; but that we can never be, unless we observe what he hath prescribed in order to our salvation: and amongst other things, we see how he hath commanded us to deny ourselves, and to take up our crosses. As any of us, therefore, desire to be Christians indeed, so as to see Christ's face with comfort in another world, let us bethink ourselves seriously what sins we have



hitherto indulged ourselves in. I fear there are but few, if any amongst us, but are conscious to themselves that they have and do still live, either in the constant neglect of some known duty, or else in the frequent commission of some beloved sin: what that is I dare not undertake to tell, but leave that to God and to men's own consciences; only I desire them to deal faithfully with their own souls, and not suffer themselves to be fooled into a fond and vain persuasion that they have any interest in Christ, or are truly his disciples, until they deny themselves that sin, whatsoever it is, which they have hitherto indulged themselves in. And let us not think that we shall deny ourselves any real pleasure or profit, by renouncing our sins; for what pleasure can we have in displeasing God, or profit in losing our own souls? No, we shall gratify ourselves, more than we can

imagine, by denying ourselves, as much as we are able, whatsoever is offensive or displeasing unto God; for we may be sure, he that came into the world on purpose to save us from evil, commands us nothing but for our own good; neither would he ever have obliged us to deny ourselves, if we could have been saved without it; and as for the cross, that he was so well acquainted with, that he would never have imposed it upon us to take it up, but that it is indispensably necessary for us. And therefore, if we be what we pretend, real and true Christians, let us manifest it to the world, and to our own consciences, by denying ourselves whatsoever Christ hath denied us, and by observing whatsoever he hath commanded us, even to the taking up of any cross that he for his own sake shall suffer to be laid upon us; still remembering, that self-denial, though it be unplea-

fant, is a most necessary duty; and the cross, though it be never so heavy, is but short, and hath nothing less than a crown annexed unto it, a glorious and eternal crown, which all those shall most certainly obtain who deny themselves.

THOUGHTS  
UPON  
SELF-DENIAL.

*By the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.*



*“And he said unto them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”—LUKE ix. 23.*

IT has been frequently imagined, that the direction here given related chiefly, if not wholly, to the apostles, at least to the Christians of the first ages, or those in a state of persecution. But this is a grievous mistake; for although our blessed Lord is here directing his discourse more immediately to his apostles, and those other disciples who attended him

in the days of his flesh, yet in them he speaks to us, and to all mankind, without any exception or limitation. The very reason of the thing puts it beyond dispute, that the duty which is here enjoined is not peculiar to them, or to the Christians of the early ages. It no more regards any particular order of men, or particular time, than any particular country. No; it is of the most universal nature, respecting all times and all persons, yea, and all things; not meats and drinks only, and things pertaining to the senses. The meaning is, if any man, of whatever rank, station, circumstances, in any nation, in any age of the world, will effectually come after me, let him deny himself in all things; “let him take up his cross,” of whatever kind, yea, and that “daily, and follow me.”

The “denying ourselves,” and the “taking up our cross,” in the full ex-

tent of the expression, is not a thing of small concern; it is not expedient only, as are some of the circumstantials of religion; but it is absolutely, indispensably necessary, either to our becoming or continuing his disciples. It is absolutely necessary, in the very nature of the thing, to our "coming after him," and "following him." Inasmuch that, as far as we do not practise it, we are not his disciples. If we do not continually deny ourselves, we do not learn of him, but of other masters. If we do not take up our cross daily, we do not come after him, but after the world, or the prince of the world, or our own fleshly mind. If we are not walking in the way of the cross, we are not following him, we are not treading in his steps, but going back from, or at least wide of, him.

It is for this reason that so many ministers of Christ, in almost every age and

nation, particularly since the reformation of the Church from the innovations and corruptions which had gradually crept into it, have wrote and spoke so largely on this important duty, both in their public discourses and private exhortations. This induced them to disperse abroad many tracts upon the subject, and some in our nation. They knew both from the oracles of God, and from the testimony of their own experience, how impossible it is not to deny our Master, unless we will deny ourselves, and how vainly we attempt to follow him that was crucified, unless we take up our own cross daily.

