

DIRECTIONS FOR A GODLY LIFE

———— HENRY TOZER ————



CROWDEDSHIP

DIRECTIONS
FOR
A GODLY LIFE

ESPECIALLY FOR COMMUNICATING
AT THE LORD'S TABLE.

INTENDED FIRST FOR PRIVATE USE; NOW
PUBLISHED FOR THE GOOD OF THOSE WHO
DESIRE THE SAFETY OF THEIR OWN SOULS,
AND SHALL BE PLEASED TO MAKE USE
THEREOF.

BY HENRY TOZER (1602-1650)

CROWDEDSHIP

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DEDICATION

To the Honorable Gentleman, Mr. Lorenzo Cary, Son to the R. Honorable Viscount Faulkland, Lord Deputy of Ireland.

Worthy Sir:

Since the time that it first pleased your honorable Father to commend you unto the religious government of this College, wherein you now live, your carriage has been so sweet and lovely, that it has won, I dare say, the heart of each member thereof to a readiness of respecting this your goodness, as in word so in deed, according to their several places and dignities. Neither could I suffer myself, standing in a more near relation than any of the rest unto you, to come short in the performance of this office; Wherefore I here offer unto your religious meditation this ensuing treatise, collected and composed first for private use, but now published; not to gain the applause of any (from which my own unworthiness sufficiently checks me) but chiefly for these two respects; (1) first to testify that love, which I both owe unto you and am ready to make good; (2) secondly and more principally to invite you to a due consideration of those holy duties therein contained, that by a seasonable knowledge of the same your actions may be the more carefully ordered, and God's name in the faithful practice thereof more fully glorified. The subject is a matter not of human learning, but of God's service; and thereof a part, without exception, the greatest; the due receiving of the holy communion. A duty, I confess, better known, then well considered; and more

often thought on, then sincerely practiced. If it were not so, bad actions would not be so commonly privileged by the greatness of the Agents, as now they are; but they to whom God has given most honor here, would ever think it their greatest glory to honor him most again by their faithful service unto him. And good reason why they should, if they remember that to whom God has given most, of them he requires most again. Yea such, who have the precedency of others in place and dignity, may do well to consider, that, in making a conscience of matters of Religion and leading their lives according to the rules thereof, they do not only provide well for the salvation of their own souls, but give a good occasion to others also, while they happily provoke them to the practice of the same duties by their good examples: which are ever held as lively precepts, and serve for a secret reproof to an ingenuous inferior, when he shall see himself defective in that, wherein his betters have gone before him. Let the Honorable and Mighty thus remember how far they shall honor God by a religious life, and then they cannot but acknowledge that it is their glorious freedom to be his humble servants. Others, if they please, may take notice of this persuasion; and perhaps they would, if I were not unworthy to advise them: but now I speak to you alone, whom I well know willing, as freely to make use of others help, so truly to accept of this from me. Your own happiness you must confess, with thanks to God, that by his providence you live in that Society, whose Religion is as firm as undefiled; where you cannot say you want the rule either of loving precepts or example; according unto which you have already joined with the rest in a religious communicating at the Lord's Table. My desire is to persuade you to a constant perseverance in what you

have so well begun; so that devoting your tender years, with those which follow unto the service of the Almighty, you may again from him receive and fully enjoy his daily blessing, which does ever attend on those that truly seek him. Some meditations which perhaps may serve for your direction, I here present unto your view; in which I freely acknowledge almost nothing mine (to prevent the censure of a curious Reader) but only the labor of composing; this I now commend to you, and you unto the blessed providence of the most Highest resting ever

Yours truly in the Lord

Henry Tozer

1.

WHAT A SACRAMENT IS AND HOW MANY THERE BE

DEFINING SACRAMENT

A sacrament is an outward visible sign of an inward and invisible grace; ordained by God, whereby he does seal unto us his covenant of grace made in the blood of Christ, and we again testify our faith and piety towards him: so that it is both a sign in respect of the thing signified, and a seal in respect of the covenant thereby sealed unto us. The word sacrament does properly signify an oath, whereby soldiers bound themselves unto their general; whence it is taken to signify that obligation, whereby we tie ourselves to the blessed and sweet service of Jesus Christ: for hereby we, as Christ's Soldiers, first bind ourselves by promise of obedience to fight under the Lord's banner against the world, the flesh and the devil; Secondly we put on the cognizance and Arms, the Colors and mark of Christ by professing our faith in him, so that it may appear unto the world to whom we do belong.

NUMBER OF SACRAMENTS

Now Sacraments are of two forts. First of the Old Testament, which were two, first Circumcision, secondly the Passover. The first was ordained for a sign of entrance into the Covenant; the second for an assurance of confirmation of, and continuance in the same, both which are now abolished. And instead of them, we now have the Sacraments of the New Testament, which are likewise two, first Baptism answerable to Circumcision; secondly the Lord's Supper

to the Passover: both signified by that water and blood, which issued out of the side of Christ, when it was pierced by the soldiers on the Cross. Of these the first is called the Sacrament of our Nativity or entrance, because by it we are assured that we are received into the Covenant of Grace, and so are regenerate and belong to the flock of Christ: the second is called the Sacrament of our growth and perseverance, whereby we grow up in Christ, and are assured that we shall be still kept in this estate. So that both are necessary; the one to assure us of our entrance into, and the other of our continuance in the estate of Grace. For although that Grace once conferred cannot be lost, yet our assurance does often want strengthening by reason of our manifold temptations, against which we are comforted by the remembrance of Christ's death and passion: which does also teach us why the Sacrament of Baptism is received but once, and the Lord's Supper often; because our birth is signified by our Baptism, and we can be borne but once; but we daily stand in need of food and strengthening, and therefore we often receive the Supper of the Lord, that our souls may be nourished unto life everlasting.

2.

WHAT THE LORD'S SUPPER IS

That we may rightly understand the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper we must know two things: (1) what it is and, (2) what belongs to the due receiving of it.

WHAT IT IS

For the first, the Lord's Supper is a Sacrament, consisting of Bread and Wine lawfully consecrated and distributed; instituted by Christ himself for a continual remembrance of the Death and Passion of Christ, and the benefits which we receive thereby.

This institution was at Christ's last Supper after he had eaten the Passover with his Disciples; so that it is called a Supper in respect of the time of the institution; and the Lord's Supper in respect of the Author, the Lord Christ; as also in respect of the end thereof, which is partly to set forth the Lord's Death, and the spiritual food therein received, namely the body and blood of Christ himself.

In this Sacrament we must consider two things: (1) the parts and (2) the end.

The parts are two: first the outward Signs, and secondly the thing signified. The signs are either representing, namely the elements themselves, or applying signs, which are the actions about those elements.

The elements are two: Bread and Wine; not Bread only, but both, according to Christ's institution: and that asunder, not the Bread dipped in the Wine, as some will have it; because Christ's blood

was shed out of his body for our sins, and we are to receive these signs as representing Christ, not whole but wounded and pierced.

Now Christ chose those elements before any other, because they best serve to set forth Christ's Body and Blood; for as Bread by diverse breakings and pressings comes to be perfect, yea the chiefest, food of our bodies, still giving a good relish, when other things do not, and is also more common to all than any other. So the body of Christ by many torments was made the chief nourishment of our souls, remaining always most sweet and pleasant, and common to all that can receive him by faith; and as Wine does cherish and comfort us, satisfy our thirst, purge away many corrupt humors, and maketh us bold and adventurous: so the blood of Christ revives and gladdens our drooping souls, satisfies our spiritual thirst, purges us from all our sins, and makes us courageous against all fear of our enemy the Devil; again as bread is made of many grains into one loaf, and wine of many grapes into one cup: so we, partaking thereof, and of Christ, by faith, are made one with him as our head, and also one among ourselves as members of his body; thus of the elements.

The Actions in this sacrament are of two sorts: (1) of the Minister, and (2) of the Communicants.

The actions of the Minister are these: (1) Setting apart, and (2) blessing of the Elements, whereby is signified that Christ Jesus was set apart and sanctified for us, as it is John 17:19. (3) Breaking and pouring out, and (4) distributing to the Communicants; whereby is signified that Christ's Body was crucified and his blood shed, and that the benefits thereof are

offered unto us, if we have faith to receive then, as it is John. 3:15. *He was lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should have life everlasting.*

The actions of the Communicants are two: (1) Taking, and (2) Eating and drinking.

By which is signified that they, which receive benefit by Christ, must receive him by faith applying his merits to their own souls, as John 1:12: *As many as received him to them he gave power to become the Sons of God, even to them which believe on his name.*

Thus of the signs; the thing signified is the Body and Blood of Christ, with the benefits, which we receive thereby; namely the strengthening and refreshing of our souls in the remission of our sins: and this we receive, not of the Minister (for he gives only the signs) but of God himself, apprehending the same by our faith; for Christ is not signified in these signs as in a picture, but exhibited unto us; being himself present in the Sacrament, though not corporally to the Bread and Wine, yet spiritually to our faith; for though his Body be in Heaven and must there remain until the last day, as it is Acts 3:2; yet we may feed on him spiritually by faith by applying his death and passion unto our sinful souls: so that there is one union between Christ and the Elements, which is Symbolical, and another between Christ and us, which is spiritual and real.

DUE RECEIVING OF IT

The ends of this Sacrament are twofold: (1) in respect of others, and (2) in respect of ourselves.

First, in respect of others, to testify unto them that faith which we profess; so that they seeing our readiness herein may have their hearts also stirred up to such good duties. In respect of ourselves it concerns, either what we have received from, or what we are to return to God. In the first respect it serves. First for remembrance; namely, of the death of Christ; for, as often as we receive this, we show the Lord's death till he come (1 Corinthians 11:26). Secondly, for confirmation unto us; and that, both of our union among ourselves. *For we being many, are one Bread and one Body, for we all partake of one Bread* (1 Corinthians 10:17), as also of our communion with Christ. For as the Bread and Wine are turned into the substance of our bodies; so we by faith are united unto Christ, and made flesh of his flesh; *for his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed* (John 6:55), and for this cause it is called the communion.

Second, in respect to ourselves. In the second respect concerning that which we are to return unto God, it serves to testify our thankfulness to God for his mercy in giving us his Son, and in him all things, and assuring us thereof by this Seal: which we cannot but do, when we consider the torments that he endured for our sins, which were indeed the very nails and spears that pierced him. For this cause, it is called the Eucharist, because in it we offer up our thanks unto God. So also, it may be called a Sacrifice; not that we do therein offer up Christ unto God, (for Christ himself at once finished this offering of his Body on the Cross) but because we offer up our thankful hearts unto God for his mercy in Christ, so that it is a sacrifice, not of Christ, but of our thankfulness.

3.

THE NECESSITY OF RECEIVING THE LORD'S SUPPER

That we may receive this Sacrament, as we ought, we must consider two things: (1) the Necessity, and (2) the right manner of receiving the same.

THE NECESSITY

As for the first, we must know that it is not a thing indifferent for us to receive or not to receive at our pleasure, but that we ought to do it though not every Sabbath after the custom observed in the Primitive Church, yet without fail, as often as occasion is offered; according to the example of those in the Acts, who continued steadfast in breaking of bread (Acts 2:42).

The Necessity of which duty will further appear, if we consider these two things: (1) the principal cause, which often keeps us from it, and (2) the motives, which may draw us unto it.

