
The Sadness of Christ



Saint Thomas More

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I

OF THE SORROW, WEARINESS, FEAR, AND PRAYER OF CHRIST BEFORE HIS TAKING, AS IT IS WRITTEN IN THE XXVI CHAPTER OF ST. MATTHEW, THE XIII OF ST. MARK, THE XXII OF ST. LUKE, AND THE XVIII OF ST. JOHN

PART II

OF THE CUTTING OF MALCHUS'S EAR, HOW HIS DISCIPLES FORSOOK HIM, AND OF THE TAKING OF CHRIST

PART I

OF THE SORROW, WEARINESS, FEAR, AND PRAYER OF CHRIST BEFORE HIS TAKING, AS IT IS WRITTEN IN THE XXVI CHAPTER OF ST. MATTHEW, THE XIII OF ST. MARK, THE XXII OF ST. LUKE, AND THE XVIII OF ST. JOHN

“When Jesus had spoken these words, and said grace, they went forth into the mount of Olivet.” (Mt 26:30)

Albeit that Christ at the time of his supper had had so much godly communication with his apostles, yet forgot he not at his departing to make an end of all together, with thanksgiving to God. But how unlike, alas! be we to Christ, which bear the name of Christian men, and yet at our table do use, not only many vain and idle words (whereof Christ hath given us warning that we shall yield a full strait account), but also very hurtful and perilous, and at last when we have eaten and drunk our fill, unkindly get us our way, forgetting to give thanks unto God the giver of all, that hath so well fed and refreshed us. Burgensis, a man well learned and deeply travailed in divinity, upon probable conjectures doth think that the grace, which Christ at the same time said with his apostles, was those six psalms which, as they stand together, the Hebrews call the great Alleluia: that is to wit, the hundredth and twelfth psalm with the five next following in order. For those six psalms, which they name the great Alleluia, they were wont of an old custom to say instead of grace at Easter and certain other high feasts. And the self same grace as yet to this day at the said feasts commonly use they to say.

But as for us, whereas we have been accustomed in times past, for grace both before meat and after, to say at sundry seasons sundry psalms such as be most convenient for the time, we have nowadays given them over almost every one,

so that with three or four words, whatsoever suddenly cometh to our minds, and those overly mumbled up at adventure, shortly make we an end and depart.

“They went forth unto the mount of Olivet.” Forth they went, but not to bed. “I rose at midnight,” saith the prophet, “to give praise and thanks to thee.” (Ps 119:62) Howbeit Christ did not so much as once lay him down on his bed. But at the leastwise, would God we could truly say: “I remembered thee in my bed, good Lord.” (Ps 63:6)

And it was not in the summer season neither that Christ after his supper took his way to the mount. For it was even shortly after the spring of the year, when the days and the nights be all of one length. And that it was a cold night appeareth also by this, that the servants were warming themselves by the fire in the bishop's hall. And that this was not the first time that he so did, well witnesseth the evangelist where he saith: “According to his custom.” (Lk 22:39) He went up to the mount to pray, willing us thereby to understand that when we set ourselves to pray, we must lift up our hearts from the cumbrous unquietness of all worldly business, to the end we may wholly set our minds upon God and godly matters.

This mount of Olivet which was all full of olive trees, containeth in it a certain mystery. For a branch of an olive tree was commonly taken as a token of peace, which Christ came himself to make betwixt God and man, who had so long before been enemies. Besides this, the oil that cometh of the olive tree doth signify the grace of the Holy Ghost, whom Christ did come to send down to his disciples after his return to his Father: to the end that by the grace of the same Holy Spirit, they might within short space after be able to learn those things which, if he had told them then, they could not well have borne.

“Over a river called Cedron into a village which is named Gethsemani.” (Jn 18:1; Mt 26:36; Mk 14:32)

This river Cedron runneth between the city of Jerusalem and the mount of Olives. And this word Cedron, in the Hebrew tongue, signifieth sorrow or heaviness. And Gethsemani in the same speech is as much to say as a very fat and plentiful valley, or otherwise the valley of Olivet. We have therefore good cause to think that the evangelists not without great consideration did so diligently rehearse the names of these places, for else they would have thought it sufficient to have shewed that he went forth unto the mount of Olivet, had it not been that God, under the names of those places, had secretly covered some high mysteries, which, by the rehearsal of those names, good men and studious should have occasion afterwards, through the aid of his Holy Spirit, to search out. For since we may in no wise think that there is any superfluous syllable in the sacred scripture, which the apostles wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and that not so much as a sparrow lighteth upon the ground without the will of God, I must needs believe that neither the evangelists made mention of those names without some good cause, nor yet that the Hebrews so named them (whatsoever their purpose was when they did so call them), but by some secret motion (albeit to themselves unknown) of God's own Holy

Spirit, which under those names had closely hid certain notable mysteries, and at length should be brought to light.

And since Cedron signifieth sorrow and blackness too, and besides that is the name, not of the river only which the evangelists do here make mention of, but also, as we may well perceive, of the valley that the river passeth through, which valley lieth betwixt Jerusalem and Gethsemani, these names (but if we be too slothful and negligent) do put us in remembrance that as long as we live here (as the apostle with), like strangers sequestered from our Lord, we must needs pass over, ere ever we come unto the fruitful mount of Olivet, and the pleasant village of Gethsemani (a village, I say, not displeasing or loathsome to look upon, but full of all delight and pleasure), we must first pass over, as I said, this valley and river called Cedron, a vale of misery and river of heaviness, the water whereof may clean, purge, and wash away, the foul black filthiness of our sins. But now if we, to avoid grief and pain, go about by a contrary way, to make this world, which should be a place of pain and penance, to be a place of ease and pastime, and so turn it unto our heaven, both do we clearly exclude ourselves from the very true felicity for ever, and drown us all too late in fruitless sorrow and care, and further bring ourselves into intolerable and endless wretchedness.

And this wholesome lesson are we put in mind of by the well-placed rehearsal of Cedron and Gethsemani. Now because the words of holy scripture have not one sense alone, but are full of many mysteries, the names of these places do so well serve to the setting forth of this history of Christ's passion, as though for the same purpose only God had from the beginning ordained those places long before to be called by such notable names, as being compared with those things that Christ did many years after, might declare that they were appointed aforehand to be as it were witnesses of his most bitter passion. For since Cedron signifieth black, doth it not seem to express the saying of the prophet, which was spoken of Christ going to his glorious kingdom by most shameful death, disfigured with stripes, blood, spiteful spitting, and such other filthiness, where it is written: "Neither comeliness nor beauty is there in him." (Is 53:2)

And that the river which he passed over did not without cause betoken sorrow and heaviness, himself right well witnessed where he said: "My soul is heavy even to the death."

"And his disciples went with him." (Lk 22:39)

It is to be understood of the eleven only which still remained with him. For the twelfth, whom the devil entered into after he had eaten the sop, and carried forth from the residue of the apostles, waited now no longer upon his master as his disciple, but like a traitor laboured to destroy him. And so proved these words of Christ too true: "He that is not with me is against me." For against Christ was he indeed, even at that time most especially, craftily contriving his destruction, when the rest of his disciples went after him to pray with him. Let us follow Christ therefore, and by prayer call upon his Father with him. And let us not, as Judas did, slip aside from him, after we have been relieved by his gracious goodness, and well and liberally supped with him, for fear this saying

of the prophet be verified in us: "If thou sawest a thief thou didst run with him, and with adulterers didst thou pay thy shot." (Ps 50:18)

"And Judas that did go about to betray him, knew right well the place, because Jesus used often times to come thither with his disciples." (Jn 18:2)

Now by occasion of the traitor do the evangelists yet once again both beat into us, and with oft rehearsal thereof much commend also, the blessed custom of Christ who was wont to resort thither with his disciples to pray. For if he had not gone to the same place so commonly in the night time, but now and then among, the traitor could not have been so well assured to find our Lord there, that he durst have conducted thither the bishop's servants and a band of the Roman soldiers, as to the thing they should not miss to meet withal; since if they had found it otherwise, they would have went he had mocked them, and so ere he could have escaped away, haply have done him some displeasure. But now where are these folk become, that stand very much in their own conceit, and as though they had done a great feat, fondly glory in themselves, if it hath fortun'd them at one time or other, on high evens, either to watch anything long in prayer by night, or else for the same purpose to rise in the morning somewhat early? Our saviour Christ customarily used to persevere in prayer all the whole night without any sleep at all.