But may not this very consideration make it reasonable to inquire, if so much has been said and wrote on the subject already, what need is there to say or write any more? I answer: There are considerable numbers, even of people



fearing God, who have not had the opportunity either of hearing what has been spoken, or reading what has been written upon it. And perhaps, if they had read much of what has been written, they would not have been much profited. Many who have wrote (some of them large volumes), do by no means appear to have understood the subject. Either they had imperfect views of the very nature of it (and then they could never explain it to others), or they were unacquainted with the due extent of it; they did not see how exceeding broad this command is, or they were not sensible of the absolute, the indispensable necessity of it. Others speak of it in so dark, so perplexed, so intricate, so mystical a manner, as if they deigned rather to conceal it from the vulgar, than to explain it to common readers. Others speak admirably well, with great clear-

ness and strength, on the necessity of self-denial; but then they deal in generals only, without coming to particular instances, and so are of little use to the bulk of mankind, to men of ordinary capacity and education. And if some of them do descend to particulars, it is to those particulars only which do not affect the generality of men, since they seldom, if ever, occur in common life—such as the enduring imprisonment or tortures, the giving up, in a literal sense, their houses or lands, their husbands or wives, children, or life itself; to none of which we are called, nor are likely to be, unless God should permit times of public persecution to return. In the meantime, I know of no writer in the English tongue, who has described the nature of self-denial in plain and intelligible terms, such as lie level with common understandings, and applied it to those little

particulars which daily occur in common life. A discourse of this kind is wanted still; and it is wanted the more, because in every stage of the spiritual life, although there is a variety of particular hindrances of our attaining grace, or growing therein, yet are they all resolvable into these general ones—either we do not deny ourselves, or we do not take up our cross.

In order to supply this defect in some degree, I shall endeavour to show—first, what it is for a man to deny himself, and what to take up his cross; and, secondly, that if a man be not fully Christ's disciple, it is always owing to the want of this.

1. I shall first endeavour to show what it is for a man to deny himself, and take up his cross daily. This is a point which is of all others most necessary to be considered and thoroughly understood, even

on this account, that it is of all others most opposed by numerous and powerful enemies. All our nature must certainly rise up against this, even in its own defence; the world, consequently—the men who take nature, not grace, for their guide—abhor the very sound of it. And the great enemy of our souls, well knowing its importance, cannot but move every stone against it. But this is not all: even those who have in some measure shaken off the yoke of the devil, who have experienced a real work of grace in their hearts, yet are no friends to this grand doctrine of Christianity, though it is so peculiarly insisted on by their Master. Some of them are as deeply and totally ignorant concerning it, as if there were not one word about it in the Bible. Others are further off still, having unawares imbibed strong prejudices against it. These they have

received, partly from outside Christians, men of a fair speech and behaviour, who want nothing of godliness but the power, nothing of religion but the spirit, and partly from those who did once, if they do not now, “taste of the powers of the world to come.” But, are there any of these who do not both practise self-denial themselves, and recommend it to others? You are little acquainted with mankind, if you doubt of this. There are whole bodies of men, who only do not declare war against it. To go no further than our own neighbourhood, I might point out more than one body of Christians, professing to enjoy a peculiar light of faith, few of whom even profess to practise it all; few of whom either recommend it themselves, or are pleased with them that do. Rather, do they not continually represent it in the most odious colours, as if it were seeking “salvation

by works,” or “seeking to establish our own righteousness.” Therefore, you are in constant danger of being wheedled, hectored, or ridiculed out of this important Gospel-doctrine, either by false teachers or false brethren (more or less beguiled from the simplicity of the Gospel), if you are not deeply grounded therein. Let fervent prayer then go before, accompany, and follow what you are now about to read, that it may be written in your heart by the finger of God, so as never to be erased.

But what is self-denial? Wherein are we to deny ourselves? And whence does the necessity of this arise? I answer—the will of God is the supreme unalterable rule for every intelligent creature; equally binding every angel in heaven, and every man upon earth. Nor can it be otherwise; this is the natural necessary result of the relation between crea-

tures and their Creator. But if the will of God be our one rule of action in everything, great and small, it follows by undeniable consequence, that we are not to do our own will in anything. Here, therefore, we see at once the nature, with the ground and reason of self-denial. We see the nature of self-denial: it is the denying or refusing to follow our own will, from a conviction that the will of God is the only rule of action to us. And we see the reason thereof, because we are creatures—"because it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves."