First, the Principal Cause. First, that which makes us backward in the performance of it is questionless the policy of our Arch-enemy, the Devil; who strives by all means to draw us away. He draws away either by a careless neglect of our chiefest good to feed rather on our own foolish imaginations; as he did them in the Gospel, *who had rather see their ground, or prove their oxen, than taste of that Supper to which they were invited* (Luke 14:18-19). Or else, by a timorous fearfulness of our own unworthiness to approach unto so holy a banquet, as this is. And truly, if we could but see that this is his doing, we would by all means strive against his temptations; for,

who amongst us would not endeavor to the utmost, so far to resist his temporal enemy, as that he should not be able to hurt him either in body or in goods? And shall we be more careful for the preservation of our earthly bodies, then of our heavenly Souls, which Christ Jesus has redeemed by his precious blood? God forbid; we must know that God expects more at our hands; and that our souls are never so safe, as when they are in greatest opposition—, and do that which is most displeasing unto our chiefest enemy, the Devil. For the more we please him, the less we please God; and the nearer we are to him, the farther we are from God.

Second, the Motives which may draw us to the performance of this duty are taken from a due consideration of these two things: (1) who it is, which invites us unto it, and (2) what be the consequences of receiving or not receiving.

He which invites us is God himself whose ordinance it is; and who requires it at our hands as a principal part of his service; and therefore as often as we omit it, we may be sure that we offend him; which he himself testified in threatening to cut off that soul from his people, which should forbear to keep the Passover (Numbers 9:13). And if so, then doubtless the neglect of this Sacrament, wherein Christ is so fully exhibited unto us, is very displeasing unto him; which is also expressed in the parable of the great Supper (Luke 14:24). None of those men, which were bidden, shall taste of my Supper. Why? Because they came not when they were invited. And if we refuse to come when the Lord calls, who knows whether he will give us

life until the next invitation? Let us therefore take the Lord's offer, while it is today, lest we be cut off before the morrow.

The next motive is taken from the consequences, and that one of not receiving. If we receive not, we offer a twofold injury; the one to Christ, the other, to ourselves.

To Christ two ways: (1) in contemning his ordinance, who commanded his Disciples to receive it (1 Corinthians 11:24) and in them us, and (2) in neglecting his love towards us; who (as a Father on his deathbed) in the night that he was betrayed, bequeathed this seal and pledge of his love unto us, which therefore ought to be right dear unto us, and at no time neglected when it is offered.

Again, if we receive not, we injure ourselves; and that also two ways. (1) In respect of our name and profession, for if we come not when others do, we expose ourselves to the censure of them, showing that we are at least neglecters, if not contemners of God's ordinance, who will have all to come to it (Matthew 26:27); yea that we have not the life of a Christian in us; *for whosoever eats not the flesh of the Son of man, and drinks his blood, has no life in him* (John 6:53). (2) We injure ourselves from the benefits thereof, for the remembrance of Christ's death and passion (if duly considered) cannot but be a great comfort unto us; which we put from us, as often as we omit the Lord's Supper: and thus much we may assure ourselves, that the Devil will be ready to take the least occasion to suggest other meditations unto us. And what a miserable thing is it for us to be exercised in our own pleasures or such like, when others,

with whom we are bound to be present, are reverently gathered together, to the comfort of their own souls, to feed at the Lord's Table? If we say that we are then exercised in other good duties, as reading the Word of God or such like; we must know that such duties (good in themselves) are not acceptable to God at such times; and who knows, seeing that herein we neglect the Lord's ordinance, how far he will give the Devil leave to tempt us, and draw us away even from those duties also to wicked imaginations?

THE RIGHT MANNER OF RECEIVING

The Consequences of receiving cannot but invite us to a constant performance of this duty. Now these consequences respect either God or ourselves. That which respects God is our duty of thankfulness and praise, which herein we offer unto him for his mercy; which is very pleasant unto him, and necessary to be performed of us; because he is gracious, and his mercy endures forever towards them that fear him; and how then can we but with David, have our hearts ready to sing and praise him with the best member that we have (Psalm 108:1)?

That which respects ourselves is the benefit which we receive thereby; which is twofold: (1) General, and (2) more special.

The General benefits, which we receive by the Lord's Supper, are chiefly two.

1. A supply of all our wants, which we shall be sure to have if we receive aright. For he which eats the flesh of Christ shall never hunger; and he which drinks his blood shall never thirst,

as Christ himself has promised. Neither need we doubt of the truth hereof; for *he is full of grace and truth* (John 1:14), and *in him dwelleth all fullness* (Colossians 1:19). How then can we want anything if we possess him that has all things?

2. An excellent rule to our whole life; for when we hereby consider God's great love unto us, we cannot (if there be any love and fear of God in us) but be careful to avoid anything, which may be displeasing unto him: so that hereby our bodies are made more obedient unto our Souls, and our Souls unto God.

The special benefit which we receive by the Lord's Supper is in regard of our faith; and this again respects either ourselves and others, or else ourselves alone.

1. The first is, a testifying of our faith unto others; for hereby we both show unto others the faith, which we profess; and also by our example stir them up to the performance of the same duty; in this respect therefore it is necessary that we should often receive.

2. In the second respect it is a confirmation and increase of that faith which we have in us: wherein we are to endeavor by all means to continue, as St. Paul taught the disciples (Acts 14:22). And beware that we fall not from our steadfastness, *but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (2 Peter 3:18). Whereof we cannot but be careful, if we consider our weakness; for we are ever subject to Apostasy, and our faith is exceeding weak. We plainly see by our coldness in prayer and other good duties, by our fear of death, and by our love of this

world; for the strengthening of which Christ has left unto us this Sacrament as a special means conducing thereunto; for the Covenant which our faith taketh hold of as it is contained in the Word of God, so it is sealed unto us by this Sacrament. And therefore, Christ calls the cup, the cup of the New Testament, because it seals unto us the Covenant of God in the New Testament, accomplished in the shedding of Christ's blood. Now if a King should in pity and compassion send a pardon under his Seal unto a poor distressed prisoner; would we not judge that prisoner unworthy of the benefit thereof, if he should either willfully refuse it, or carelessly neglect it? Questionless we would: yet such is our case before God, who, as King of Kings, has sealed unto us by this Sacrament a full remission of all our sins. If we therefore shall either willfully contemn, or at our pleasure receive this pledge of his love, what can we expect at God's hands, but a just removal of this his favor from us? Surely if we join the consideration of our own weakness, which so much needed help, with the meditation of God's mercy, who so freely gives it, we cannot but acknowledge our own misery, if we neglect it. Wherefore, as we fear him, and tender the good of our own Souls, let us be careful in the due performance of this so weighty a business.

EXCUSES FOR ABSENCE

But some are want to frame these excuses for their absence.

1. The often receiving of this Sacrament may breed a disesteem thereof; and therefore, it is safer sometimes to abstain. To which I answer, that in matters temporal (as pleasures, and such like) the

often use may breed contempt, or at least neglect, as it often doth: but in spiritual things it rather breeds a greater desire, because the more we feel and know the goodness of them, the more we seek after them; yet if it so come to pass, that by often receiving, we begin to undervalue the worth of it; we must consider that this neglect arises not from the often use of the thing, but from our corrupt nature; for this Exercise is God's own ordinance; always attended with his blessing, if rightly received; appointed as a means to stir up and increase our zeal and devotion; and therefore it is not likely that it should hinder it. Let not this therefore keep us from the Lord's Table, but let us rather come, that it may be a means to increase our piety.

2. Some will say; I am not prepared, and therefore dare not come: but this indeed is no excuse; for we must know that we ought to be always prepared, our whole life should be a continual preparation, as to all other good duties, so especially to this; being ever ready when the Lord shall call, as our Savior admonishes us (Matthew 24:44).

3. Others will urge: I am to take a journey, or to be employed in such or such a business; and therefore I cannot come. Well, if this journey or the like, must of necessity be performed, your excuse is the safer; but if it may be any way avoided (as oftentimes it may) assure yourself, this is to prefer your own pleasure before that which God commands. A day will certainly come, wherein we must give an account for the neglect of the least of God's ordinances; and then it will be said of such Pretenses, "Who required these things at your hands?"

4. Some are want to urge: I am not in charity, by reason of some wrong which has been offered to me, and therefore I ought not to come. This indeed is an excuse too common; but we must know, that if we be not in charity, it is our own fault. We ought to be in charity and still to preserve it, and certainly a miserable thing it is, that we should prefer to feed on our own malice rather than to eat of the Lord's Supper. This is to hurt ourselves more than we need, even to wrong ourselves because others have wronged us. We should rather seek all means of reconciliation, so that we may remove those impediments of Piety and Religion, and come the more freely to the Lord's Table.

5. Some thus plead for their absence: I am afraid to approach unto the Lord's Table by reason of my manifold infirmities, which are in me; and therefore I had rather sometimes to refrain, lest I come unworthily, which is a very fearful thing. It is so indeed, but we must consider, that our staying away is no comfort unto us in this case, but rather a means to make us worse, and to pull down God's judgments upon us. We should rather remember the goodness of God, that invites us, promising to refresh those that are heavy laden with their sins (Matthew 11:28), not putting us off for our infirmities; for, if thereof be a willing mind, he accepts us according to that which we have, and not according to that which we have not (2 Corinthians 8:12). Though we want that perfection which others have; yet, if we have a true desire to be refreshed by the merits of Christ, and have a sincere heart before God, he will accept us according to this. Whensoever therefore the Devil shall tempt you to draw away by the consideration of your own infirmity, cheer up yourself with the comfort of the blind man in the Gospel (Mark

10:49). Be of good comfort, behold he calls you. Say unto yourself; Christ Jesus has invited me; and has promised to accept me, if my heart be sincere, humble, and willing. Why then should the consideration of my infirmities keep me from it?

6. Others thus reply: I desire to receive, but I am conscious unto myself of some crying sins which I have committed before God, for which I have not yet sufficiently repented. How then can I partake of this holy banquet in the presence of God? Is it so? Are you poor, and yet will you refuse gold when it is offered unto you? Who will then pity you for your poverty? Are you desperately sick, and will you not seek unto the Physician for means of recovery? Who will then bemoan you for your disease? Behold, Christ Jesus is the Physician of your soul; as well able to heal it of all its diseases, as he did the bodies of those, which came unto him, of their infirmities. Forsake not then this heavenly Physician; but labor by a serious repentance to discharge your conscience of those your sins, and then come speedily unto him. It is the counsel of the Apostle (1 Corinthians 11) who bids us to examine: and then eat, not go away. First examine, then eat of this Bread and drink of this cup. If you say, I had rather stay till the next opportunity, that I may have the more time to repent; consider that the longer you stay, the more sins you will run into, and then it will be so much the harder to repent as you ought. Besides that, how do you know, whether God will give you grace and time to repent then or not? He has promised indeed to have mercy upon a sinner, at what time soever he shall repent; but he has not promised to give him grace to repent when he will. Seek the Lord therefore while he offers himself unto you, that you may find mercy when you seek it.

Lastly, some in a proud manner thus excuse (or rather justify) their absence. I do already sufficiently believe whatsoever is proposed in the word of God; and therefore, what need have I to receive this Sacrament so often, as a seal to confirm my faith? It does no way confer grace unto me; and my faith is so firm, that I persuade myself I need not a seal to strengthen it, so much as others do, whose faith is weaker; wherefore I think that I may sometimes forbear. But know, O vain man which disputes with your God, that this is God's ordinance, a principal part of his service, which therefore ought diligently to be performed, though it did no way profit us, even because God had commanded it. Yea, when we have done all those things which are commanded us, we must say that we are unprofitable servants, we have done but that which was our duty to do (Luke 17:10). Besides, is your faith so strong that it needs no further strengthening? Do you not daily perceive in you a weakness of understanding in matters of Piety and Religion; a frailty in your memory, and a continual disorder in your affections? If not, know this much; that it is a misery to want, but a greater misery not to be sensible of our wants. And this also know for a certain truth, that when you find in yourself either none, or at leastwise a small desire of hearing God's word and receiving the Sacraments; know, I say, that there is surely some sin or other in you not well repented of, which cloyeth [chokes] your soul, that it cannot delight in those spiritual exercises. Let us therefore endeavor to come to the Lord's Table as often as we are invited. When we do come, let us take heed that we come not for fashions sake, or to please men, or in any opinion of our own merit in this action; for this is not a celebration, but a profanation of the Lord's

ordinance, because herein we serve not God but ourselves. This is a fearful thing; for God is not as man that he should be deceived; neither sees he as man sees; for man judges only according to the outward appearance, but God searches the very heart and reins; and will one day as certainly punish the profaners of his ordinance, as the contemners thereof. Wherefore, as we ought in the first place to be fully persuaded of the necessity; so should we in the second by all means labor to come to the knowledge of the right manner of receiving; which is the next thing to be considered.