Where be they also which, because he refused not to eat and drink with the publicans, nor disdained not to receive kindness and service of sinners, called him a glutton and a drunkard, and in comparison of the Pharisees, whose profession was very strait, counted him to be scant in virtue so perfect as one of the common sort? And yet while these sour lowering Pharisees, to be seen of the world, were praying openly abroad in corners of the streets, he therewhiles full mildly and lovingly taught sinful men, while he ate and drank with them, to amend their lives. Again while the false dissembling pharisee lay at his ease routing in his soft bed, Christ continued without doors painfully all night in prayer. Oh, would God we which are so slack and slothful that we cannot follow the good example of our saviour in this behalf, would yet at the least wise, when we turn ourselves in our bed even ready to fall asleep, have in remembrance Christ's continual watch, and although it were in few words, till sleep come on us again, give him hearty thanks, both misliking our own sluggishness and therewithal desiring him to endue us with more of his grace. Surely if we would accustom ourselves to do but even so much, I nothing doubt but that God would within short space help us with his grace and make us much better.

"And sit you here,' quoth he, 'whiles I go yonder and pray.' Then took he Peter with him, and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be heavy and sad, and to wax somewhat afraid and weary. Then said he unto them: 'My soul is heavy even unto the death. Abide ye here and watch with me.'" (Mt 26:36-38; Mk 14:32-34)

Whereas Christ willed the other eight of his disciples to stay somewhat behind him, Peter, John, and his brother James caused he to go further with him, as those whom he had always used more familiarly than all the rest of his apostles. Which thing although he had done for none other respect but only for that it liked him so to do, no cause yet had any man to be grieved therewith to see him so good and gracious. Howbeit great considerations were there besides, which as it seemeth moved him thereunto. Forasmuch as Peter for the fervour of his faith, John for his virginity, and his brother James for that he was the first of his apostles that should suffer martyrdom for his sake, did indeed far pass and surmount all the rest. And these three also had he long erst vouchsafed to admit both to be privy to his glorious transfiguration, and also presently to see it. Convenient was it therefore that they whom he had afore all other called with him to so wonderful a sight, and there had comforted for the while with the clear light of his eternal glory, convenient was it, I say, that these three in especial, who as reason would were more strong hearted than the other, should be placed nearest about him at the time of his painful pangs foregoing his bitter passion. Now when he was gone a little beyond them, straightways he felt himself oppressed with such an horrible heaviness, sorrow, fear, and weariness, and that with so great extremity that by and by even before them, he letted not to utter these lamentable words, that evidently declared the marvellous inward anguish of his sore troubled heart: "my soul is heavy even to the death."

For the blessed and tender heart of our most holy saviour was cumbered and panged with manifold and hideous griefs, since doubtless well wist he, that the false traitor and his mortal enemies drew near unto him, and were now in manner already come upon him; and over this that he should be despitefully bounden, and have heinous crimes surmised against him, be blasphemed, scourged, crowned with thorns, nailed, crucified, and finally suffer very long and cruel torments. Moreover much did it disquiet him, that he foresaw the fear and dread which his disciples should fall in, the mischief that should light on the Jews, the destruction of the false traitor Judas, and last of all, the unspeakable sorrow of his dear beloved mother. The storms and heaps of so many troubles coming upon him all at once, as doth the main sea when it violently breaketh down the banks over the land, sore oppressed his most holy and blessed heart.

Some man may haply here marvel how this could be, that our saviour Christ, being very God equal with his almighty Father, could be heavy, sad, and sorrowful. Indeed, he could not have been so, if as he was God, so had he been only God, and not man also. But now seeing he was as verily man as he was verily God, I think it no more to be marvelled that inasmuch as he was man he had these affections and conditions in him, such I mean as be without offence to God, as of common course are in mankind, than that inasmuch as he was God he wrought so wonderful miracles. For if we do marvel that Christ should have in him fear, weariness, and sorrow, namely seeing he was God, then why should we not as well marvel that he was hungry, athirst, and slept, since albeit he had these properties, yet was he nevertheless God for all that? But hereunto peradventure mayst thou reply and say: "albeit I do now marvel no more that he could so do, yet can I not but marvel still why he would so do. For what reason is it that he which taught his disciples in no wise to fear those

that could but kill only their bodies, and when that was done had no further thing in their power wherewith they could do them harm, should now wax afraid of them himself, namely since against his blessed body they could no more do, than it liked his holy majesty to permit and suffer them?

“Over this seeing (hereof we be well assured), that his martyrs joyfully and courageously hasted them toward their death, not letting even then boldly to rebuke and reprove the tyrants and their cruel tormentors, how unseemly might it be thought that Christ himself being, as a man might say, the chief banner-bearer and captain of all martyrs, should, when he drew near to his passion, be so sore afraid, so heavy, so wonderfully unquieted and troubled. Had it not been meet that he which did all things himself before he taught the same, should in this point especially in his own person, have given other men example to learn of him, for the truth's sake cheerfully to suffer death; lest such as in time to come would be loath and afraid to die for the defence of the faith, might happily, to excuse their own faint and feeble hearts, bear themselves in hand, that they did none otherwise therein than Christ had done before them. And so doing yet should they both not a little dishonour so good and worthy a master, and besides that much discourage other folk, to see them in so great fear and heaviness.” They that make these objections, and such other like, neither do thoroughly perceive the whole bottom of this matter, nor yet well weigh what Christ's meaning was, when he commanded his disciples in no wise to be afraid of death. For he meant not that they should in no case once shrink at death, but that they should not so shrink and flee from temporal death, that by forsaking the faith, they should fall into endless death for ever. Who though he would have his soldiers to be bold and therewithal discreet, requireth not yet to have them neither like blocks nor madmen. For as he hath a strong courageous heart that never shrinketh patiently to suffer pain, so he that feeleth none, is like a very block without any sense at all. It were a mad part for a man not to fear to have his flesh cut, and yet should no wise man for any dread of pain be withdrawn from his godly purpose, and so, by the refusal of a small pain, purchase himself a much greater.

A surgeon when a diseased place must be lanced or seared, exhorteth not his patient to imagine that at the same time he shall feel no grief or pain at all, but willeth him in any wise quietly to take it. He denieth not but that it will be right painful unto him. But then again the pleasure that he shall have by the recovery of his health and the avoiding of sorer grief likely to ensue, this shall fully, saith he, recompense altogether. And albeit our saviour Christ biddeth us rather willingly to suffer death, when there is none other remedy, than for fear thereof to forsake him (and forsake him do we, if before the world we refuse to confess his faith), yet doth he not for all that, command us so to strive against nature, as not once to shrink at death. Insomuch that he giveth us free liberty to avoid all trouble and danger, in case we may so do without prejudice and hindrance of the cause. “For if they persecute ye,” saith he, “in one city get ye into another.” (Mt 10:23) Upon which merciful licence and provident advice of our most prudent master, none of the apostles was there in a manner, no nor but few of the most notable martyrs neither that suffered so many years after, but that at one time or other they thus preserved their lives; and to the manifold profit both of themselves and many other more,

reserved the same until such season as the secret providence of God foresaw to be more convenient.

Howbeit some time Christ's valiant champions have done far otherwise, and of their own accord professed themselves Christian men, when no creature required it of them, and of their own minds, offered their bodies to martyrdom when no man called for them. Thus hath it liked God for the advancement of his honour, some whiles to keep from the knowledge of the world the great abundant faith of his servants, thereby to disappoint their wily and malicious enemies; and some whiles again so to set it forth, that their cruel persecutors were therewith much incensed, while both they saw themselves deceived of their expectation, and were moreover right angry to consider that the martyrs, that offered themselves to die for Christ's sake, could be overcome by no kind of cruelty. But yet lo! God of his infinite mercy doth not require us to take upon us this most high degree of stout courage which is so full of hardness and difficulty. And therefore I would not advise every man at adventure rashly to run forth so far forward, that he shall not be able fair and softly to come back again, but unless he can attain to climb up the hilltop, be haply in hazard to tumble down even to the bottom headlong. Let them yet whom God especially calleth thereunto, set forth in God's name and proceed, and they shall reign. The times, yea the very instants oftentimes and the causes of all things, hath he secret unto himself, and when he seeth time convenient he doth all things, as his deep wisdom, which pierceth all things mightily and disposeth all things pleasantly, before had secretly determined.