This reason for self-denial must hold even with regard to the angels of God in heaven; and with regard to man, innocent and holy as he came out of the hands of his Creator. But a further reason for it arises from the condition wherein all men are since the Fall. We are all now "shapen in wickedness, and in



sin did our mother conceive us." Our nature is altogether corrupt, in every power and faculty. And our will, depraved equally with the rest, is wholly bent to indulge our natural corruption. On the other hand, it is the will of God that we resist and counteract that corruption, not at some times, or in some things only, but at all times, and in all things. Here, therefore, is a further ground for constant and universal self-denial.

To illustrate this a little farther. The will of God is a path leading straight to God. The will of man, which once ran parallel with it, is now another path, not only different from it, but, in our present state, directly contrary to it: it leads from God. If, therefore, we walk in the one, we must necessarily quit the other. We cannot walk in both. Indeed, a man of faint heart and feeble

hands may go in two ways, one after the other; but he cannot walk in two ways at the same time; he cannot, at one and the same time, follow his own will, and follow the will of God; he must choose the one or the other—denying God's will, to follow his own; or denying himself, to follow the will of God.

Now, it is undoubtedly pleasing, for the time, to follow our own will, by indulging, in any instance that offers, the corruption of our nature. But by following it in anything, we so far strengthen the perverseness of our will; and by indulging it, we continually increase the corruption of our nature. So, by the food which is agreeable to the palate, we often increase a bodily disease. It gratifies the taste, but it inflames the disorder; it brings pleasure, but it also brings death.

On the whole, then, to deny ourselves

is to deny our own will, where it does not fall in with the will of God, and that however pleasing it may be. It is to deny ourselves any pleasure which does not spring from, and lead to God; that is, in effect, to refuse going out of our way, though into a pleasant flowery path—to refuse what we know to be deadly poison, though agreeable to the taste.

And every one that would follow Christ, that would be his real disciple, must not only “deny himself,” but “take up his cross” also. A cross is anything contrary to our will, anything displeasing to our nature. So that taking up our cross goes a little further than denying ourselves; it rises a little higher, and is a more difficult task to flesh and blood—it being more easy to forego pleasure than to endure pain.

Now, in running the race which is set before us, according to the will of

God, there is often a cross lying in the way—that is, something which is not only not joyous, but grievous; something which is contrary to our will, which is displeasing to our nature. What, then, is to be done? The choice is plain: either we must take up our cross, or we must turn aside from the way of God—from the holy commandment delivered to us; if we do not stop altogether, or turn back to everlasting perdition.

In order to the healing of that corruption, that evil disease, which every man brings with him into the world, it is often needful to pluck out, as it were, a right eye, to cut off a right hand; so painful is either the thing itself which must be done, or the only means of doing it: the parting, suppose, with a foolish desire, with an inordinate affection; or a separation from the object of it, without which it can never be extinguished.

In the former kind, the tearing away such a desire or affection, when it is deeply rooted in the soul, is often like the piercing of a sword, yea, like “the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow” (Heb. iv. 12). The Lord then “fits” upon the soul “as a refiner’s fire,” to burn up all the dross thereof. And this is a cross indeed; it is essentially painful; it must be so in the very nature of the thing. The soul cannot be thus torn asunder, it cannot pass through the fire, without pain.

In the latter kind, the means to heal a sin-sick soul, to cure a foolish desire, an inordinate affection, are often painful, not in the nature of the thing, but from the nature of the disease. So, when our Lord said to the rich young man, “Go, sell that thou hast, and give it to the poor” (as well knowing this was the

only means of healing his covetousness), the very thought of it gave him so much pain, that "he went away sorrowful," choosing rather to part with his hope of heaven than his possessions on earth. This was a burden he could not consent to lift, a cross he would not take up. And in the one kind or the other, every follower of Christ will surely have need to "take up his cross daily."

The taking up differs a little from bearing his cross. We are then properly said to bear our cross, when we endure what is laid upon us without our choice, with meekness and resignation. Whereas, we do not properly take up our cross but when we voluntarily suffer what is in our power to avoid; when we willingly embrace the will of God, though contrary to our own; when we choose what is painful, because it is the will of our wise and gracious Creator.

And thus it behoves every disciple of Christ to “take up,” as well as to bear, his cross. Indeed, in one sense, it is not his alone; it is common to him and many others, seeing “there is no temptation befalls any man, *εἰ μὴ ἀνθρώπινος*, but such as is common to men”—such as is incident and adapted to their common nature and situation in the present world. But in another sense, as it is considered with all its circumstances, it is his, peculiar to himself; it is prepared of God for him; it is given by God to him as a token of his love. And if he receives it as such, and, after using such means to remove the pressure as Christian wisdom directs, lies as clay in the potter’s hand, it is disposed and ordered by God for his good, both with regard to the quality of it, and in respect to its quantity and degree, its duration, and every other circumstance.