4. THE NECESSITY OF PREPARATION

He which desires to receive at the Lord's Table in a right manner, must make conscience of three duties, which are necessarily to be performed.

1. A diligent Preparation before [ch. 4].
2. A seasonable Meditation in the time of receiving [chs. 5-11].
3. A religious practice after the same in our lives and conversations [ch. 12].

In the first (as before in the matter of receiving) we must take notice of two things: (1) first, the Necessity, and (2) the right manner of Preparation.

The Necessity will plainly appear, if we consider these two things: (1) In whose presence it is, that we are to receive, and (2) the danger which we bring on ourselves by not being prepared.

IN WHOSE PRESENCE WE RECEIVE.

As for the first, we are to sit, and feed in the presence of the Lord himself. Now if any, even the best of us, should be invited by a King to his Princely table, he would be careful to present himself (if he reverence his presence) in the best manner that he could, putting on then especially (if he have any better than other) his best apparel, and disposing all things in the most decent order, so that he might be the better accepted. If so, with what fear and reverence should we then approach unto the Table of this King of Kings,

when he invites us? Who stands there ready attended with his Angels to behold those, which present themselves; and will soon espy out that man, who shall dare to approach before him, not having on his wedding garment; and what can such expect, but, with the man in the Gospel, *a casting out into utter darkness?* (Matthew 22:12). Neither must we think to deceive the Lord with an hypocritical outside; for he looks not to the outward gesture only, but to the inward parts of the soul. It is not so much a clean hand or curious attire which makes us accepted of God, as a pure heart and a cleansed soul, adorned with faith and repentance. We may for a time deceive mortal men, such as ourselves; but when the secrets of our hearts shall be made manifest, then shall our hypocrisy, as well as our negligence, be laid open to our destruction. Let us therefore humble ourselves before God, and prepare ourselves aright, that we may escape the danger which will otherwise fall upon us; which is the second thing to be considered in the Necessity of preparation. The danger of not being prepared is particularly set forth unto us by considering the offense, which we herein commit, and the reward thereof.

THE DANGER OF COMING UNPREPARED

If we come unprepared, and so receive unworthily, our offense is no less than to be *guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ*, as Saint Paul says (1 Corinthians 11:27); that is, we offer special disgrace and indignity unto Christ, in not receiving him with that reverence which we ought: which offense, as it is in itself very heinous so it draws on us a fearful punishment; for the Prophet Jeremiah has pronounced him *accursed which does the work of the Lord deceitfully*

(Jeremiah 48:10). And if it be so in other things, which are of less moment, what can we expect for the abusing of this so weighty a matter? The Apostle sets down at full the fearfulness hereof; when he says (1 Corinthians 11:29) that he, *which eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks his own damnation*. Than which what can be more terrible? Neither is the Scripture silent in showing us the judgments of God upon such offenders; as we may plainly see, both in the Old Testament, in the sudden death of Uzza for rash touching of the Ark; and also in the New, in the binding hand and foot for want of the wedding garment. Wherefore let the danger hereof move us to a careful preparation, before we presume to come unto the Lord's Table. But some may say; I persuade myself, that I can by no means be worthy to receive this Sacrament, and how then can I receive worthily? It is true, if we truly consider our own unworthiness and the excellency of this Sacrament, we cannot by any means become worthy thereof. But, this must be our comfort, that he is truly worthy whom God in mercy accepts as worthy; and so he will us, if we come unto him in humility and reverence. Let us therefore, according to the Apostles rule, first *try and examine ourselves, and then eat of this Supper*. which that we may the better do, we ought in the next place to take notice of the right manner of preparation.

5. CONCERNING EXAMINATION IN GENERAL

For our better performance of the duty of preparation, we must be careful to set aside a convenient time before the communion; wherein, laying aside all other impediments, we ought seriously to be exercised in three duties:

1. A diligent examination of our fitness and worthiness to receive,
2. A comfortable premeditation of the benefits, which we are to receive, and
3. Earnest prayer unto God for a blessing upon our endeavors, so that we may be accepted to receive those benefits.

In our Examination we are to consider: (1) To whom this duty belongs, and (2) how it is to be performed.

TO WHOM THE DUTY BELONGS

The first, we learn from Saint Paul (1 Corinthians 11) who bids *every man to try and examine himself*; so that we ourselves are to examine ourselves. Indeed the Ministers of the Word of God, and all such, to whom God has committed the charge and care of others, ought carefully to try and examine those, which belong unto them; so that they may be the more fit. Inferiors ought also willingly to submit themselves unto their trial; yea, if it be not offered, to seek their help when they doubt of anything; so that by their directions they may the more cheerfully go on. These are

duties, which God requires at the hands of all. The neglect whereof will one day fall heavy upon those, which shall fail in the due performance thereof. Yet this is not sufficient; for we are, for the most part, full of hypocrisy, ready to hide our sins from others. Yea we are so witty in iniquity, that we can behave ourselves so smoothly, in respect of the outward show, that others shall find no fault in us at all; though notwithstanding our consciences do all the while accuse us of some sins lurking within us: wherefore we are commanded also to try and examine every man himself in particular.

HOW IT IS TO BE PERFORMED

This Examination must be twofold: (1) General, and (2) Particular. In the first we must examine ourselves in these two things.

1. Whether we be in the number of the faithful or not; which is very needful to be considered, otherwise we partake in vain; for as our bodies can receive no nourishing and strengthening from the food, which we daily receive, unless they have some life in them before: so neither can our souls, if they be void of the life of grace, receive any comfort by this spiritual food in the Lord's Supper; which does continue and increase life, where it finds it; but works none, where there is none before. Let us therefore in the first place diligently try whether Christ be in us or not; of which we shall the more fully assure ourselves, if we can find this persuasion in us, that we (as our forefathers were) *are strangers and pilgrims here* (Hebrews 11:13), looking for a city (as Abraham did) *which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God; and that we are made free from the bondage of sin by the Son of God, Christ Jesus* (John 8:36)

and so with David, *put our whole trust and rely only on his mercy* (Psalm 52:9).

2. We are to make trial of our readiness, whether we be willing and have a desire to partake of the Lord's Supper or no. A willing mind God required of those, which *offered anything for the building of the Tabernacle*; as it is Exodus 25:2, and of those, *which offered him any burnt offerings* (Leviticus 19:5). If so in these, which were but shadows of things to come; much more does he expect it at our hands in the performance of this duty, which is the substance itself. Neither yet let us here deceive ourselves, thinking that a bare consent or willing mind is sufficient; it is an hungry desire and appetite, as well as a willingness, to receive meat offered; yea that especially, which testifies a good disposition in the stomach: and God requires in all his service (therefore in this also) that *we serve him with all our heart, and with all our soul* (Deuteronomy 10:12) and *blessed are they, which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled* (Matthew 5:6). For want of this desire it is, that many, when they come to the Lord's Table, are never the better; because God, as he invites, so he feeds none but those that *hunger and thirst* (Isaiah 55:1). Let us therefore try and examine ourselves whether we can say with David (Psalm 42:1), *Like as the heart desireth the water brooks; so longeth my soul after thee, ô God: my soul is a thirst for God, yea even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?* If we can find this desire in us, then happy are we: if not; let us humble ourselves before God and beseech him to work and stir up in us the good motions of his spirit, so that we may attain to some measure of this thirst; and from that go on farther to a particular examination of our fitness to receive.

6. THE EXAMINATION OF OUR KNOWLEDGE

In our particular Examination (because we are dull and ignorant in matters, that concern our Salvation, and also have, and do often offend both God and our neighbors; all which are hindrances to the due performance of this duty), we must examine ourselves in those particulars, which concern both our information in matters which we should understand [ch. 6]; and our reconciliation with those, whom we have offended [ch. 7].

That, which concerns our information, is a good and wholesome knowledge of those things, which God has revealed unto us; which is so necessary, that it is the very ground of all our service of God: for how can we do the will of God aright, if we know it not? *Surely that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good* says Solomon (Proverbs 19:2), and therefore *God will have all men to come to the knowledge of the truth* (1 Timothy 2:6), without which we can reap no comfort unto ourselves in anything that we do; but are as dead men: for *this* (and this only) *is life eternal, that we know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent* (John 17:3). So that without it there is no life: and hence it is that the Lord himself complains, *my people are perished for lack of knowledge* (Hosea 4:6); and hence it comes to pass, that many receive this Sacrament without any benefit unto themselves, because they are not able to discern of it aright. We should therefore all our life long carefully exercise ourselves in the word of God, so that, when we shall come to examine ourselves concerning our Knowledge, we may the more easily, and with the

greater comfort, try our fitness in this respect; whether we have attained to a competent measure of knowledge in the grounds of religion or not. Which that we may the better do, we are to make trial of a twofold Knowledge, which we ought to have: the one concerning God, the other concerning man.

CONCERNING GOD

Concerning God we are to know, that there is but one, only wise, and true God, subsisting in three Persons; the Father begetting the Son; the Son begotten of the Father; and the Holy Ghost proceeding from both: which is a mystery far exceeding our understanding; yet so far are we to know and believe it, as God has revealed it in his word: and therefore first are we to Examine ourselves concerning this knowledge.

CONCERNING MAN

Concerning man we are to know, that he was first created in uprightness *according to the Image of God* (Genesis 1:27), but afterwards fell through disobedience, and was again recovered by the meritorious death of Christ Jesus. This we are to examine according to the two parts of the Word of God, the Law and the Gospel.

The Law.

In the first we shall plainly see what we are in ourselves, even wretched and miserable sinners, corrupt children of disobedient parents; and that we have justly deserved death as a due reward for our manifold sins both original and actual; being carnal, sold under sin, by nature the children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3).

The Gospel.

In the second we shall understand what we are in Christ; and what that covenant is, which God has made unto man in him for the pardoning of their sins which return unto him by repentance and apply the same unto themselves by faith. So that here we are to know two things.

First, the means of our redemption and reconciliation, the Death of Christ: *whom God in love sent into the world, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons* (Galatians 4:5), and *so has delivered us from the power of darkness* (Colossians 1:13).

Second, the means, whereby we may apply this unto ourselves; namely faith; which is a gift of God, begotten and increased by hearing the word, and receiving the Sacrament. Let us therefore seriously examine ourselves, whether we have learned out of the Word of God our first innocence, which we had by creation: our misery, which we fell into by transgression; and the happiness, which we have obtained again by our sweet and blessed redemption: for in those things ought everyone to be instructed, which approaches unto the Lord's Table.

Besides this Knowledge of God and Man, we are further to have a particular Knowledge of the Sacrament itself; where we are to try, whether we do rightly discern the Elements from the Lord's Body, and the true use of them. Wherein we must consider, that the Bread and Wine, (in themselves ordinary) being ordained of Christ, are now become holy; and whereas Christ blessed this Sacrament at the first institution, we are to know that it is a blessed

Sacrament; because, whatsoever he blesses, is blessed; and that it will be a means of great blessing unto us, if rightly received and whereas Christ gave the same after Supper, we must further know, that it was not ordained to satisfy our bodily hunger; for, *if any man thus hunger*, Saint Paul tells him that he must *eat at home* (1 Corinthians 11:34). But it was given for the refreshing of our wearied Souls by the commemoration of Christ's Death for us, and of our communion with him: but of this particular Knowledge of the Sacrament, more in the beginning of the first chapter. In this, as in the former, we must diligently try and examine ourselves; for, except we know all these things, we are not to partake at the Lord's Table; because without it, whatsoever we do, is but blind devotion.