Whosoever therefore is brought to such a strait, that needs he must either endure some pain in his body, or else forsake God, this man may be right well assured, that he is by God's own will come to such distress. Whereupon hath he without doubt great occasion to be of good comfort, since either God will not fail to deliver him therefrom again, or be ready at his elbow to assist him in his conflict, and so give him the upper hand, that for his victory shall he be crowned. "For God is true of his promise," saith the apostle, "who will not suffer ye to be tempted above that ye may bear, but make ye also with the temptation a way out, that ye may have strength to abide it." (1 Cor 10:13) Wherefore when we are come to the point, that we must of necessity fight hand to hand with the prince of this world, the devil, and his cruel ministers, so that we cannot shrink back without the defacing of our cause, then would I, lo! counsel every man in this case utterly to cast away all fear. And here would I bid him quietly to set his heart at rest, in the sure hope and trust of God's help, namely seeing the scripture telleth us, that "whosoever putteth not his confidence in God in the time of tribulation shall find his strength full feeble." (Pro 24:10)

But yet before a man falleth in trouble, fear is not greatly to be discommended; and so that reason be always ready to resist and master fear, the conflict is then no sin nor offence at all, but rather a great matter of merit. For weenest thou that those holy martyrs which shed their blood for Christ's faith were never afraid of death and pain? I will not spend much time in this behalf to make any long rehearsal of other, since St. Paul alone shall serve my turn herein, as well as if I alleged ye a thousand. Yea and if David in the war against the Philistines was reputed as good as ten thousand, well may St. Paul

perdy, for the proof of that we now speak of, in the fight for the faith against the faithless persecutors, be accounted as sufficient as if I rehearsed ye ten thousand beside. Then this most valiant champion St. Paul, which was so ravished with the love of Christ and the hope he had in him, that he reckoned himself assured of his reward in heaven, insomuch that he said: "I have fought a good battle, my course have I finished, my faith have I kept, in time coming have I a crown of justice reserved for me," (2 Tm 4:7-8) which he so fervently desired and longed for, that he spake these words of himself: "Christ is my life, and to die were mine advantage," and again: "I long to be discharged of this body of mine, and to be with Christ," (Phil 1:21, 23) this selfsame Paul I say for all this, both by policy procured to escape the Jews' deceitful trains through the help of a certain captain of the Roman garrison, and afterward got out of prison, alleging that he was a citizen of Rome, and at another time saved himself from the cruel Jews by appealing unto Caesar, and before that, was let down over a wall in a basket, and so avoided the cursed hands of King Aretas. Here if any man will say that all this while he was in no dread of death at all, but did all this only upon consideration of the great increase of faith, that through his labour and travail might after grow to the world, surely for my part, as I would be loath to deny the one, so dare I not be so bold to warrant the other, since of his own fear that he some time was in (as strong-hearted as he was) maketh he sufficient declaration himself where he writeth unto the Corinthians as followeth: "When we came to Macedonia our body had no rest, but much tribulation abode we, battle without and fear within." (2 Cor 7:5) Also in another place he writeth unto them in this wise: "In much weakness was I, in sore dread and fear among you." (1 Cor 2:3) And again he saith: "Brethren, we would not have you ignorant of our trouble which hath happened in Asia, where we have been above our power so afflicted that we were even weary of our life." (2 Cor 1:8) Dost thou not hear now St. Paul with his own mouth confess here his own fear and dread and wonderful weariness, more intolerable unto him than death. Insomuch that he seemeth by these words, as it were in a painted table, lively to set forth the painful agony he then abode for Christ. Let me now see whether any man can justly say that Christ's holy martyrs were never afraid of death. And yet for all that could no fear cause St. Paul once to shrink or go back from his good purpose to advance the faith of Christ, nor all the counsel the disciples gave him could not stay him, but that needs forth would he to Jerusalem still, as to the place whereunto he saw well that the spirit of God called him, albeit the prophet Agabus had foreshewed him plain, that there should he be both imprisoned, and further in no little danger of his life too.

Whereby it appeareth that to fear death and torment is none offence, but a great and grievous pain, which Christ came not to avoid but patiently to suffer. And we may not by and by judge it a point of cowardice if we see a man either afraid and loath to be tormented, or discreetly eschew peril in such case as he may lawfully do it. But Mary! for dread of death and torment, either to run quite away when need requireth a man to abide by his tackling, or desperately to yield himself into his enemies' hands, this lo! is by the law of arms reputed a very shameful and traitorous act. For be a man of war never so fainthearted and dismayed before, yet when his captain commandeth him, if he be then ready straightways to set forward and go forth, and do manfully fight and

overthrow his enemies, this man may be well assured that his former fear shall no whit abridge his reward, since in good earnest such a one is rather the most of all to be commended, as he that hath overcome both his enemy and his own fear too, wherein consisteth many times more difficulty than to conquer and vanquish a man's mortal enemy.

So indeed our saviour Christ, as his own doings shortly after declared, letted neither for sorrow, fear, nor weariness, obediently to execute his Father's will and pleasure, and mightily to pass through all those painful pangs, which for our health himself a little before had full wisely been in dread of. But more causes are there than one, for which in the mean season it pleased him to suffer such fear, such sorrow, such weariness, and such inward anguish. It pleased him, I say, since he was not enforced thereunto. For who could have enforced God? It came therefore, without fail, of a wonderful high consideration of himself that his godhead did, for that while, in such wise forbear to give his aid and influence unto his manhood, that he might thereby to his great grief sensibly feel in his own body these troublesome passions of man's frail nature. But as I was about to say, it liked Christ of his wonderful goodness thus to do, upon sundry considerations.

First because he would fulfil the thing for which he came into this world, and that was to set forth and testify the truth. For whereas he was verily both God and man too, yet some were there which because they considered that he had in him hunger, thirst, sleep, weariness, and such-like dispositions, as all other men naturally have, falsely mistook him, and believed he was not God indeed. I mean this not only of the Jews and gentiles in his own time that were so much his enemies, but of those Jews and gentiles also which were many years after, that nevertheless called themselves good faithful Christian men; as Arius and the heretics of his sect, who letted not to deny that Christ was one in substance with his Father. Whereby raised they many years together much business and ruffle in the Church. But for a most strong treacle against these venomous heresies, wrought our saviour many a marvellous miracle.

Howbeit afterward rose there as great danger on the other side, as often times from one dangerous peril folk straightways fall in another as jeopardous as the first. For there lacked not some, that so earnestly beheld his glorious and mighty miracles, that the bright shining thereof made their eyes so to dazzle, that contrary to all truth they plainly denied his manhood. Now did these wretches too, following his trade that first began this heresy, never cease by sedition maliciously to break the godly unity of the holy Catholic Church, who by that fond frantic opinion, no less perilous than false, as much as in them lay, laboured to destroy and overthrow the whole mystery of man's redemption, in that they went about to cut from us and, as a man might say, utterly to dry up the gracious moisture of our saviour's death and passion, from whence as out of a well spring issues the water of our salvation. Now to remedy this deadly disease, it pleased our most gracious and loving physician, by these evident tokens of man's frail nature, as heaviness, fear, weariness, and dread of pain and torment, to declare himself to be a very natural man. Further, for as much as the cause of his coming hither was to suffer sorrow and pain for us, thereby to procure us joy and pleasure, like as the joy that he obtained for us was such as should be to our full contentation in soul and body both, so liked it him not in his body only to endure most cruel tormentry, but

inwardly also to feel in his blessed soul the sore anguish of sorrow, fear, and weariness; partly to the end that the more pains he took from us, the more should we be bounden to love him; and partly to put us in remembrance how unreasonable a thing it were, if we should either refuse to abide any trouble and grief for his sake, that willingly abode so many and great for ours, or grudge to take at his hands such punishment as our offences have righteously deserved; considering we here see that our saviour Christ himself, of his own mere goodness, shrank neither in body nor in soul patiently to suffer so manifold and grievous torments, for no desert on his behalf, but only to purge and put away vile and sinful wretchedness.

Finally, likewise as nothing was to him unknown from the beginning, so foresaw he well that there were like to spring up in his mystical body the Church members of divers conditions and qualities. And albeit that to suffer martyrdom nature is not able without the help of grace, since “no man,” as saith the apostle, “can say so much as our Lord Jesus but in the spirit of God,” (1 Cor 12:3) yet doth God in such sort bestow his grace upon mankind, that he letteth not therewhiles nature to work and have her course too, but either suffereth he nature to help forward the grace that he sendeth unto man, to the intent he may the more easily work and do well, or if nature be so froward that it will needs strive there against, yet when it is mastered and overcome by grace, it liketh him that of the difficulty that such folk have in their well doing, there shall grow unto them more matter of merit.

Wherefore forasmuch as Christ did foresee that many there would be so tender of body, that were they never so little in danger of bodily harm, they would be ready forthwith fearfully to tremble and quake, now lest such persons should conceive any inward discomfort, when they should feel themselves so fearful and faint-hearted, and see the martyrs again so stout and courageous, and upon fear to be enforced to faint and give over might mishap wilfully to yield and not go through, Christ vouchsafed therefore, I say, to comfort their weak spirits with the example of his own sorrow, heaviness, weariness, and incomparable fear, and unto one that were likely to be in such case, as it were by the lively voice of the precedent, he shewed himself expressly to say: “Pluck up thy courage, faint heart, and despair never a deal. What though thou be fearful, sorry, and weary, and standest in great dread of most painful tormentry that is like to fall upon thee, be of good comfort for all that, for I myself have vanquished the whole world, and yet felt I far more fear, sorrow, weariness, and much more inward anguish too, when I considered my most bitter painful passion to press so fast upon me. He that is strong-hearted may find a thousand glorious valiant martyrs, whose example he may right joyfully follow. But thou now, O timorous and weak silly sheep, think it sufficient for thee, only to walk after me, which am thy shepherd and governor, and so mistrust thyself and put thy trust in me. For this self same dreadful passage lo! have I myself passed before thee. Take hold on the hem of my garment therefore. From thence shall thou perceive such strength and relief to proceed, as shall much to thy comfort stay and repress this fond fantasy of thine, that maketh thee thus causeless to fear, and give thee better courage, when thou shalt remember, not only that thou followest my steps therein (which am faithful, and will not suffer thee to be tempted above thy power, but give thee with thy temptation a way out, that thou mayest be able

to abide it), but also that this small and short trouble, which thou sufferest here, shall win thee exceeding great glory in heaven. For the afflictions of this world be nothing worthy the glory that is to come, which shall be revealed in thee. Now having all these things imprinted in thy remembrance take a good heart unto thee, and with the sign of my cross clearly drive from thee these fearful, heavy, dreadful and dull vain imaginations that the spirit of darkness thus worketh in thee, and prosperously go forward on thy journey, and pass through all trouble and adversity, faithfully trusting that by mine aid and help, thou shalt have the upper hand and of me receive for thy reward the glorious crown of victory.”