In all this we may easily conceive our blessed Lord to act as the physician of our souls, not merely “for his own pleasure, but for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness” (Heb. xii. 10). If, in searching our wounds, he puts us to pain, it is only in order to heal them. He cuts away what is putrified or un-sound, in order to preserve the sound part. And if we freely choose the loss of a limb, rather than that the whole body should perish, how much more should we choose, figuratively, to cut off a right hand, rather than that the whole soul should be cast into hell?

We see plainly, then, both the nature and ground of “taking up our cross.” It does not imply the “disciplining ourselves” (as some speak), the literally tearing our own flesh, the wearing hair-cloth or iron girdles, or anything else that would impair our bodily health (although

we know not what allowance God may make for those who act thus through involuntary ignorance), but the embracing the will of God, though contrary to our own; the choosing wholesome though bitter medicines; the freely accepting temporary pain, of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, when it is either essentially or accidentally necessary to eternal pleasure.

2. I am, secondly, to show, that it is always owing to the want either of self-denial, or taking up his cross, that any man does not thoroughly follow him, is not fully a disciple of Christ.

It is true, this may be partly owing, in some cases, to the want of the means of grace, of hearing the true Word of God spoken with power, of the sacraments, or of Christian fellowship. But where none of these is wanting, the great hindrance of our receiving or growing

in the grace of God, is always the want of denying ourselves, or taking up our cross.

A few instances will make this plain. A man hears the Word which is able to save his soul. He is well pleased with what he hears, acknowledges the truth, and is a little affected by it. Yet he remains “dead in trespasses and sins,” senseless and unawakened. Why is this? Because he will not part with his bosom sin, though he knows it is an abomination to the Lord. He came to hear, full of lust and unholy desires; and he will not part with them. Therefore, no deep impression is made upon him, but his foolish heart is still hardened—that is, he is still senseless and unawakened, because he will not deny himself.

Suppose he begins to awake out of sleep, and his eyes are a little opened, why are they so quickly closed again? Why does he again sink into the deep

sleep of death? Because he again yields to his bosom sin; he drinks again of the pleasing poison; therefore it is impossible that any lasting impression should be made upon his heart—that is, he relapses into his fatal insensibility, because he will not deny himself.

But this is not the case with all. We have many instances of those who, when once awakened, sleep no more. The impressions, once received, do not wear away; they are not only deep, but lasting. And yet, many of these have not found what they seek: they mourn, and yet are not comforted. Now, why is this? It is because they do not “bring forth fruits meet for repentance” (Matt. iii. 8); because they do not, according to the grace they have received, “cease from evil, and do good.” They do not cease from the easily-besetting sin—the sin of their constitution, of their educa-

tion, or of their profession. Or they omit doing the good they may, and know they ought to do, because of some disagreeable circumstance attending it—that is, they do not attain faith, because they will not “deny themselves, or take up their cross.”

But this man did receive “the heavenly gift;” he did “taste of the powers of the world to come” (Heb. vi. 4, 5); he saw “the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. iv. 6). The “peace which passeth all understanding” did “rule his heart and mind” (Phil. iv. 7); and the love of God was shed abroad therein by the Holy Ghost which was given unto him (Rom. v. 5). Yet he is now weak as another man. He again relishes the things of earth, and has more taste for the things which are seen, than for those which are not seen. The eye of his

understanding is closed again, so that he cannot "see him that is invisible" (Heb. xi. 27). His love is waxed cold, and the peace of God no longer rules in his heart. And no marvel; for he has again given place to the devil, and grieved the Holy Spirit of God. He has turned again unto folly, to some pleasing sin—if not in outward act, yet in heart. He has given place to pride, or anger, or desire, to self-will, or stubbornness. Or he did not stir up the gift of God which was in him; he gave way to spiritual sloth, and would not be at the pains of "praying always, and watching thereunto with all perseverance" (Eph. vi. 18)—that is, he made shipwreck of the faith, for want of self-denial and taking up his cross daily.