7. THE EXAMINATION OF OUR REPENTANCE

Thus of our information in matters, which we ought to know. As for our reconciliation, we are to examine ourselves in those things, which concern either God or our Neighbors; because we have and do often offend both.

Those, which concern God, are principally two: (1) Repentance whereby we testify our hearty sorrow for offending him, with a desire of amendment [ch. 7], and (2) Faith; whereby we take hold on his mercy, for the pardon and forgiveness of them [ch. 8].

First, we are to try whether we have attained to a competent measure of Repentance. And indeed, if we truly look into ourselves, and consider that we must one day give an account for every idle word, we shall find matter enough for Repentance, if our hearts be not hardened in sin. Now, that it is necessary to examine ourselves herein, appears from this, because without it we have no ground at all for any comfort in Christ Jesus; for he, which is stuffed with his sins, is no more fit to receive Christ, than a glutted stomach it's meat: and again, *unto them that are defiled, there is nothing pure* (Titus 1:15), that is, if through unbelief, they remain in their pollutions; but *unto the pure all things are pure; and if we cleanse our hands and purify our hearts and so draw nigh unto God, he will draw nigh unto us* (James 4:8), *as many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them* (Galatians 6:16). Let us then *search and try our ways and turn unto the Lord* (Lamentations 3:40) and put on David's resolution before we come to the Lord's Table; *I will wash my hands*

in innocence, O Lord, and so will I go to your Altar. (Psalm 26:6). In this examination of our Repentance we must have respect both unto the time past and to come.

In respect of the time past, we are to perform three duties.

SEARCH OUT OUR OWN CORRUPTIONS

First, carefully search our hearts to find out our own corruptions; that knowing them we may the better avoid them which is most necessary to be done and that in the first place; because it is impossible that he should seek to go into the right way, which does not first see his error: and thus much we must know, that he that will not set his sins before him here to his conversion, shall have them set before him hereafter to his confusion, if we will needs cover and hide sins, let us in love and charity cover the sins of others; for, *Love covers a multitude of sin* (1 Peter 4:8), that is, lays them not open before men to their disgrace, who have committed them; as many do, who delight to hear other men's faults ripped up to the quick, but cannot endure to hear of their own. We should not so much exclaim against other men's sins, but rather be humbled for our own, and lay them fully open before ourselves, so that we may come to a more serious repentance for them. Which I think, we cannot but do (except we have more than stony hearts) when we consider the torments which Christ suffered for our sins; and see our own misery, what we are in ourselves: for this must needs drive us unto God, as a desperate disease unto the Physician; and make us utterly to accuse ourselves and say, *I acknowledge my fault, and my sin is ever before me* (Psalm 51:3).

Now the chief means, which we can use to come to the knowledge of our sins, are these two: (1) A continual meditation in the Word of God, wherein (as in a glass) we shall plainly see all our deformities. (2) A seasonable conference and conversation with such as are themselves touched with their sins, both which are excellent means: and therefore we ought sincerely love the Word of God, because it does discover our sins unto us; and diligently read, and exercise ourselves in it, so that we may come to a full knowledge of it; and also heartily effect and love those whom we see to be thus affected. When we have thus considered, that we ought, and how we may discover our sins; let us examine ourselves whether we have thus done in our life past or no, giving thanks to God that he has at any time discovered such or such sins unto us: if we find that we have not thus done (as God knows, we are all too slack herein) let us seasonably repent us of this neglect; and be sorry that we have no sooner repented; desiring God that he will be pleased ever more and more to discover our sins unto us, so that we may the better forsake them and serve him, as we ought. Having thus unfolded our sins before our eyes, let us in the second place examine; how in sorrow we have humbled ourselves to God for them; for this is that, even our sorrow, which must move God to compassion; and we know that *God is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart, and will save such as be of an humble spirit* (Psalm 34:18) and therefore David, being pressed down with the burden of his sins, comforted himself in this saying: *The Sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God shalt you not despise* (Psalm 51:17). Whereas on the contrary, if we have no true sorrow, if our souls be not wounded within us for our sins, we

cannot expect that either we or our prayers should be accepted of God; or, that we shall with the Sacrament receive any comfort to our souls if we come not to it with sorrow for our former transgressions.

Now there is a twofold sorrow: (1) Servile; when we are sorry for our sins (as some servants are, when they have offended their Masters) not because we have sinned against such a Master, but because we have thereby made ourselves subject to the punishment due unto our offense: this is not that sorrow, which God expects of us; for it rather drives us to despair, than to any pious meditations. (2) Filial; when (like natural children) we grieve for our sins; not so much in respect of the punishment due unto us, as that we have sinned against so merciful and loving a Father. This is that true sorrow, with which we ought to be affected: which we may obtain two ways. First by ourselves. Secondly, by the help of others also.

By ourselves; and so by the consideration especially of two things: First who it is that we have offended; even God himself, who in tender mercy towards us, gave his only begotten Son to die for our sins: the consideration of which cannot but work in us a true sorrow, that we should offend so merciful a God; for what son is there (if he have in him the affection of a son) but would grieve that he should offend a Father, which has been ever loving and kind unto him?

Second, the grievousness of our sins, which we have committed; which will plainly appear, if we consider them either in respect of ourselves, how deadly they wound the conscience; or with reference to others, how infectious they have been to them; whom we have

often drawn into the same faults, which we ourselves have committed; and so have made them guilty of our sins, and ourselves of theirs.

ATTAIN THE HELP OF OTHERS

The next means, to attain this sorrow, is the help of other men, who are themselves touched with a feeling in this kind; with whom we ought to accompany ourselves, and patiently to accept of their admonitions, still accounting them our truest friends, which most faithfully and roundly put us in mind of our faults. The hypocrite may esteem such as desire thus to express their love, busy-bodies or the like; but David's wish was that *the righteous might smite him friendly and reprove him* (Psalm 141:5) and whosoever is a sound-hearted Christian will ever strive to make the best use of such, as he can. Let us therefore examine ourselves, whether we have made good use of those means or not: if we have not, we ought to humble ourselves before God for this neglect also; earnestly beseeching him that he will work in us true sorrow for our sins past, with desire of amendment. Whereunto that we may the better move him, we are in the next place to lay open and confess our sins unto God; which is the third thing required in our Repentance. Confession is so necessary, that without it we can expect not pardon at God's hands, but rather some judgment or other; and therefore Solomon says, *He that covers his sins will not prosper, but who so confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy*: and Saint John persuades us hereunto by the mercies of God, saying; *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9).

CONFESS SIN

Now in our confession we are to observe especially three things: (1) First what we are to confess, (2) secondly to whom, and (3) thirdly how.

1. What We Confess

As for the first, there is a twofold confession. (1) Landis, or of Thankfulness; of which David speaks Psalm 89:1, *With my mouth will I ever be showing your truth; yea every day will I give thanks to you and praise your name* (Psalm 145:2). Which we are also daily to practice according to his example: but this is not that confession, which is so properly meant here in the matter of Repentance. There is therefore another, called *Confessio fraudis*, a confession of sin; and this we are to make, if we will truly repent: which ought to be, not of some sins only, but of all as far as we can call them to mind; and especially of those beloved and bosom-sins to which we are most addicted: which that we may the better do, we ought daily to renew the memory of them in ourselves; so that we may be the better able faithfully to confess the same, as often as occasion requires.

2. To Whom We Confess

We are to confess our sins, not unto men or Angels, but unto God, who is the supreme Judge of all. There is indeed a time wherein we may make confession before men; either in public, before a whole congregation by way of penance, being by the Church thereunto commanded; or else in private; and that, either, for satisfaction, to our Neighbor, whom we have wronged; or for consolation, to the Minister, when our consciences are troubled. But that confession,

which is a part of our Repentance for our sins past against God, and wherein we desire full pardon for the same, we are to make to God alone: for he it is, who is offended, and he alone, that can forgive our sins.

3. *How We Confess*

Our Confession must not be of the heart only, but of the mouth also; for God, who made both, expects to be honored by both; and as both have been unclean before him; so they ought both also to acknowledge the same, that he may cleanse and purify both them, and with them the whole man.

Again, our confession must proceed from a twofold ground. (1) Hatred of sin because by it we dishonor God. (2) Hope of mercy, which is that we aim at in our confession; and it must further be qualified with sincerity, with shame and sorrow that we have offended so gracious a God, lest God reject us as hypocritical. Let us therefore henceforth leave off censuring the faults of other men, and begin to aggravate our own; and especially before we presume to come to the Supper of the Lord: Let us take some time unto ourselves, wherein we may be most private; and shut ourselves up in our closets, and there humbly on our knees lay open before God those sins, which we have committed in our life past: and that fully and faithfully; neither diminishing the number of them, nor mincing the heinousness of them for God will not be mocked. These are things, which we are to perform in respect of the time past: as for the time to come, we must know, that he which will truly repent, must not only turn from Evil, but also turn unto Good; and therefore, having confessed our sins past with sorrow

for them, we must (if we expect pardon) constantly purpose forever after, by God's grace, to amend and reform our lives; resolving (as much as in us lies) to avoid all occasions, which may draw us into the like sins again, and to make better use of those means which God has afforded us, than we have done heretofore; and that by so much the more, by how much we have offended so gracious a Father. But of this resolution of amendment, more in the 12th chapter.

8. THE EXAMINATION OF OUR FAITH

The Examination of our Faith, is that whereunto Saint Paul exhorts the Corinthians, saying, *examine yourselves, whether you be in the Faith or not* (2 Corinthians 13:5). The necessity whereof appears even from this, that *without Faith we cannot please God in anything we do* (Hebrews 11:26) much less in this weighty business: yea Faith is so necessary, that without it we do receive nothing at all, when we do receive; for although with our bodily hands we receive the Bread and Wine; yet if we have not Faith, we want a hand to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, and the comfort which thence arises unto our Souls: for how can we be persuaded in our consciences, that our receiving is acceptable unto God, and that the merits of Christ Jesus belong unto us without Faith? It is impossible that we should receive any more comfort than what we believe; and therefore our Savior Christ says; *he that believes on me, shall never thirst* (John 6:35): therein implying, that he which does not believe in him, shall ever thirst: yea, which is fearful; *he which believeth not, shall be damned* (Mark 16:16).

Now that Faith which is here required of us, must not be only a general faith, whereby we believe that the Word of God is true, and that God is a just Judge; (for this the Devils themselves believe and tremble at it; and well they may, considering what is due to them; eternal condemnation) but we must go on further to a more special kind of Faith; and (which they cannot do) apply the merits of Christ, and the promises of God made therein, unto our Souls and

Consciences; saying with Job, *I know that my Redeemer lives* (Job 19:25). I know, by the knowledge of Faith; or I believe; and not only the Redeemer of Man, but My Redeemer lives.

OUR INABILITY

Of which that we may the more fully persuade ourselves, we must believe; first concerning ourselves, that we are not able, of ourselves, to do anything that is acceptable and pleasing in the sight of God; *for we have nothing but what we have received of God*, as Saint Paul testifies, whether good gift, or ability of doing good.

CHRIST ALONE IS SUFFICIENT

2. Concerning the means of our Salvation, we must believe, that the merits of Christ's Death and Passion are alone sufficient for our Redemption, without any merits at all, or satisfaction of ours.

GOD'S MERCY DUE OUR REPENTANCE

3. Concerning God, we ought to believe, that, if we truly repent us of our life past, constantly purposing to lead a new life hereafter, and sincerely use those good means, which he shall afford us, he will then be merciful unto us in accepting our endeavors through the merits of Christ Jesus.