Thus among other causes for which our saviour vouchsafed to take upon him these afflictions of our frail nature, one was this which I have here before rehearsed, and that as it seemeth very reasonable, that is to wit, he became weak for their sakes that were weak, by his weakness to cure theirs, whom he so entirely tendered, that in all that ever he did in this his bitter agony, it appeareth he meant nothing more, than to teach the faint-hearted soldier how to behave himself in his troublous travail, when he shall be violently drawn to martyrdom.

For to the intent he would instruct him that is in fear of danger, both to desire other folk to watch and pray for him, and therewith nevertheless in his own person to recommend himself wholly unto God, and again for that he would have it known that none but himself alone as then should taste the painful pangs of death, when he had commanded those three apostles, whom he took forth with him from the other eight almost to the foot of the hill, to stay still there and to abide and watch with him, then got he himself from them a stone's cast further.

“So when he was gone a little further, down fell he prostrate upon the ground, and prayed, that if it were possible, that hour might pass away from him. And thus he said: ‘O Father, Father, unto thee are all things possible. Take away this cup from me, but yet thy will be fulfilled and not mine. O my good Father, if it may be, let this cup pass from me, howbeit do not as I will herein, but as it liketh thee.’” (Mt 26:39; Mk 14:35-36)

Here doth Christ like a good captain teach his soldier by his own example, first of all to begin with humility, the foundation and ground of all other virtues, which once laid, a man may without danger climb up higher. For Christ albeit he was very God, equal and one in substance with God his Father, nevertheless for that he was man also, letted not in most humble wise to cast himself down flat upon the ground before him.

But here, good reader, let us pause awhile, and with entire devotion consider with what meekness our captain Christ lieth thus prostrate upon the ground. For if we earnestly so do, we shall have our hearts so lightened with the bright shining beam of that light, that illumineth every man which cometh into this world, that we shall be able thereby to see, know, lament, and at length to reform this foul folly. For negligent or slothful sluggishness can I not call it, but rather frantic madness and insensible deadly dullness, which causeth a great many of us when we go to make our prayer unto Almighty God, not with

reverence attentively to pray to him, but like careless and sleepy wretches hoverly to talk with him. Wherefore I much fear me lest we rather sorely provoke his wrath and indignation, than purchase at his hand any favour or mercy toward us.

Would God we would sometime take so much pain, as soon as we have finished our prayers, as forthwith orderly to call to our remembrance again all things that have passed us in the while we seemed to pray. Lord, how foolish, how fond, and how filthy matters shall we many times there find? We would, I assure you, wonder how our mind could possibly in so short a space stray so much abroad into so many places so far severed asunder, and about so divers and sundry, so many and idle occupations. For if a man would even of purpose for a proof do his endeavour to occupy his thought upon as many and as manifold matters, as by any possibility he could devise, hardly could he, I trow, in so little a while think upon so many things, and so far distant asunder as our idle unoccupied mind wandereth about, while our tongue at adventure pattereth apace, upon our matins and evensong, and other accustomed prayers.

And therefore if a body would muse and marvel what our wits are busied withal, when we be troubled with dreams in our sleep, nothing know I whereunto I may better liken our mind for the while, than if we do imagine it to be in like sort occupied while we be sleeping, as it is when we pray waking (if at the least wise he that prayeth after this manner may be counted waking), while we suffer our foolish mad brain in the mean season, so fast to wander about hither and thither upon so sundry fond fantasies. Saving this only difference is there betwixt them, that these which, as a man might say, thus dream waking, have certain so monstrous, so shameful, and so abominable toys in their heads, while their tongue mumbleth up their prayers in haste without any heed taken thereunto, and their hearts be straying abroad therewhiles in other places, that if a man had seen the like but in his sleep, yet even among children would he not, I am sure, for shame (were he never so shameless) at his uprising utter so frantic fantastical dreams.

And out of all doubt most true is the old said saw, that the outward behaviour and continuance is a plain express mirror or image of the mind, inasmuch as by the eyes, by the cheeks, by the eyelids, by the brows, by the hands, by the feet, and finally by the gesture of the whole body, right well appeareth how madly and fondly the mind is set and disposed. For as we little pass how small devotion of heart we come to pray withal, so do we little pass also how undevoutly we go forward therein.

And albeit we would have it seem that on the holy days we go more gorgeously apparelled than at other times only for the honour of God, yet the negligent fashion that we use a great many of us, in the time of our prayer, doth sufficiently declare (be we never so loath to have it so known and apparent to the world), that we do it altogether of a peevish worldly pride. So carelessly do we even in the church somewhiles solemnly jet to and fro, and other whiles fair and softly set us down again. And if it hap us to kneel, then either do we kneel upon the one knee, and lean upon the other, or else will we have a cushion laid under them both, yea and sometime (namely if we be anything nice and fine) we call for a cushion to bear up our elbows too, and so like an

old rotten ruinous house, we be fain therewith to be stayed and underpropped.

And then further do we every way discover, how far wide our mind is wandering from God. We claw our head, we pare our nails, we pick our nose and say therewhiles one thing for another, since what is said or what is unsaid both having clean forgotten, we be fain at all adventures to aim what we have more to say. Be we not ashamed, thus madly demeaning ourselves both secretly in our heart, and also in our doings openly, in such wise to sue for succour unto God, being in so great danger as we be; and in such wise to pray for pardon of so many horrible offences; and over that in such wise to desire him to preserve us from perpetual damnation? So that this one offence so unreverently to approach to the high majesty of God, all had we never offended him before, were yet alone well worthy to be punished with a thousand endless deaths.

Well now suppose that thou hadst committed treason against some mighty worldly prince, which were at his liberty either to kill thee or save thee, and this notwithstanding that he would be so merciful unto thee, as upon thy repentance and humble suit for his gracious favour again, be content favourably to change the punishment of death into some fine and payment of money, or further upon the effectual proof and declaration of thine hearty and exceeding shame and sorrow for thy fault, clearly release thee of altogether. Now when thou comest in presence of this prince, suppose thou wouldst unreverently, as one that carelessly passed not what he did, tell thy tale unto him, and while he sat still and gave good ear unto thee, in the uttering of thy suit all the while jet up and down before him, and when thou hadst jetted thy fill squat thee down fair and well in a chair, or if for good manners' sake thou thoughtest it most seemly for thee to kneel on thy knees, yet then that thou wouldst call somebody first, to fetch thee a cushion to lay underneath thee, yea and besides that to bring thee a stool and another cushion therewithal to lean thine elbows on, and after all this gape, stretch, sneeze, spit, thou carest not how, balk out the stinking savour of thy ravenous surfeiting, and finally so behave thyself in thy countenance, speech, gesture, and thy whole body beside, that he might plainly perceive that while thou spakest unto him, thy mind were otherwise occupied; tell me now, I beseech thee, what good, trowest thou, shouldst thou get at his hand by this tale thus told afore him? If we should thus handle a case of life and death, in the presence but of some worldly prince, we would I am sure reckon ourselves even quite out of our wits. Whereas he, when he had killed the body, had done his uttermost, and were able to do no more. And be we then, ween you, well advised, which being found faulty in a great many of matters of much more importance, presume so without reverence to sue for pardon unto the king of all kings, Almighty God himself who, when he hath killed the body, hath power also to cast the soul and body both into the fire of hell for ever.

Howbeit I would not any man should so understand my words here, as though I would have nobody to pray either walking or sitting, or lying in his bed either. For gladly would I wish, that whatsoever the body be doing, we would yet in the meanwhile ever more lift up our hearts to God, which is a kind of prayer that he doth most accept, since which way soever we walk, so that our mind be fixed on God never depart we from him which is everywhere present

with us. Howbeit like as the prophet that said unto God: "I forgot thee not, while I lay in my bed," did not so satisfy himself therewith, but that he would needs rise at midnight too, for to laud and praise our Lord, so beside these prayers that we say thus walking, some yet would I have sometimes in such wise to be said, that both should our minds with so godly meditation be prepared, and our bodies in so reverent manner disposed and ordered, that we could not in more humble wise use ourselves, if we should go unto the princes of the whole world, all were they sitting in one place altogether at once. And without fail this wandering of the mind, as oft as I bethink me thereupon, troubleth my heart full sore.