But perhaps he has not made shipwreck of the faith: he has still a measure of the Spirit of adoption, which continues

to witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. However, he is not “going on to perfection” (Heb. vi. 1); he is not as one hungering and thirsting after righteousness, panting after the whole image and full enjoyment of God, as the hart after the water-brook (Psalm xlii. 1): rather, he is weary and faint in his mind, and, as it were, hovering between life and death. And why is he thus, but because he hath forgotten the Word of God?—“By works is faith made perfect?” He does not use all diligence in working the works of God. He does not “continue instant in prayer” (Rom. xii. 12), private as well as public; in communicating, hearing, meditation, fasting, and religious conference. If he does not wholly neglect some of these means, at least he does not use them with all his might. Or he is not zealous of works of charity, as well as works of piety.



He is not merciful after his power, with the full ability which God giveth. He does not fervently serve the Lord by doing good to men, in every kind and in every degree he can, to their souls as their bodies. And why does he not continue in prayer? Because in times of dryness it is pain and grief unto him. He does not continue in hearing at all opportunities—because sleep is sweet, or it is cold, or dark, or rainy. But why does he not continue in works of mercy? Because he cannot feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, unless he retrench the expense of his own apparel, or use cheaper and less pleasing food. Beside which, the visiting the sick, or those that are in prison, is attended with many disagreeable circumstances. And so are most works of spiritual mercy; reproof in particular. He would reprove his neighbour; but sometimes shame, sometimes fear, comes

between. For he may expose himself, not only to ridicule, but to heavier inconvenience too. Upon these, and the like considerations, he omits one or more, if not all, works of mercy and piety. Therefore, his faith is not made perfect, neither can he grow in grace—namely, because he will not “deny himself, and take up his daily cross.”

It manifestly follows, that it is always owing to the want, either of self-denial, or taking up his cross, that a man does not thoroughly follow his Lord, that he is not fully a disciple of Christ. It is owing to this that he who is dead in sin does not awake, though the trumpet be blown; that he who begins to awake out of sleep, yet has no deep or lasting conviction; that he who is deeply and lastingly convinced of sin, does not attain remission of sins; that some who have received this heavenly gift retain

it not, but make shipwreck of the faith; and that others, if they do not “draw back to perdition” (Heb. x. 39), yet are “weary and faint in their minds” (Heb. xii. 3), and do not reach the “mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. iii. 14).

3. How easily may we learn from hence, that they “knew neither the Scripture, nor the power of God” (Matt. xxii. 29), who directly or indirectly, in public or in private, oppose the doctrine of self-denial and the daily cross. How totally ignorant are these men of a hundred particular texts, as well as of the general tenor of the whole oracles of God! And how entirely unacquainted must they be with true, genuine, Christian experience—of the manner wherein the Holy Spirit ever did, and does at this day, work in the souls of men! They may talk, indeed, very loudly and con-

fidently (a natural fruit of ignorance), as though they were the only men who understood either the Word of God, or the experience of his children. But their words are, in every sense, vain words; they are weighed in the balance, and found wanting.

We may learn from hence, secondly, the real cause why not only many particular persons, but even bodies of men, who were once burning and shining lights, have now lost both their light and heat. If they did not hate and oppose, they at least lightly esteemed this precious Gospel doctrine. If they did not boldly say, "*Abnegationem omnem proculamus, inter-necioni damus*" ("We trample all self-denial under foot; we devote it to destruction"), yet they neither valued it according to its high importance, nor took any pains in practising it.

We may learn from hence, thirdly,

that it is not enough for a minister of the Gospel not to oppose the doctrine of self-denial—to say nothing concerning it. Nay, he cannot satisfy his duty by saying a little in favour of it. If he would indeed be pure from the blood of all men, he must speak of it frequently and largely; he must inculcate the necessity of it in the clearest and strongest manner; he must press it with all his might, on all persons, at all times, and in all places, laying “line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept” (Isaiah xxviii. 10). So shall he have a conscience void of offence; so shall he save his own soul, and those that hear him.

Lastly, see that you apply this, every one of you, to your own souls. Meditate upon it when you are in secret—ponder it in your hearts. Take care not only to understand it thoroughly, but

to remember it to your life's end. Cry unto the strong for strength, that you may no sooner understand than enter upon the practice of it. Delay not the time, but practise it immediately, from this very hour; practise it universally, on everyone of the thousand occasions which will occur in all circumstances of life; practise it daily, without intermission, from the hour you first set your hand to the plough, and perseveringly endure therein to the end, till your spirit return to God.



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