THE SACRAMENT, A MEANS OF CONFIRMING OUR FAITH

4. Concerning the Sacrament, we ought to believe; that it is a means, ordained of God, to exhibit unto us Christ Jesus with his merits, and a seal to confirm our Faith. If, upon consideration of these particulars, we can be thus persuaded of our own

insufficiency and unworthiness, and that yet notwithstanding upon our sincere humiliation and obedience, God will be merciful unto us; if we cannot only say in general that God is a merciful Father, and that Christ died for the redemption of Man; but everyone of us in particular thus apply unto himself; I believe that God is my merciful Father, and that Christ Jesus died to redeem me as well as any other; all which I shall have plainly confirmed unto me in the receiving of this Sacrament; wherein (I trust) God will in mercy accept me for Christ's merits, though of myself I be unworthy: if (I say) we can find that we are not hypocritically, but sincerely; not verbally, but heartily, thus persuaded; then may we, having thus made peace with God by our Faith and Repentance, boldly approach unto the Lord's Table.

9. THE EXAMINATION OF OUR CHARITY

Having examined ourselves in those former duties towards God, we are to go on to another duty, which concerns our neighbor; namely, Charity; which is a free forgiving of those that have offended us; with a testification of the same, when occasion is offered; and a reconciliation of ourselves to those, whom we also ourselves have wronged.

That we may be the better persuaded unto a due performance of this duty, we are to observe two things: (1) The motives thereunto, and (2) the manner how it ought to be done.

THE MOTIVES

The motives, which invite us to the necessity of it, are drawn from the consideration of these four things.

1. What we ourselves have done unto others.
2. What harm we do unto ourselves by not being in charity.
3. What they are, with whom we are offended.
4. Whence such wrongs, as we receive, do primarily come.

What We Have Done to Others

As for the first, we are conscious unto ourselves of a twofold offense, which we have committed.

1. Against other men; whom perhaps we have at some time or other more wronged, then they us; or at least our consciences can tell us,

that we have been prone and ready thereunto, had we not been prevented: and how can he, which has been forward to wrong others, make the most of every wrong offered by others unto himself? We must here take notice of the advice of Solomon in another case. *Seek not to have your servant curse you; for oftentimes your heart knows, that you yourself have also cursed others* (Ecclesiastes 7:22). So also, be not hasty to aggravate the wrongs which others have done unto thee; for your heart can tell thee, that you yourself hast also wronged others.

2. If this consideration prevail not with us; let us consider in the next place, that we have daily offended God far more than any man can offend us: and can any of us expect any mercy from God in the forgiveness of our debts, if we show none to others in passing by small matters of offense? Small, I say; because the greatest are but small in respect of the offenses, which we have committed against God. Our Savior Christ told his Disciples plainly (and in them us), *if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses* (Mark 11:25) which was verified in the Parable of the cruel servant; who (because he had no compassion on his fellow-servant, as his Lord had pity on him) was delivered to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due; with this application annexed, *so likewise will my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if you from your hearts, forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses* (Matthew 18:34-35). The consideration whereof, I think, is able to move any good-hearted Christian to love his brethren, though they have offended him.

Harm Done to Our Own Souls

The second Motive unto this duty is taken from the consideration of the harm, that otherwise we bring upon our own Souls; which indeed is greater, than either we can do unto others, or they unto us.

This harm is twofold. **First**, General; namely, a stain to all the good, which we have: for *though we speak with the tongue of Men and Angels: though we have all other good gifts, as of Prophecy, understanding of mysteries, &c: yet, if we have not Charity, we are nothing* (1 Corinthians 13:1-2). Let us not therefore boast of our learning and other good parts, as long as we are without Charity; for all is nothing; no more than a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

Second, Particular: and so it is an hindrance: (1) to our Prayers, and (2) to the right receiving of the Sacrament. The want of Charity is a hindrance to our Prayers in twofold respect.

1. Because, without Charity, we cannot expect to receive that which we pray for; for if we pray to God to forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us, how shall we hope that God will forgive us, if we forgive not others, which is the condition of our Prayers? To pray for the one, and not to perform the other, is to mock God in our Prayers; or rather, miserably to deceive ourselves: for, as many have not because they ask not: *so many ask and receive not, because they ask amiss* (James 4:3): and such are they which ask without charity; and who knows how soon they may stand in need of God's mercy?

2. It hinders our Prayers in this respect; because without Charity, we cannot join those, with whom we are at variance, with ourselves in our Prayers: which is against the rule of our Savior Christ, who bids us to pray; *Our Father*, and *give us Our Bread*; and so to join others with ourselves in every Petition: now how can we heartily pray thus for them, whom we love not? Our own consciences can sufficiently tell us that we cannot; yea, and that we often have been faulty herein. Wherefore, if we desire that our Prayers should henceforth be effectual, let us follow the counsel, which Saint Peter gives to the Husband and Wife, which is, *to live together according to knowledge, bearing one with another, that our Prayers be not hindered* (1 Peter 3:7): which, if we do, our Prayers shall be much furthered, as Christ himself saith: *if two of you agree on earth, as touching the thing that they ask, it will be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven* (Matthew 18:19).

The want of Charity is a hindrance to our due receiving of the Sacrament: because the Sacrament is a Seal of our union and communion, as with Christ, so amongst ourselves: as Saint Paul says, *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ? For we, being many, are one Bread and one Body, because we partake of one Bread* (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). So that, unless we be joined together in love, we cannot be capable of those benefits, which otherwise would arise unto our Souls.

Again, love is the very badge, whereby we are known to be Christ's Disciples. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another* (John. 13:35). It is a part of that wedding garment

wherewith everyone ought to be clothed, that comes to the Lord's Table. Wherefore, if we desire to be accepted when we do come, and there to receive the benefits of Christ's Death and Passion, let us put on the bowels of mercy and compassion.

The Value of Those Offended

A third Motive unto this duty is taken from the consideration of the parties, with whom we are offended: they are Men, yea Christians as well as ourselves; such for whom Christ died as well as for us. Shall we then think it hard to suffer some small wrong at their hands, for whom Christ thought it not too much to die? Can we persuade ourselves, that there is the love of God in us, if we hate them whom he so loved? *Everyone, which loves him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him* (1 John 5:1) and whosoever loveth him that did redeem, loveth him also that is redeemed by him.

From Whom These Wrongs Proceed

The fourth Motive unto this duty of Charity is taken from a serious consideration of the first original, whence these wrongs proceed, which we receive.

And here we may take notice both of the Author and also of the Disposer thereof. The first Author is not so much the party from whom we receive the wrong; as the grand-Enemy of both us and them; the Devil: who well knows that a house divided against itself cannot stand; and therefore strives by all means to set us at variance among ourselves, though sometimes upon small occasions; so that thereby, hindering us from the performance of good duties (as the receiving or the Sacrament, and such like) which are the means of our Salvation, he may the more easily tempt us to worse

employments, while others are better exercised; and so make his side the stronger against us: and who knows what power it may please God to give him against us at such times? Wherefore, as we love our own safety, let us seek to cross him, who thus opposes us by his temptations: and if we will needs be at strife, let it be with him, who will never be at quiet with us, until he have gotten the upper hand of us: which we may the more easily persuade ourselves unto; if we have respect not so much to other men's wrongful actions, as to his wicked suggestions, the cause of all; and assure ourselves, that, in putting up a wrong, we right ourselves, and cross him; which should be our chief aim.

Again, as the Devil is the Author of our wrongs: so God, who is the Disposer of all things has a hand in it: who permits the Devil thus far to provoke us: perhaps for the trial of our constancy and patience, or for other some ends best known unto himself: and, if we could but see, that the finger of God is in our Crosses, we would patiently answer with David, *I will become dumb, and open not my mouth, because it is your doing* (Psalm 39:9); *and so commit our cause to him, that he might make our righteousness clear* (Psalm 37:6).

These are the chief Motives to persuade us to this duty of Love and Charity; to all which we may add another, taken from the exceeding love of God to us; *who so loved us*, without any love received first from us, *that he sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins* (1 John 4:10) whence the Apostle gathers this powerful consequence; *if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another* (vs. 11). Which that we may the better do, let us in the next place see the manner how it ought to be performed.

THE MANNER HOW IT OUGHT TO BE DONE

Here we are to have respect both to the time past and also to come.

As for the Time Past

As for the time past, either we have wronged others, or they us. If we have wronged others, we ought to perform two things. (1) undo that which we have done, by making restitution as far as in us lies: according to the example of Zacchaeus who was willing to *restore fourfold whatsoever he had taken from any man by false accusation* (Luke 19:8). Such ought we to be, ready to make good, whatsoever we have taken from any man, and to give satisfaction for any wrong that we have done. Neither is it sufficient to be willing thus to make satisfaction, when we are moved thereunto. (2) But we must also in the second place seek peace with those, whom we have wronged, though we be not asked: which is the Counsel of Christ himself: *If you bring your gift to the Altar, and there remember that your brother has ought against you, leave your gift before the Altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother* (Matthew 5:23-24). He says not; stay till he come to you, or, be reconciled when he comes; but go you to him. And so David also advises us, *Seek peace and ensue it* (Psalm 34:14). Stay not till it be offered to, or required of you; but seek it. But perhaps those (whom we have offended) are far off, and we cannot come near them; or near, and will not be reconciled to us; what should we do in this case? Here we ought to use all means that we can, for the procuring of peace and quietness; but if either occasion or acceptance be denied us, we need not doubt but that God will be pleased to accept of our desire.

Now, if others have wronged us, we must (though perhaps it may seem somewhat hard) freely forgive them; loving even them that hate us; whereunto our Savior Christ often admonishes us in every Gospel; saying; *If your brother trespass against you seven times a day, you shalt forgive him* (Luke 17:4). And again, *I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you* (Matthew 5:44). But someone may say, such a one has wronged me so much, that flesh and blood cannot take it. It is true, if you consult with flesh and blood, it will seem hard to bear the least wrong; but flesh is not a friend, whom we may safely consult; but rather a bosom enemy, whom we ought to resist: if we ask counsel of Christ (whose counsel we ought and may most safely follow) he will bid us go and be reconciled: and Saint Paul bids us to *feed our enemies, and to overcome evil with good* (Romans 11:21); and Solomon can tell us, that *it is the glory of a man to pass over a transgression* (Proverbs 19:11). As for revenge, it is not for us to meddle with it; because the Lord himself says, *To me belongs vengeance and recompense* (Deuteronomy 32:35). And Saint James will assure us, that *to have bitter envyings and strife in the heart, is wisdom which descends not from above; but is earthly, sensual, devilish: but that wisdom, which is from above, is easy to be entreated, and full of mercy* (James 3:17). Wherefore let us grieve at such wrathful emotions, assuring ourselves that it is a point of heavenly wisdom to forbear; and certainly, if we can but once find that God has wrought in us a readiness to forgive those, which have wronged us, and to pray for their conversion, we may esteem it an evident sign of Sanctification.

As for the Time to Come

As for the time to come, that we may the better preserve the bond of Charity, we must resolve carefully to observe these two rules: (1) How we may keep peace with others, and (2) how others may do the like with us.

As for the **first**, because others may outwardly wrong us either in word or deed, that we may in both avoid discontent and strife thereupon, we must propose unto ourselves a twofold rule.

1. Concerning their words; which is the rule in Solomon, namely: *That we take no heed unto all words, that are spoken* (Proverbs 7:21): for this is that, which often stirs up strife among us, which otherwise might easily, and without any prejudice be avoided, if men were not too inquisitive and ready to take notice of everything that is spoken: and therefore we should here not entertain but flight, yea reject such men, who, under pretense of love unto us, will whisper in our ears, and maliciously inform us against such or such an one; whom Solomon calleth *pickthanks, whisperers, tale-bearers, such as will separate chief friends* (Proverbs 16:28) for occasion of separation may be given (if so taken) even between friends; as we often see that he, which is singularly affected to another, may hastily speak some reproachful words of him; which perhaps he will presently be sorry for, and not speak the like again; yet this shall be enough for the breach of charity, if it be in the audience or a whisperer: who (to speak the truth) is a mere incendiary, that will ever be adding fuel to the fire of contention. Whence Saint James calls the tongue *a fire, a world of iniquity, that sets on fire the whole course of Nature* (James 3:6). And Solomon says, *that*

without wood, the fire is quenched; and without a talebearer, strife ceases (Proverbs 26:20).