Yet will I not say that every thought (albeit right shameful and horrible) which in the time of our prayer either is put into our mind by the suggestion of our evil angel, or otherwise by the imagination of our own senses creepeth covertly into us, is forthwith deadly sin, if so be we do resist it and quickly cast it off. But Mary, if we be content either gladly to take in such evil thoughts, or suffer them long carelessly to increase in us, I nothing doubt at all but that the weight thereof may in conclusion grow to very deadly and damnable sin indeed.

Moreover, when I consider the high majesty of Almighty God, I must needs straightways deem and believe that albeit to have the mind never so little awhile wandering upon other things, is not accounted for mortal sin, yet proceedeth that rather of God's marvellous mercy towards us, whereby it pleaseth him not so to lay to our charge, than that the thing is not of itself so evil as to deserve damnation, since I can in no wise devise how any such lewd thoughts could possibly enter into men's minds while they be praying, that is to wit, while they be talking with God, but only by means of a faint and feeble faith. For seeing our heart strayeth never a deal when we have communication in an earnest matter with a worldly prince, yea or with any officer of his either, that beareth any stroke about him, it were not possible that we should have so much as one vain and strange fantasy in our heads at all, while we make our prayer unto God, if we did firmly and surely believe, that he were presently with us himself, and not only heard what we say, and marked our outward manner as well in our countenance as in all our other gestures beside, and thereby guessed how our heart were inwardly occupied, but also clearly saw and beheld the very bottom of our stomach, as he that by the infinite brightness of his divine majesty maketh all things lightsome; if we believed, I say, that God himself were present, in whose glorious presence all the princes upon earth, even in their most royalty, must needs (but if they be stark mad) plainly grant themselves to be no better than very vile wretched worms of the earth.

Wherefore our saviour Christ, forasmuch as he perceived that there is nothing more profitable for man than prayer, and therewith again considered that, partly by man's negligence, and partly by the malice of the devil, so wholesome a thing almost everywhere taketh but little effect, yea and oftentimes too doth great hurt and harm, determined while he was going toward his passion, both by the manner of his own prayer, and his own example joined thereto, to set forth so necessary a point, to be as it were a full conclusion of all the rest of his doctrine.

And therefore to give us warning, that we ought not only secretly with our heart, but also with our body openly in the face of the world, to serve and honour God, the creator of them both, and to teach us over this, that the reverent and seemly behaviour of the body, albeit the same principally proceedeth of the fervent devotion of the heart, doth nevertheless cause again our inward fervour and reverence to godward to increase and grow greater, he shewed us then a sample himself of most humble submission in prayer; who with such lowly outward gesture worshipped his heavenly Father, as none earthly prince (unless it were Alexander, when he was in his drunken and riotous rages, and certain other barbarous princes that were so proud of their estate that they looked to have been reputed for gods) durst either for shame require of his subjects, or receive when it was willingly offered.

For all the while he prayed, neither did he sit at his ease, nor stand upon his feet, nor yet only kneeled neither, but fell down grovelling flat upon the ground, and there so lying lamentably, besought his Father to be merciful unto him, and still saying: "Father, Father," humbly desired that he unto whom nothing is impossible, would vouchsafe, if it might so be, that is to wit, unless he had fully determined to have him taste the cup of this painful passion, else at his request and prayer to preserve him from it, being nevertheless content that his request herein should take no place, if unto his blessed will it seemed not so convenient.

We may not by occasion of these words, reckon that the Son was ignorant of his Father's will and pleasure, but as he came hither to instruct and teach men, so would he have it appear unto them, that he had in himself very man's affections. And whereas he said twice: "Father, Father," he willed us thereby to understand, that God, his Father, is indeed the father of all things both in heaven and earth. Furthermore, he put us by the same in remembrance, that God the Father was to him a double Father. Once by creation, which is a kind of fatherhood, since of truth more rightly come we of God that made us of nought, than of the man that naturally begat us, in as much as God both created our natural father and orderly made and disposed all that matter whereof we ourselves are engendered. And albeit Christ as man in this wise took God for his Father, yet as God took he him for his natural and co-eternal Father.

It may well be too, that he twice called upon him by this name Father, to have it known that he was not alonely a natural Father unto him in heaven but also that he had none other Father here in the world neither, for as much as he was conceived in his manhood of his mother, being a pure virgin without man's seed, by the coming of the Holy Ghost that entered into his mother, that Holy Spirit, I mean, which proceedeth both from his Father and himself, whose doings be evermore all one, and can in no wise by any man's imagination be dissevered.

Now by this his so oft and earnest calling him Father, which declareth an effectual desire to obtain his request, we learn another wholesome lesson beside: that whensoever we heartily pray for anything, and do not forthwith speed thereof, we should not faint and be utterly therewith discouraged, as was the wicked king Saul, who because he received not an answer from God by and by as he looked for, sought unto a witch and so fell to sorcery and

witchcraft, which was both by God's law forbidden, and by himself also not long before inhibited.

Then hereby doth Christ teach us still to persevere in prayer, and although we do never obtain the thing which we require, that yet we should not repine and grudge thereat, considering that, as we see here, the Son of God our saviour himself did not obtain his own delivery from death, which he most instantly prayed unto his Father for, saving that evermore (in which part specially ought we to follow his example) he submitted and conformed his own will to the will of his Father.

“And he came to his disciples, and found them asleep.” (Mt 26:40; Mk 14:37; Lk 22:45)

Here may we see what difference there is in love. For that love, lo! that Christ bare unto his disciples, very far surmounted the love that they bare toward him again, even they I say that loved him best of all. Who for all the sorrow, fear, dread, and weariness he was so sore panged with, his most bitter passion drawing so fast upon him, could not for all that forbear, but that needs would he even then go and see how they did; whereas they on the other side, how great love so ever they bare him, as without fail they loved him full tenderly, for all the exceeding peril they saw their most loved master so likely forthwith to fall in, were yet never the more able to keep themselves from sleep.

“Then said he thus to Peter: Sleepest thou, Simon? Couldst thou not endure to watch one hour with me? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit is prompt and ready, but the flesh is frail and weak.” (Mt 26:40-41; Mk 14:37-38)

Oh! what force and efficacy is there in these few words of Christ! And in these gentle words of his, Lord, how sharply doth he touch him! For in that he called him here by the name of Simon, and so called him when he laid to his charge his sluggish sleeping, thereby did he secretly signify that such feebleness and slothful sluggishness was full unfit for him that bare the name of Peter, which name Christ for his constant steadfastness he would should have been in him, had given long erst unto him. And as it was a privy check unto him that he called him not by the name of Peter or Cephas, so sounded it again to his reproach that he named him Simon. For in the Hebrew tongue in which Christ at the same time spake unto him, Simon is as much to say as hearing and obedient. But now when he contrary to Christ's admonition fell to sleeping, then did he neither hear Christ nor obey him neither.

And yet as me seemeth did our saviour not in this wise only covertly control Peter by these his mild words unto him, but somewhat sharply nipped him otherwise also, as if he had earnestly thus spoken unto him and said: “What, Simon, here playest thou not the part of Cephas, for why shouldst thou any more be called Cephas, that is to wit, a stone, which name I gave thee heretofore to have thee steadfast and strong, when thou shewest thyself so feeble and faint now sleep cometh on thee, that thou canst not abide to watch

so much as one hour with me. What, Simon, I say, art thou now fallen asleep? And well worthy art thou perdy to be called by thy first name Simon, for since thou art so heavy asleep, how shouldst thou be named Simon, that is to say, a hearer? Or seeing that I warned thee to watch with me, how canst thou be called obedient? Which as soon as my back was turned like a slothful sluggard straightways wert fallen asleep. Simon, I evermore made most of thee, and art thou now asleep? Simon, I have so many ways advanced thee, and dost thou now sleep? Simon, thou didst but right now boldly boast that if need were thou wouldst die with me, and dost thou now sleep? Simon, even at this point do the Jews and gentiles, and Judas worse than either of them, go about to murder me, and yet dost thou sleep? Yea, Simon, and the devil too laboureth to sift ye all like wheat, and art thou still asleep? Oh! what may I reckon that the rest of my disciples will do, when thou, Simon, seeing me and yourselves too in so extreme peril, art now thus fallen asleep?"