2. The second rule, whereby we may keep peace with others, is concerning other men's actions: which is, that we so take them (though sometimes wrongful) that we be not easily provoked thereby; for a hasty and furious discontent upon some small occasion, does often break out to the breach of charity; whereas a seasonable deliberation would mitigate the matter, and so cover all in silence. And therefore Saint Paul tells us that *Charity suffers long and is not easily provoked* (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). If we can but make true use of these two rules, we may easily, for our parts, live at peace with others.

Secondly we must endeavor that others also by our carriage may do the like with us: to which purpose we must take away, (1) first a common fault amongst us, which is a main cause of strife and enmity, and (2) the occasion thereof.

1. The fault itself is railing, scandalous and reproachful speaking: which is so frequent, that few or none (if we look narrowly into our words) but are conscious unto themselves hereof; but so heinous in itself, that Saint Paul ranks it with robbery and extortion saying that *neither thieves, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God* (1 Corinthians 6:10); and so pernicious also unto the sweet society of men; that it is that breath, which often blows the coals of contention so far, that they cannot be quenched again without blood: and daily experience teaches us, that there is no such common cause of strife and debate, as scandalous terms which are so often heard amongst us: so that, if we can but avoid these, we shall take away the very ground upon which our wrongful actions

are built; and therefore Saint James, *beseeking us* by the name of *brethren*, exhorts us *not to speak evil one of another* (James 4:11), and Saint Peters advise us, that *we lay aside all evil speakings, and, as new borne babes desire the sincere milk of the word* (1 Peter 2:1).

Now, that our speech of others may be such as it ought to be, let us follow the advice of Solomon; whose counsel is, that it be friendly: *A man that has friends, ought to show himself friendly* (Proverbs 18:24): not uttering anything; that may tend to their disgrace; least, by such discourtesies, he loose their good liking; but rather endeavor by fair, and courteous speeches, to knit their hearts faster unto him.

2. Neither yet can we easily avoid this fault, unless in the second place we take away the occasion of it; which is a tickling desire, that most men are affected with, to hear the faults of other men (though perhaps less than their own) laid open and spoken against: which quickly begets a suspicion of their worth, and hereupon we too too readily build some calumnious report or other. If it shall therefore happen at any time, that we hear the slips and errors of another; let us not be delighted therein, but rather seek to cover them; for *he that covers a fault seeks love* (Proverbs 17:9) and not he, which desires to have them laid open. This is that which we ought to do, both for the restoring and preserving of charity; wherein we must necessarily examine ourselves before we come to partake with others at the Lord's Table. If upon examination we find anything wanting; either that we are not in charity with others, or others with us; let us according to these rules seek by all means to make good what is wanting, and so come.

10.

OF PREMEDITATION AND PRAYER

Thus of the first thing to be performed in our preparation, namely Examination of our own fitness to receive. The second is the Premeditation of the benefits, which we are to receive: which we must not omit, that we may the better be stirred up to seek God, and to communicate at his Table with joy and gladness; for there is nothing which makes us more cold and backward in such duties, than this, that we have not sufficiently tasted how good the Lord is to those which seek him; the consideration whereof is alone able to move any man to a longing desire after him. Wherefore, having searched into our own estate by a serious examination, least we should yet fall back to a lukewarm carelessness of what we are to do, (to which the Devil will be ever ready to tempt us) and so become the more unfit to communicate at the Lord's Table, either to God's glory or our own comfort, let us ever quicken our devotion with a seasonable premeditation, before we come, of the benefits which we are to receive by coming. All which are comprehended in this one word – life – which we receive in the Lord's Supper, by receiving Christ, who is *Life itself* (John 14:6).

Now the life of a Christian is either the life of Grace here, or Glory hereafter.

THE LIFE OF GRACE HERE

The life of Grace (which we obtain in this Supper) consists of 2 things.

Happy Freedom

1. A happy freedom from a twofold evil: first of sin; from which we are freed by the Death of Christ: whose blood (if we rely on him) will make our sins (though as red as scarlet) to become as white as wool.

2. of Punishment; from which Christ has redeemed us by the shedding of his blood; so that *there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus* (Romans 8:1) whence we may boldly say, *who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died; yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, making intercession for us* (Romans 8:34).

Comfortable Enjoyment

The second thing is a comfortable enjoyment of a threefold good.

1. An inseparable union both with Christ our head, *from whom nothing shall be able to separate us* (Romans 8:38) as also with our brethren and fellow members in love and charity; which David accounted *a good and joyful thing* (Psalm 133:1).

2. A blessed strengthening of our faith, whereof this Sacrament is a sure seal, (as before) whence it shall come to pass, that we shall be able to resist the temptations of the Devil, (who strives by all means to make shipwreck of our faith and us) and reply with David, *I have set God always before me, for he is on my right hand, therefore shall I not fall* (Psalm 16:9). This is that which *will make our hearts glad, and our flesh to rest in hope*, as it is verse 10.

3. Which brings in a third good, and that not the least, that God vouchsafes to his people in this world, namely, Peace of Conscience.

THE GLORY HEREAFTER

This is that which we are most carefully to seek after, and which in the latter end, will be more worth unto us, than ten thousand worlds of pleasure which we can enjoy: and therefore David's counsel is, *Keep innocence, and take heed unto the thing that is right, for that shall bring a man peace at the last* (Psalm 37:38). Now wherein can we better keep innocence, than by being carefully and faithfully exercised in God's service? And what greater comfort of heart, and what greater peace of conscience can redound to a poor sinful soul, than the full assurance of the forgiveness of his sins, and his inseparable union with Christ Jesus which we receive, if we receive aright, by receiving the Sacrament. This is that, besides which there is nothing in us that shall be able to strengthen and comfort us against our enemy the Devil, in the day of our departure hence; who will then be sure to affright us with the ugliness of our sins (though now in policy he cover them) so that he may, if it be possible, drive us to despair of God's mercy towards us: then (I say) by the help of a good conscience, as Samuel resolutely spoke unto the Israelites, saying, *Behold, here I am; witness against me before the Lord and before his anointed; whose ox have I taken? Whom have I defrauded? And I will restore it you* (1 Samuel 12:3): so shall we be able to nonplus our calumniating enemy, and say; Behold, Satan, here I am, witness against me before the Lord, wherein have I done those evil things which I should not have done? Wherein have I

omitted those good duties which I should have done? When did I at any time despair of God's mercy, or neglect the same? When did I profane, or abuse his holy sabbaths? When did I contemn or neglect his word and Sacraments? Here I am; witness against me: but my conscience tells me to my comfort, that I have diligently, according to my power, performed what I ought, and therefore you have no part in me. If we can thus clear ourselves, then shall we be able to say with Saint Paul, *The time of my departure is at hand, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:* and that which follows hereupon, is, *Henceforth is laid up for me a Crown of righteousness* (2 Timothy 4:7-8). This Crown is that benefit, which we shall receive, after this life of grace is ended, in the life of glory. In the meantime, while we live here, we shall receive, though not this Crown actually, yet the full assurance thereof, believing with Saint Paul, *that it is laid up for us, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give us at the last day.*

These are the benefits, which every true communicant receives at the Lord's Table: wherefore (as we desire to receive these benefits, which pass all understanding) let us carefully meditate thereon, that we may be inflamed with the desire of them.

But (because all that we can do, is nothing without God's blessing) we are in the next place to pray to God, that he will be pleased to bless our endeavors, and to accept us in his Son; which is the third duty required of us in our Preparation: without the due performance of which, though otherwise we have diligently prepared ourselves, we cannot expect to receive any comfort of soul with the Bread and Wine; because God only gives that unto us, and he is debtor unto no man: let us therefore seek unto him by

prayer for a blessing, who is the giver of all blessings. This we ought to do first in private, setting aside some convenient times, wherein we may freely betake ourselves to this duty: but especially in the morning, when we are to receive, we should rise early and consider what we are to do that day, namely, sit at the Lord's Table, and therefore be sure that we consecrate ourselves to God by Prayer and good meditations. Secondly in public with the Congregation, where we ought to present ourselves at the very beginning, so that we may join together in all things which we are to perform, and there at our first entrance pour forth unto God (as at all other times) this or the like prayer.

O Lord strengthen me against the temptations of Satan who strives to draw away my heart from you; and accept the prayers, which I now make unto you through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Which done, join with the Congregation in such prayers as are then used.

In both, we are carefully to consider two things.

1. For whom we ought to pray; and that is, not for ourselves only, but for others also, according to the Counsel of Saint James. *Pray one for another* (4:16); which we learn from the pattern of prayer, the Lord's Prayer, left unto us by Christ himself.

2. How we ought to pray; and that is, **first** in humility, with a feeling of our own wants, for which the poor Publican was rather justified than the proud Pharisee for his vain boasting (Luke 18:14). **Secondly** in a settled and fervent devotion: when we pray, our minds ought not to be fixed on anything else (as many, God knows, are) for God will have the whole heart or none. **Finally**, in

faith; with confidence that we shall receive what we ask; for he, *which wavers*, that is, not believeth, *Let not that man think that he will receive anything of the Lord* (James 1:7). If we be deficient in any one of these conditions, we ask amiss, and so will receive accordingly. Wherefore, as we desire to receive benefit and comfort by the Lord's Supper, let us seek unto God for it: and as we hope to have our prayers heard; let us pray both for ourselves and others in true humility, fervency and devotion, and assured hope of obtaining.

11.

OF MEDITATION AT THE LORD'S TABLE

Having thus fitted ourselves by examination of our estate premeditation of the benefits, and prayer for a blessing, we may assure ourselves that we have prepared ourselves for the receiving of the holy communion (though by reason of our weakness, not in that measure, yet) in that right manner as we ought: and so have performed the first duty required of us, namely diligent preparation; whereupon we may boldly and cheerfully (otherwise not) present ourselves unto the Lord's Table: where we are to be exercised in a second duty, namely, a seasonable Meditation.

This Meditation must be threefold: (1) before, (2) in the time of the Consecration, and (3) after the same, or, in the time of Receiving.

BEFORE THE CONSECRATION

Before the Consecration, when the Minister is going towards the Table, Meditate on these two things. **First**, seeing the table spread, and the Elements set thereon, we are to consider, what place we are come unto; namely the Table of the great King of Heaven and Earth; and that therefore we ought most carefully and reverently, to behave ourselves, both in body by a reverent and seemly gesture: and also in mind, laying aside all earthly cogitations whatsoever: and that in a twofold respect.

1. Because the place itself is holy and therefore ought not to be profaned by any unseemly behavior; for these must be laid

aside, as God commanded Moses. *Put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon you stands, is holy ground* (Exodus 3:5).

2. Because as the place is holy, so also God himself is there amongst us, as he says, *where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them* (Matthew 18:20). He is in the midst of us, beholding not only our outward gesture but our very hearts and affections; and ready both to reward those that honor him by reverencing; and to punish all such as dishonor him by profaning and abusing his holy ordinance: which we shall do if our carriage be not with fear and reverence.

Second, when we hear the Minister say, *draw near and take this Sacrament*; we must consider that God by his Minister freely invites us to his Table; then let everyone lift up his heart by this or the like ejaculation.

Lord, I am not worthy by reason of my sins to approach before you; but seeing it has pleased you in mercy to call me, behold, in humility and obedience I come.

IN THE TIME OF CONSECRATION

Then join in prayer with the Minister. In the time of the Consecration, we ought seriously to settle our minds on the Elements, and the Actions about then, for the better stirring up of our devotion: and so meditate thus.

First, when we hear the Minister read the words of Christ's Institution, and see him take the Bread and Wine; we ought joyfully and thankfully to meditate on the great love of God in setting apart his Son for the Redemption of us his enemies; which

is represented in the taking of these Elements, and setting them apart to be distributed unto us, as seals and pledges of the same: joyfully (I say) in respect of the benefit, which does thereby come unto us, and thankfully in respect of God's love, which is greater than all the hearts of men joined in one are able to express.

Second, when we see the Bread broken and the Wine poured out, we ought to be exercised in a twofold meditation.

1. Of comfort; considering that the Bread is broken and the Wine poured out, not only to be the more divisible to the Communicants, but chiefly to represent unto us the crucifying of Christ's Body, and the shedding of his Blood for our sins: *for he was broken for our iniquities* (Isaiah 53:5). By which is not meant that any bone of him was broken, but that he was crucified: whence we should everyone of us gather this comfort, saying to our souls: *Christ Jesus was broken on the Cross, and suffered an accursed death for me; by whose merits, I trust, I shall escape the curse of that death, which is due for my sins unto me.* And here by the way we may take notice how the Papists do err in delivering whole cakes unto the Communicants, which represent Christ whole not crucified, and so afford the less comfort.

2. Of sorrow, and that for our sins; the grievousness of which was such that they could not be satisfied for, without the precious Blood of Christ Jesus: these were the spears that pierced him to the Soul; that was that, which drew his precious Blood from his side: and the consideration of this should breed in us a hearty sorrow, that we so vile wretches, as we are, should

thus wound so loving a Redeemer: and certainly if we do not grieve for those sins, for which he has so much smarted, we may justly fear that the stupid Earth, the hard rocks, and the dark graves, which trembled, rent, and opened at his death, shall one day rise up in judgment against us and condemn us. When therefore we see the Bread broken &c: let everyone thus meditate; *O vile wretch that I am, that I by my sins should thus wound my merciful and loving Redeemer.*

AFTER THE CONSECRATION

After the Consecration, when the Minister is receiving himself (considering that we are in the presence of God, who sees our very hearts) we should power out our souls unto him in this or the like soliloquy.

O Sweet Jesus, I do humbly acknowledge with the Centurion that I am not worthy, that you should enter under my roof, much less to come and sup and dwell with me: but seeing it is your good pleasure to vouchsafe me this favor, cleanse me, I beseech you, from my sins, that I may entertain you in a pure and sanctified heart, strengthen my faith that I may fully rely on your mercy; comfort me with your blessed spirit and so dwell with me forever. Grant this, O blessed Redeemer, for your mercy's sake, Amen.

Again, before we receive, when the Minister is coming to distribute, and offers the Elements unto us (considering that Christ with all his benefits is offered unto us by God, as well as the Elements by the Minister) let everyone meditate thus with himself:

Christ with the benefits of his Death does now come to sanctify and comfort my sinful Soul, in full assurance whereof I am to receive these signs and Seals at the hand of his Minister.

And so as he stretches out his hand to receive these, let him lift up his soul in faith with this or the like ejaculation. *Come, Lord Jesus unto your humble servant, as my trust is you wilt.* This we are to do after the Consecration, before we receive.

After this, in the act of receiving we are to perform these two things.

1. While we eat the bread, meditate everyone thus.

Blessed Jesus, I do heartily believe that you were crucified on the Cross, and that for me as well as for any other, and, as I have now received this Bread broken, whereby my Body shall be nourished: So I believe that I have also received spiritually your Body crucified with all the benefits thereof; the full pardon of all my sins; and the strengthening and refreshing of my sinful soul; this I believe, Lord, help my unbelief for your mercies sake. Amen.

2. When we drink the wine, and while we feel it in our stomach, we should thus meditate.

Most blessed Redeemer, I do truly believe that your Blood was shed out of your Body, as verily as I have received this wine apart from the bread; and that for the remission of my sins, as well as any others: and I do also believe that with this wine I have received your precious Blood, whereby my sins are fully washed away and my soul purified: and that according to your promise, I shall never hunger nor thirst anymore; because with this Bread and Wine I have

received your flesh, which is meat indeed, and your Blood which is drink indeed; with which I humbly pray you to cherish and nourish my poor soul, and to increase in me hearty love to these my fellow-members, who have now participated with me, so that we may serve you as we ought, and that nothing may be able to separate us from your love; which I humbly beseech you to grant for your mercies sake. Amen.

12. OF PRACTICE

This is that, whereon we ought to meditate in the time of receiving; which being duly performed, we ought in the next place to take notice of a religions Practice of those things, which are to be observed afterwards in our life and conversation.

These things may be reduced to two heads: namely, such as we are to do, (1) in the Church, and (2) at home.

IN THE CHURCH

In the Church we must perform 2 duties.

Give Thanks for God's Mercy

Having ended the former meditations, we ought each man in particular to give thanks unto God for his mercy, in this or the like form.

O Lord, I humbly bless your holy name, for that you hast in mercy vouchsafed to accept me at this your Table amongst the rest of your elect and chosen people; and that you hast so graciously fed my languishing soul with the precious body and blood of Christ Jesus. I confess, O Lord, that I am not worthy of the least of your favors; but seeing it has pleased you thus to have mercy upon me; give me grace, I humbly beseech thee, to walk worthy of this your mercy in newness of life to the glory of your holy name, and the salvation of my sinful soul; even for your mercy's sake. Amen.

Corporate Prayer and Thanksgiving

After this everyone ought to join with the Congregation in prayer and thanksgiving, praising God for his goodness, and so depart lovingly together with joyful hearts that God has so graciously entertained us his unworthy servants.

AT HOME

After we come home, we are further to take notice of two duties.

Meditation

First, Meditation: meditating seriously on what comfort we have received by being at the Lord's Table. Upon which consideration, if we find any good emotion in ourselves, any assurance of the forgiveness of our sins, we ought by all means to cherish the same by the comfortable remembrance of Christ's Death and Passion for us; and so much the more lift up our thankful hearts unto God for his mercy; as Saint Paul Sweetly exhorted the Colossians, saying, *as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, abounding therein with thanksgiving* (Colossians 2:6-7). And this is that which Solomon makes a true note of a righteous man; that he will ever be increasing those good gifts, which he has in him; when he says, *The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto perfect day* (Proverbs 4:18). When therefore we shall find a little faith, a little love in us (as, God knows, the best of us has little enough) let us desire to increase it, and to have our corruptions diminished; for these desires are a beginning of Grace, and a sign of a heart well affected: and of this desire we cannot make a better trial, than by

considering whether we long to receive again the next time; so that these good beginnings may be the more perfected.

But if we find not this comfort in us; let us search into ourselves, whether there be not some sin in us as yet unrepented of, and whether we came not so well prepared to the communion as we should: if so, then ought we to humble ourselves before God, with sorrow for this our negligence: if we cannot see this in us, but that we came well prepared; then must we patiently wait the Lord's leisure, and pray earnestly that he will give us the comfort of his Spirit; with full assurance that he will grant our request, when it shall be best for us.

A Purpose to Lead a New Life

The second duty, wherein we must be exercised at home, is a resolution or constant purpose of leading a new life, whereunto Saint Paul earnestly invites us saying, *As you have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity, unto iniquity even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness* (Romans 6:19); and why? *Because being made free from sin, and become servants unto God, we have our fruit* (not unto sin, but) *unto holiness* (vs. 22). Shall we then be made free from sin, and become the servants of God, and yet return unto sin again? God forbid: if we do so, we receive the grace of God in vain; which Saint Paul beseeches the Corinthians to take heed of: now what is it but to receive the Grace of God in vain, when, after we have *escaped the pollutions of this world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we are again entangled therewith* (2 Corinthians 6:1); and as the sow to the mire, return to our former course of life again?

Saint Peter will assure us that *it had been better never to have known the way of righteousness, than, after we have known it, to turn from the holy Commandment delivered unto us* (2 Peter 2:21). And well were it, if this were duly considered of some, who think it sufficient to live precisely that day, in which they receive, (though perhaps they can scarce do that) and presently afterwards live as profanely and loosely as ever they did; but we must know that God expects a daily reformation of those, which present themselves at his Table; and, if we do not duly consider of it, we shall one day with fear and trembling acknowledge it; as Saint Paul plainly tells the Hebrews; saying *If we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation* (Hebrews 10:26-27).

THREE THINGS KNOWN OF CHRISTIANS

Now that we may the better lead a new life before God, we must consider that to the direction of a Christian life three things are to be known of us, (1) what we are to pray for, (2) what we ought to believe, and (3) what we are to do.

The first being rightly known affords us a perfect direction for our Hope: the second for our faith; the third for our Piety.

What we are to Pray for: The first we have fully set down in the Lord's Prayer, composed by Christ himself as a most exact rule for all our Prayers.

What we ought to Believe: The second in the Creed, which contains the Articles of our Faith, contained in the doctrine of the Apostles; called therefore the Apostle's Creed.

What we are to Do: The third in the Ten Commandments, written by the finger of God himself, and revealed unto us in his holy Word to be our direction both for our holiness towards God and our charity towards our neighbors.

These 3 rules of our life (the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments) are daily repeated of those of the meaner and more simple sort; but yet (God knows) not so well understood, as they should be, by diverse to whom God has given a greater measure of knowledge: never did our Land, yea almost every house, more freely abound with fruitful and comfortable expositions upon these rules, than now they do; yet who looks so far into them, as to know thereby the full extent of any of them? Some few indeed there are (whereof God increase the number) who make a conscionable use of those good means of Salvation: whereas others are well content, yea with delight desire to read (and that upon the best days) vain and idle discourses, which are so far from furthering us in the way of salvation, as that (like tares) they choke the Word of God, and hinder the growth thereof, as we too often see by our daily experience. There is indeed a time for all things; for pleasure, as well as profit: but shall we spend the best of our time, yea (as some do most miserably) the greatest part of our time in such vanities, and altogether neglect those good helps for our direction; esteeming them too plain and homely, or not pleasant enough for our witty inventions, and acute judgments? Let such know; that they, which thus neglect their own good, are guilty to themselves of a twofold crime:

1. Of unnatural wrong unto their own souls, in stopping their eyes from beholding the light of salvation, which otherwise

would shine unto them; dealing herein as injuriously with themselves, as Papists do with their deceived Laity; training them up in ignorance and blind devotion.

2. Of a twofold ingratitude: first towards those painful Authors, which (like fruitful lights) have spent themselves for the directing of others; whose labors do well deserve to be accepted amongst us; and we shall prove ourselves but unthankful members of the Church, wherein we live, if we make not that good use of those lights, for which they were intended.

Secondly (which is the greatest) we show ourselves unthankful towards God himself, who has in mercy raised up such means for the helping of our infirmities; whereof others, better deserving than ourselves, have been destitute. Having therefore such helps so freely offered unto us, let us (if we desire to live more righteously before God) use them more carefully than we have done: endeavoring in the first place to know what is contained in each Petition of the Lord's Prayer; that so, when we pray, we may know what that is, for which we pray; and secondly, for our Faith, to know the full extent of every Article thereof; so that we may truly understand what that is, which we confess we believe: and because both of these are little available, except our piety be such as it ought to be, let us especially be exercised in the Commandments of God; that thereby we may understand what we are commanded, and what forbidden. These are the direct courses which every true-hearted Christian ought to take, and which will one day prove truly comfortable, when others, vain and frivolous, deceive us.

But because our Piety and religious behavior is the chief thing required on our part unto the leading of a new life, let us further see what rules we may yet observe for the directing thereof.

OUR PIETY DISPLAYED

This Piety of ours is seen in these two things: (1) our Words, and (2) our Works and Actions.