After these words because it should not seem that he touched Peter alone, he began to say unto the rest also: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit is prompt and ready, but the flesh is frail and weak." Here are we warned continually to pray and here are we taught how profitable and very needful prayer is to stay us, that our frail flesh do not draw back and stop our well-disposed heart, and train it headlong into dangerous deadly temptation. For who was bolder spirited than Peter? And yet how greatly he needed the aid of God to assist him against his frail flesh, plainly appeareth by this, that while by his sleeping he forsothed to pray and call for God's help, he gave the devil such advantage upon him, that through the feebleness of his flesh, his courageous spirit was soon after abated, and himself driven clearly to deny and forswear Christ. Now if it thus fared with the apostles, being so fresh and forward, that while through sleeping they discontinued their prayer they fell into temptation, what shall become of us withered and barren wretches, if in time of danger (which, God wot, seldom are we out of, since our adversary the devil like a ramping lion runneth evermore about, everywhere seeking whom by frailty fallen into sin he may forthwith catch and devour) what shall become of us, I say, if in such danger we do not, as Christ bade us, persevere in watch and prayer?

Here Christ biddeth us watch, not to play at cards and dice, not to banquet and surfeit, not to drink ourselves drunk, and fulfil our filthy lusts, but he biddeth us watch to pray. And pray doth he bid us not now and then among, but always without any ceasing. "Pray ye," saith he, "without intermission." And he would have us pray, not in the daytime only (for who would bid anybody to watch in the day), but he admonisheth us to bestow also even a good part of that time in hearty prayer that a great sort of us are wont to spend altogether in sleep. Wherefore ought we wretched caitiffs much to be ashamed of ourselves and to acknowledge how grievously we do offend, which scanty in the day say any short prayer at all, and yet as short as it is, full slightly cometh it from us, and as though we were half asleep. Finally our saviour willeth us to pray, not for abundance of riches, and plenty of other worldly pleasures, nor to have hurt light on our enemies, nor to receive honour here in this world, but that we fall not into temptation; willing us therein to understand that all those worldly things be either very perilous and hurtful or else, in comparison of this one thing, very vain and foolish trifles. And

therefore that thing, as the principal point that briefly implieth all the rest, did he purposely place in the end of that prayer, which long before he had taught his disciples, where he willed them to pray thus: "And suffer us not to be led into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

"So went he his way the second time again, and made the same prayer that he did before, saying: 'O my Father, if this cup cannot pass from me but that I must needs drink thereof, thy will be fulfilled.' And he came again and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy, and they wist not what answer to make him. Then he left them, and went his way again and prayed as before, and upon his knees made his prayer in this wise: 'O Father, if it be thy will, take away this cup from me, howbeit let thy will be done, and not mine.'" (Mk 14:39-40; Mt 26:42-44)

Now after he had given this advertisement unto his disciples, he got him to his prayers afresh. And albeit he desired yet once more the self-same thing that he had done before, yet in such sort framed he his request, that he referred the whole matter again to his Father's will and pleasure. Whereby giveth he us a good lesson, both heartily to pray and therewithal not to be so precise, but that we leave yet wholly unto God to do still what him list, who willeth us as much good as we can to ourselves, and a thousand fold better knoweth what is best for us.

"O my Father," quoth he, "if this cup may not pass from me, but that I must drink of it, thy will be fulfilled." In these words 'my Father' are there two things implied. For thereby doth both Christ express a great earnest affection, and declareth also, that God the Father is after a singular manner Father unto him, not by creation only as he is to all creatures, nor by adoption as he is Father to Christian men, but is unto him as he is God his very Father by nature. By reason whereof notwithstanding he teacheth all other men to make their prayer in this wise: "Our Father which art in Heaven," by which words we should acknowledge that God is father unto us all and we to each other as brethren, yet doth he himself of very good reason, as he that for his godhead alonely might do so, thus speak unto the Father, and saith "O my Father." Howbeit now, if any man be so high-minded that disdaineth to be like other men he would seem specially to be governed by the secret spirit of God, and so to be in better case than any man is beside, verily this man in mine opinion arrogantly usurpeth these words of Christ, and in his prayer saith: "My Father" and not 'Our Father' in that he would have it appear that the spirit of God which is common to all Christian folk were singularly in himself alone. Wherein he fareth not much unlike Lucifer, for as proudly presumeth he upon God's words as Lucifer did on his place. Now whereas he saith: "If this cup cannot pass from me but that I must needs drink of it, thy will be fulfilled", is declared evidently what thing Christ calleth possible, and what impossible. For that that he calleth impossible, is nothing else but the resolute and immutable voluntary determination of his Father concerning his own death, since else, if he had perceived either by the course of the planets, or by some secret working of nature, or by destiny, that he must needs die, and thereupon had said: "If this cup cannot pass from me but that I must needs drink

thereof," then to what purpose should he have added this: "Thy will be fulfilled?" For why should he refer the matter unto his Father's pleasure, if he had thought, that either it had not lain in his Father's power to bring it so about or else that needs must it so have come to pass whether his Father would or no.

But now though we do all this while rehearse such words as Christ spake unto his Father to be preserved from death, and nevertheless humbly referred altogether to his will and pleasure, we must yet think always again that, seeing he was both God and man, he spake all this, not as God, but as only man. As we which be made of a body and a soul, use to speak some things of ourselves, that cannot be applied but to the soul alone, and some things speak we on the other side that can be understanden but of the body only. So say we that martyrs, as soon as they be dead, go up straightways to heaven, whereas no more goeth thither of them saving their souls alone. And likewise say we that men, how proud so ever they be here, are yet but earth and ashes, and after this short life shall lie and rot in a poor simple grave. Thus be we commonly accustomed to talk, yet never entereth the soul into the grave, nor perdy never dieth neither, but like as if it hath lived wretchedly in the body it miserably afterward liveth in perpetual pain, so if it hath lived well, contrariwise continueth it in endless joy and bliss.

So in like manner for because, in the omnipotent person of Christ, his godhead was as well knit and joined unto his manhood, as his mortal soul was to his mortal body, therefore both that that he did as God, and also that that he did as man, as he was indeed not two persons but one, so doth he speak thereof as one. After which sort by reason of his godhead, he letted not to say: "I and my Father be all one." And in another place: "Before Abraham was made I am." And in respect of these two natures said he further thus: "I am with you always even to the world's end." And again in respect of his manhood alone, spake he these words following: "My Father is greater than I am." And he saith also elsewhere: "A little while am I with you." For although his glorious body is verily present with us, and so shall be ever still to the end of the world, under the form of bread in the blessed sacrament of the altar, yet his corporal figure, in which he was so long conversant with his apostles, which kind of presence he meant when he said: "With you am I but a small season," at his ascension was clearly taken away, saving at such time as it liketh him to some special person, as he sometimes doth, so to show himself. All these things therefore that Christ here in this time and place of his agony, either did, suffered, or prayed, which are so base that they may be thought far unseemly for the high majesty of his godhead; all these things, I say, let us remember that he did but only as man. Yea, and some of them too, must we imagine to proceed from the inferior part of his manhood, that part I mean that appertaineth to the senses, whereby both then declared he himself a very man indeed, and also much relieved afterward the natural fear of other. In consideration whereof did Christ count neither any of his own foresaid words, nor anything else that in the whole process of his passion testified his humanity to have been so sore afflicted, to be any minishment of his honour at all. So far forth that he himself caused the same with all diligence to be openly set forth to the world. And albeit those things that were written by all the apostles were all equally by his own only spirit indited, yet of all the acts that

ever he did, none is there to my remembrance, that he so specially willed to be recorded.

For how very heavy and sorrowful he was, that told he unto his apostles himself, to the intent they might of his mouth to other after report the same. But in what wise he made his prayer unto his Father, since they that were nearest him were a stone's cast from him, this could they not hear, all had they been waking, nor being asleep, all had they been with him. And much less see at that time of the night, either when he fell down on his knees or when he lay grovelling on the ground. And as for that bloody sweat that streamed down all his body, all had they seen never so plain with their own eyes the drops thereof afterward remain in the place where he prayed, yet anything would they, trow I, sooner have conjectured than have hit so rightly upon the truth, since never was it erst heard, that ever had any man so sweat blood before. Moreover it cannot be gathered that he then to any creature disclosed it himself, since from thenceforth until his dying hour, neither with his own mother nor with any of his apostles had he any kind of communication at all, unless anybody could reckon it likely that he should make rehearsal of the long circumstance of his bitter agony to his apostles, either when after his prayer he returned unto them and found them either fast asleep, or scant awake, at the leastwise very sleepy, or finally when the soldiers were suddenly come upon him. Then follow must it needs, and so most seemeth it to be true, that he himself after his resurrection, at what time they were clearly out of all doubt of his godhead, with his own most blessed mouth opened unto his loving mother, and dear beloved disciples, the whole history and process, which none could tell but himself alone, of the grievous agony that he had suffered in his manhood; the knowledge whereof might be right fruitful, first unto themselves and after by them to other. Great cause therefore of comfort may they take in the remembrance of this agony, that are in tribulation and heaviness, considering that our saviour himself, purposely to relieve and comfort other in their distress, of his special goodness vouchsafed to disclose that sore affliction of his own, which had he not so uttered it, had never no man known nor never could have done.