Our Words

As for our words, we should follow the counsel of Saint Paul to the Ephesians, which is, that we avoid in our talk, *all filthiness, all foolish talking, and jestings which are not convenient* (Ephesians 5:4): and he giveth a very good reason for it. *Because evil communications corrupt good manners* (1 Corinthians 15:33); and that oftentimes both in the speaker and hearer. But some will say, what? Must we never use any pleasant discourses? No jesting at all? Yes, there is a time for that also; so it be, according to the rule of Saint Peter, *such as God may thereby be glorified* (1 Peter 4:11). Other ways we may not: stir up our minds we may to an honest cheerfulness by civil and modest jesting; but obscene and profane, which Saint Paul calls filthiness; vain and idle, which he terms foolish talking, and jesting, which is not convenient; such, I say, *ought not to be once named among us as become Saints*: for hereby both speaker and hearer are often stirred up to loose and vain gestures, or at leastwise to conceive and think of them, and so God's Name is much dishonored. Miserable it is to observe how frequently such speeches do pass for currant under the assumed titles of merry discourses: but let us remember what our Savior Christ has said that *by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be*

condemned, and that every idle word, which we shall speak, we shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment (Matthew 12:36-37). Must we give an account of our Words, and shall we not then be careful of them? Must we answer for every idle word, and shall we fill up our discourses with blasphemies, with obscene and scurrilous jestings? If we must give an account of them, certainly these will lie heavy upon us: Wherefore let us rather with David set a *watch before our mouth, and bridle up our lips, that we offend not in our tongue*: let us be careful that our words be such, as Solomon commends, *fitly spoken, which are like apples of gold in pictures of silver* (Proverbs 25:11); that is; such words, as contain wholesome matter, and are spoken in a comely and decent manner, are as acceptable and pleasant to the ear of a judicious hearer, as silver pictures, adorned with golden apples, are unto the eye of the beholder.

Our Works

For our Works, we must, as Saint Paul counsels, *walk as children of the light, ever proving what is acceptable unto the Lord* (Ephesians 5:8) *having our conversation honest among men, that they seeing our good works, may glorify God thereby* (5:10).

Our Actions

How to direct both our Words and Actions aright, we must chiefly observe these two things: (1) how to avoid that which is evil in both, and (2) how to seek and obtain, that which is good.

To avoid that which is in evil, four rules are especially to be observed.

The First rule concerns the beginnings of evil; namely, that we watch and pray, according to our Savior's counsel and practice: *least we enter into temptation* (Matthew 26:41), and so be drawn away to sin against God; for of ourselves we are prone thereunto, and unable to avoid it: and if it go so far that we be once tempted to sin, and feel in us any motion thereunto, we should endeavor to resist this temptation in the beginning, and reason thus with ourselves; Did not I lately receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, where I had a full pardon of all my sins (past) sealed unto me, and where I vowed and promised to lead a new life before God, how then can I do this thing, and break my promise with God? I have put off my coat of sin, and therefore I may not (I will not) put it on again: thus ought we to resist temptations at the first, lest they get the dominion over us.

The Second rule concerns the occasions of evil, which we must necessarily avoid, if we desire to avoid the evil itself.

The Occasions are diverse, but especially these two.

1. Idleness, from which proceed many (& these sometimes heinous and crying) sins which the Son of Sirach calleth therefore *the teacher of much evil* (Ecclus. 33:27). To avoid this, we must be careful to employ ourselves diligently in that vocation, wherein God has placed us; for otherwise the Devil will be sure to take an occasion to tempt even the best of us: as we see in David, who was a man after God's own heart; and yet, when he was walking on the roof of his house (while Joab and the rest were in the battle) he was tempted to commit adultery with Bathsheba the wife of Uriah (2 Samuel 11:2).

And how many do we daily see drawn away to lasciviousness, drunkenness, and such like vices by this occasion? Let us therefore carefully exercise ourselves in our Vocation, that the Devil may not have an opportunity to set upon us.

2. Bad Company, then which, nothing almost is more forceable to draw us away to that which is evil: Let Joseph but live in Pharaoh's Court, and he shall soon learn to swear *by the life of Pharaoh* (Genesis 42:15): and *if Israel abide in Shittim, the people will soon commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab* (Numbers 25:1): wherefore God commands his people to *go out of Babylon, lest they be partakers of her sins* (Revelation 18:4). And often are we partakers of other men's sins by frequenting their society; yea, (which is miserable to observe) diverse of ingenuous disposition and civil behavior, have by degrees been drawn away to looseness and riot, by associating themselves unfortunately with vain and dissolute persons. And we may herein observe the policy of our enemy the Devil; who, when he finds any man well disposed of himself, and not ready to yield to others temptations will beset him (if he can possibly) with this snare, so that he may either by the wicked persuasions or bad examples of others, steal away his heart, and allure him to that which is evil: which should be a forceable Caveat unto us, to make us heedful what company we fall into, and with whom we acquaint ourselves, if we have any care of our souls: seasonable is the counsel of Solomon herein, who advises us (1) concerning the examples of others, not to conform ourselves unto them *by walking in their ways, but to avoid and pass away* (Proverbs 4:15). (2) Concerning their allurements, by no means

to hearken unto them; *if sinners entice thee, consent you not* (Proverbs 1:10). If they say, come let us take our pleasure in this or that sort, let us go to such a place, where we may freely do what we will, *if they thus draw thee, walk not in the way with them, refrain your foot from their paths.* (3) As for familiarity with others, he advises us to *make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man not to go.* Why? *Least you learn his way and get a snare unto your soul* (Proverbs 22:24-25). Wilt you avoid gaming, swearing, &c. then shun that company wherein those vices are practiced, or else you will rather increase them in you. But some will say, such an one is my familiar friend, and shall I leave him? That will be taken unkindly; shall I get myself discredit, where I may avoid it? Yes, be he never so near unto you, yet if he in his courses forsake God, forsake you him, lest God forsake you: yea you may therein show yourself a very friend to him in winning him from his evil ways by your forsaking of him; for so says Saint Paul, *If any man obey not our word, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed* (2 Thessalonians 3:14). It may be when he sees you leave him, he will begin to think of his bad life, and so be ashamed of it, and by degrees leave it: therefore, leave bad company for their sakes also, as well as thine own.

The third rule is, how we may restrain ourselves when we are about to undertake any sinful action: and that is, by setting before our eyes this Caveat, *God sees: for his eyes are over all* (Proverbs 15:3), and therefore whatsoever we do, we should consider that we do it in his presence: which, being conscionably considered, cannot but breed in us both reverence and watchfulness; reverence in respect

of his Majesty; watchfulness in respect of his all-seeing Eye, that we offend him not, who will espy in us the least fault, be it never so secretly kept from the World.

Again, consider how merciful God has ever been unto you in delivering you from this or that danger, from this or that sin, whereinto you must necessarily have fallen, if he had not upheld thee; and then answer the Devil when he tempts thee, as Joseph did his wicked mistress; how can I do this wickedness, and sin against my God? God has been thus and thus merciful unto me, and shall I yet offend him and provoke him to anger? God forbid.

The fourth rule is for our direction, when we are fallen into any sin; which is this. When we are overtaken with any sin (as who is not every day) we should presently lament it, and not suffer it to go on any further, lest it come to a custom, and so stick fast in us: this is a difference which Solomon puts between the righteous and the wicked. *A just man (says he) falls seven times and rises up again, but the wicked shall fall into mischief* (Proverbs 24:16). The just man, though he fall into any sin, rises again by repentance; but the wicked sinks deeper down, even to the pit of destruction.

These are the chief rules to be observed for the avoiding of that which is evil.

OBTAINING THAT WHICH IS GOOD

The next thing which we must look into, is, how we may obtain that, which is Good. Here we must principally observe these two things: (1) make use of all occasions thereunto, and (2) make conscience of every good duty.

Make Use of All Occasions

As for the first, we must first, according to the example of Saint Paul, *use all diligence that we may press on towards the mark* (Philippians 3:14), still endeavoring to be better and better: and when we find ourselves deficient in the performance of any good duty (as God knows we are in all) we should do the same again and endeavor to perform it more fervently and seriously; so that we may come to a greater measure of goodness. Again, we should gladly embrace the company of good men, that by their example and advice we may be brought to a sense and feeling of those sins, which we commit; counting it a great blessing of God, if thereby we at any time be crossed in those sins, to which we are most addicted; as gaming &c: and ever esteem best of that company, not where our ears maybe filled with profane jestings, or tickled with superfluous conceits; but where our corruptions may be most roundly reprov'd; esteeming them our best friends, that will most plainly and faithfully put us in mind of our errors; which is the counsel of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians; *I beseech you* (says he) *to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake* (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13): which may be our direction for esteeming both of our familiar friends and of our teachers; both which (if faithful) labor for our good in the Lord by admonishing us; and both thereby deserve from us a true regard as a recompense of this their love: therefore if any man desire to be furthered in good duties, let him testify it by loving such men.

Make Conscience of Every Good Duty

If we desire to obtain that which is good, we must be careful that we make conscience (as of avoiding every evil, so) of doing every good duty, be it never so little; *endeavoring* with Saint Paul *to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and men* (Acts 24:16). And laboring to keep, not only some but all God's commandments, according to David's wish. *O that my ways were made so direct, that I might keep your statutes, so shall I not be confounded, while I have respect to all your commandments* (Psalm 119:5-6). Let us not deceive ourselves in thinking it sufficient, that we observe the Sabbath, and that we offend not God by swearing, stealing, or such like heinous offenses; and yet in the meantime make no conscience of a lie for our commodity, or of vain and idle discourses for delight; for, if we thus do, it is certainly an argument of a bad heart.

But some perhaps will say; If I thus endeavor to carry myself in all things, if I now and then do not give a little way, I shall be accounted too precise, and curious in matters which I need not. Be it so; yet be willing to undergo that censure; and esteem it safer to offend ungodly men by your good life, than a righteous God by your bad life: and though others account it too much preciseness, yet do not you so; but rather consider that God commands us to *keep his precepts diligently* (Psalm 119:4). If diligently, then certainly there is nothing in his precepts superfluous; nothing, which we may do or not do, but everyone, though of never so small a matter, is to be performed of us: whosoever therefore shall endeavor to his power to keep the Commandments of God in everything, is so far from being too precise, that he does but what he is commanded.

To these rules, for avoiding of evil and seeking of good, we may add one more, as the rule of all the rest, and of our whole life; and that is the Word of God: which alone is able to direct us in the way to salvation, as David testifies: *Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? Even by ruling himself after your word* (Psalm 119:9): Wherefore let us carefully read, meditate and confer, about this Word, and that often; accounting (as well we may) every day lost, wherein we learn not something out of it; ever desiring more and more to be instructed therein, and account it a great blessing of God, that we have the use of it so freely to direct us in the way of salvation. Neither let any man think himself so learned, that he needs no farther instruction; for the best of us comes short of David, and yet he prayed still *to be instructed in the word of the Lord* as we may see throughout the 119 Psalm. Again, if we did know more than we do, yet we are dull in the performance of what we know; and therefore, we have need to read the same again and again, to stir us up to a daily practice hereof. But that we may so use the word of God, as that it may be unto us the savor of life unto life; let us at all times, when we are about to read it, lift up our hearts to God by prayer, that he may give a blessing to our endeavors; without which whatsoever we do in this or any other thing, it will be so far from being profitable unto us, as that it will rather prove our ruin in the end.

He, which shall thus set his heart to serve the Lord by denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, by living honestly, righteously and soberly in this present world; he, which shall thus carefully receive the Sacrament in a right manner, and hear the word with diligence, devoting himself to God by prayer in all things, which he doth; he

which shall thus make conscience of his ways in everything; the blessing of God rest upon him, as it needs must; and that peace of conscience, which no man knows but he that enjoys, ever attend him here, and everlasting peace and happiness crown him hereafter. Amen.

FINIS.