But some are there perchance which somewhat muse too, that Christ after his prayer returning to his apostles when he found them sleeping, and with his sudden coming upon them so sore abashed, that they wist not what answer to make him, so went again from them as it might seem that thither he came but of purpose to spy whether they were sleeping or waking, whereas being God, that foreknew he well enough ere ever he came at them.

Howbeit they that marvel at this, if haply any such there be, may well be answered thus. All that ever Christ did, he did upon good cause. For albeit his coming unto his apostles at that point did not so thoroughly awake them, but that either they were still so heavy, so drowsy, and so amazed that scantly could they hold up their heads and look on him; or else, which is yet somewhat worse, by his sharp words had unto them being fully awaked, nevertheless as soon as his back was turned fell straight asleep again; yet did he herein both declare his earnest care towards his disciples, and by his own example give a plain lesson beside, that from thenceforth should the heads of his Church for no sorrow, fear, or weariness, suffer their care and diligence toward their flock in any wise to slack and decay, but evermore so use

themselves as it might plainly appear that they were more careful for the safeguard of their flock than for their own selves.

But here will peradventure some busybody, more inquisitive than needeth of God's high secrets, say either it was Christ's will to have his apostles watch or not. If not, why did he then so straitly command it, and if it were his will, what needed he then to go and come so often? Could not he, seeing he was God, as well make them as bid them do it?

No mastery was it, good sir, for him being God, to have so done indeed, who did all things that him liked, and with his word made all creatures. For he spake the word, and all things were made, and by his commandment were all things created. Could not he that caused the born blind man to have his sight have found the means as well to open the eyes of him that was asleep? No great matter hardly had that been for him to do, all had he not been God. Since if a man do but with a needle's point prick them in their eye that be asleep, what doubt is there but that they will continue waking, and not lightly fall to sleep again, Christ could, be ye sure, have caused his apostles still to have waked, and not to have slept at all, if he had precisely and determinately willed the same.

But now did he but conditionally will them so to do, that is to wit, if they were willing thereto themselves, and so fully willing too that with him both outwardly exhorting them, and by his gracious help inwardly furthering them therein, they would each man for his part put too their own good endeavour withal. And so would he have all men saved, and no man perpetually to be damned. I mean as thus, lo! if we of our own frowardness wry not a contrary way, but be ready obediently to follow his most blessed will and pleasure. And yet if any man of wilfulness will not let still so to do, him will not God hawse up to heaven maugre his teeth, as though he had such need of our service there that he could not continue in his glorious kingdom without our help and assistance. Which if it so were, then many things would he punish here forthwith out of hand, which now for our weal he favourably long beareth with and winketh at, to see whether his merciful sufferance will in conclusion drive us to amendment. Which his so marvellous gentleness while we sinfully abuse, and continually heap sin upon sin, we do (as saith the apostle) lay up to our own confusion God's wrath and indignation in the day of his dreadful anger. All this notwithstanding, such is the goodness of God, that for all he seeth us thus negligent, and sluggishly sleeping upon the soft pillow of our iniquity, he stirreth us other while, he shoggeth us, and shaketh us, and by tribulation laboureth to awake us. And whereas in this point he plainly proveth himself, for all he is displeased with us, to be nevertheless a tender, loving father unto us, yet so fond folk be we the most part of us, that we interpret it far otherwise, and this so great a benefit of his towards us account we as marvellous high displeasure. Whereas contrariwise, were we in our right wits, rather would we most earnestly entreat him, that as oft as we wander a wrong way from him, he would (draw we never so fast backward) by sharp correction maugre our mind bring us into the right way again.

For first must we pray for grace to know the way, and so say unto God with the Church: "From blindness of heart, deliver us, O Lord." And with the prophet also thus: "Teach me to fulfil thy will, and shew me, O Lord, thy ways, and thoroughly instruct me in thy paths." And secondly ought we heartily to wish,

that in the fragrant odour of thy sweet savours, O God, and in the most pleasant breath of thy Holy Spirit, we may most joyfully run after thee. And if we misfortune to faint by the way (as God wot seldom do we otherwise) and like slothful losels scantly come after him a great way behind, let us forthwith say unto God: "Take me by the right hand and lead me in thy way."

Now if we grow so feeble that we wax loath to go forth any further, and of sloth and niceness begin to stagger and to stand still, then let us make our prayer to God to draw us forward whether we will or no. And in conclusion if after fair handling we draw still stubbornly backward and, clean contrary to God's gracious pleasure and contrary to our own wealth, continue yet unreasonably stiffnecked, like a horse and mule which have no manner of understanding, here ought we in most humble wise to beseech almighty God, with the words of the prophet well serving for this purpose: "With a snaffle and a bridle hold hard my jaws, O God, when I do not approach towards thee." (Ps 32:9)

But of truth for as much as when we once fall to slothfulness, no virtuous disposition sooner goeth from us than doth our good devotion to pray, and that loath in our prayer are we to sue for those things, be they never so behovable, that we be unwilling to receive, long before must we, even while we be well disposed, earnestly take heed, that ere ever we fall into those dangerous diseases that the unquiet mind is cumbered withal, we devoutly call upon God's help by prayer, and in most lowly wise beseech him, that if it mishap us at any time afterward, either through any lewd lust of the flesh, or through any deceitful desire of worldly things, or through the wily trains of the devil, so to be overcome that we require anything against our own wealth, he would give no care to our such requests, but keep those things that we so pray for, very far from us, and again grant us plenty of those that he foreseeth shall be profitable unto us, make we never so much labour for the contrary.

For so are we wont all that be wise, when we look for our fit in an ague, to give them warning beforehand that shall attend on us in our sickness, that they minister nothing unto us, be we never so desirous thereof, that our disease to the hindrance of our health and to the more increase of itself in such case against all reason doth commonly covet. And therefore when we be so deadly asleep in sin that, although God of his mercy thus calleth us aloud, and shoggeth us, yet will we never the sooner awake, and diligently apply ourselves to virtue, oft times be we the cause ourselves that God giveth us over and leaveth us in our sins, some in such wise as he never cometh to them again. And other some suffereth he to sleep till some other season, as his wonderful goodness and unsearchable deep wisdom seeth to be more expedient.

Which thing was covertly signified in that Christ, when he came the second time to his apostles, and they yet for all that would never the more watch, but needs sleep still, left them alone and went his way from them. "For leaving them there, he departed from them eftsoons, and prayed as he did before, and kneeling upon his knees made his petition and said: 'O Father, if it be thy will, take away this cup from me, but yet not my will be done but thine.'"

Now lo! doth he make the same prayer again, now doth he add the same condition again. Now doth he give us example again, that when we come in any great danger, yea though it be for God's sake, we should not reckon it

unlawful for us continually to pray unto him graciously to deliver us therefrom, since it may so be that purposely he suffereth us to be brought in such extremity, that seeing prosperity made us so key-cold and dull to pray, fear of peril and danger should yet set us in an heat, namely being in hazard of bodily harm. For in the jeopardy of our soul are we the most part of us scantily but even lukewarm. But for those that care for their soul's health, as each one of us ought to do, unless it be such a man as the mighty hand of God encourageth to martyrdom, which thing must either by some secret means be perceived, or else by some other reasonable ways be well tried and known, otherwise I say is it meet for these folk every man to stand in fear of himself, that he be not over charged with his burden, that he fall therewith downright; and therefore lest he, like as Peter did, trust over much to himself, heartily must he beseech almighty God that he will of his goodness mercifully deliver his silly soul from so great danger. Nevertheless this one point must we keep still in remembrance, that we never so precisely pray to be preserved from peril, but that we commit the whole matter unto God, ready for our parts with all obedience patiently to accept whatsoever his pleasure shall be to appoint us.

Thus did Christ upon these considerations leave us a wholesome example in this wise to pray, whereas he for his own person was further from all such necessity of praying than the heaven is distant from the earth. For as he was God, he was equal with his Father, and in that he was God also, as he was of like power with his Father, so had he like will too. But as man was he in power very far beneath him. Howbeit at length all authority both in heaven and earth was by his Father delivered into his hands.

And albeit inasmuch as he was man his will and his Father's will was not all one, yet unto his Father's will was his in every point so conformable, that never was he found to vary from the same; so far forth that his reasonable soul, obeying his Father's appointment, consented to suffer that most painful death; notwithstanding his bodily senses (to shew himself a very natural man) were full sore against it, as his own prayer lively expressed both these points at once, where he said: "O Father, if it please thee, take away this cup from me, yet not my will be fulfilled but thine."

Which two points yet not so clearly appeared by that he said, as by that he did. For that his reason refused not to endure that hideous horrible tormentry, but lowly obeyed his Father even to the death, and that unto the death of the cross, this to lo! did the process of his passion right well at the full declare. Again, what a grievous and exceeding fear he felt in his senses for the bitter pangs that drew so fast upon him, do the words of the gospel here immediately following sufficiently testify:

"Then appeared unto him an angel from heaven, and comforted him." (Lk 22:43)

Oh how great anguish and heaviness was he then in, trow ye, when there came an angel from heaven to comfort him?

But here can I not but much marvel. What the devil aileth them that let not to bear folk in hand, that folly it were for a man to desire either any angel or any

saint in heaven to pray unto God for him, because we may, say they, boldly make our prayer to God himself, who alone is more ready to help us than are the angels and saints, and set them altogether. And thereto is both able and willing to do us more good than all the saints in heaven beside.

With such foolish reasons and, to say the truth, nothing to the purpose at all, do these fond fellows for malice they bear against the honour of saints (and therefore may they look for as little favour of them again), go about as much as they may, both to withdraw our good affection from them, and to take away their wholesome help from us. Why might not these wretches then with as good reason say that the comfort which this angel ministered unto our saviour Christ was utterly vain and needless? For among all the angels in heaven, who was either able to do so much for him as was himself alone, or so near at his elbow to assist him, as was God, and that was he himself? But like as it pleased his goodness for our sakes to suffer sorrow and anguish, so for our sakes vouchsafed he also by an angel to be comforted, thereby partly to confute these triflers' trifling reasons, and partly to prove himself to be a very man. And likewise as angels came and did service unto him as God, when he had gloriously vanquished the temptations of the devil, so liked it him that as he was meekly going to his deathwards there should come to him as man, an angel to comfort him; and over that to put us in good hope, that if we in like manner in time of danger humbly do desire it, we shall not fail of comfort, so that we do it not coldly and hoverly, but with deep sighs from the very bottom of our hearts do pray as Christ here giveth us the example.

“For being in an agony, he prayed along while and his sweat was as it had been drops of blood distilling down on the ground.” (Lk 22:44)

The most part of all the doctors do for a truth affirm, that the passion which Christ suffered for us was a great deal more grievous than ever any martyr abode, that from thence hitherto suffered martyrdom for his faith. But some other be there of a contrary mind, because our saviour Christ, say they, had neither so many sundry kinds of torments, nor so many days together continued or renewed as those holy martyrs had. And further seeing one drop of his most precious blood, by reason of his eternal godhead, had been enough and more than enough to pay the ransom of all the whole world, therefore think they that God did not appoint him to suffer so much pain as ever any martyr did, but even so much as his unsearchable wisdom deemed to be most convenient, the stint and rate whereof as no man perfectly knoweth, so reckoned they it against no point of our faith to believe that his pains were somewhat less than many of the martyrs' were. But surely in my judgement, beside the common opinion of the Church, which aptly applieth unto Christ these words of Jeremias that were spoken of Jerusalem: “O all ye that pass by the way, behold and see whether there be any sorrow like unto mine,” (Lam 1:12) this place, to that we be now in hand withal, maketh me verily to be persuaded that never was there martyr's torment for pain comparable in sharpness with Christ's painful pangs.

Now if I would for my part grant (as upon good causes I have no need to do) that any martyr had both more and greater torments, yea and longer if ye will

than Christ, yet methinketh it very likely, that he, though his pains seemed far less in appearance, abode yet far more exceeding anguish than any of the martyrs felt, all were it so that their grief appeared much greater, considering that he was so sore inwardly panged upon the dreadful sight of his bitter passion at hand, as never was man for any pain that was towards him. For whoever felt in himself such an agony that he sweat bloody drops throughout all his body, that streamed down to the ground? Hereby do I gather, then, how great his smart was in the very time of his passion, since when he but foresaw it draw near unto him, he was so sore tormented as never was creature afore him.

Howbeit his anguish could not have grown so great neither as to cause his body sweat blood, had not his almighty godhead purposely determined, not to assuage and minish, but rather to increase and make those hideous griefs more, thereby both covertly to shew that his martyrs should afterwards likewise shed their blood here in earth for his sake, and therewithal by the marvellous strange example of his own incomparable heaviness, to encourage and comfort such as might perhaps else, upon the remembrance of dreadful pain, wax full sore afraid, and by misconstruing their own faint heart as a plain evidence that they should not be able to stand, thereupon desperately give over altogether.

Here again, if any man will reply and bring forth those martyrs, which in Christ's quarrel courageously, uncalled for, offered themselves to death, and judge them specially worthy to receive a triumphant crown in heaven, for that their joy so far surmounted their sorrow that no manner of signs and tokens of dread or discomfort could be perceived in them; in that point am I content he take me on his side too, so that he deny not them their reward also which, though they come not forth and offer themselves, do nevertheless, when they be laid hands on, neither draw back, nor strive thereat but, what fear and heaviness soever they be in, patiently yet for Christ's sake endure all that their hearts do full sore abhor.

Now whoso will stiffly say that they that thus offer themselves have higher reward in heaven than the other have, in this matter reason shall he alone for me, since for my purpose it is sufficient that either sort in heaven hath far greater glory than, while they lived here, they had either seen with their eyes, or heard with their ears, or in their hearts ever erst had conceived. In heaven how highly soever any man is advanced, therewith is none offended, but rather every one, so well they love each other, rejoiceth and hath his part in each other's advancement.

Beside this, for us that blindly go groping here in the dark vale of this miserable world, hard it is in mine opinion to know whom God doth in the bliss of heaven most gloriously advance.

For as I will well agree that God loveth a glad and cheerful giver, so mistrust I never a deal, but that he loved Tobias well enough, and blessed Job likewise, and yet as either of them both with a bold courage patiently took their adversity, so was neither of them, as far as I can learn, very proud thereof or greatly rejoiced therein.

A man to offer himself to death for Christ, either when he is openly called to it, or else when God secretly stirreth him thereunto, is a high point of virtue: to that I say not nay. Marry, otherwise to attempt it, I think it not the surest way.

And we find that the very best and chief of them that willingly suffered for Christ, were at the first sore afraid and wonderfully troubled, and saved themselves from death oftner than once, which after for all that most courageously they refused not to suffer.

Yet I deny not, but that God can, and of truth among so doth, sometime in consideration of some holy martyr's former virtuous painful life, and sometime freely of his own mere goodness, so thoroughly ravish his heart with joy, that the same not only quite keepeth down all his troublesome pangs, but also so far driveth from him those first sudden passions which the Stoics call in Latin propassiones, and which by their own confession the wisest of their sect were not able to eschew, that he will not let him be once cumbered therewith.

And seeing we see at our eye, that oft times it so fareth in a fray, that some men be sore wounded, and feel it not until their mind (which for the while was earnestly otherwise occupied) come to itself again, and so perceive their harm, I doubt it never a deal, but that the heart may be so ravished with the comfort of that glorious joy which is so near at hand, that neither shall it dread death nor taste the smart thereof.

Howbeit, if it please God to give unto any man such grace, this good hap would I account to come, either of the free gift of God, or to be as a reward of his godly virtue in time past, rather than to be any matter of merit after this life, since reward would I reckon to be proportioned after the rate of pain patiently taken for Christ's sake, saving that God, of his liberal bounty, with so good, so full, so well heaped, and so exceeding plenteous measure, recompenseth such pain, that all the trouble and afflictions of this world can in no wise countervail the glory that is to come, which shall be revealed in them that have here so entirely loved God that for the advancement of his honour, with great anguish and torment of heart and body, they have not letted to spend their blood and therewithal their life too. And what will you say if God other whiles of his goodness giveth some men the grace not to be afear'd at all? Not for that he most liketh and rewardeth such men's boldness, but that he knoweth them to be so faint-hearted that they were else like to give over for fear. For many of truth have there been, that at the first brunt have fearfully shrunk and fainted, and yet afterward valiantly passed through all the pain that was put upon them.

Now albeit I cannot deny, but that the example of them that suffer death with a bold and hardy courage, is right expedient for a great many to hearten them to do the like, yet on the other side, forasmuch as all the sort of us in effect be very timorous at the coming of death, who can tell how many take good by these folk too, which though they come to it, as we see, with much anguish and dread, do yet in conclusion manfully pass through those horrible strong stops of weariness, fear, and heaviness, and so, stoutly breaking all those violent lets, do gloriously conquer death, and mightily get up into heaven? And do not these persons put other faint and feeble silly souls, such I mean as they were themselves, in good courage and comfort, that in time of persecution, and although they feel themselves inwardly in never so sore trouble, dread, weariness, and horror of most cruel death, yet shall they not utterly yield and give over?

Therefore the provident wisdom of God, which pierceth all things mightily, and disposeth all things pleasantly, presently foreseeing how and in what wise sundry men's minds be inclined in sundry times and places, tempereth examples of either sort of folk according as the time and place requireth, even as he espieth it to be most for their behoof. So of his high providence doth he moderate the hearts of his blessed martyrs, that some joyfully speed them towards their death apace, and some other right sore afraid creep fair and softly thither. Who nevertheless, when they come to the pinch, do die with as good a stomach as the other, except some will percase count them not so valiant, because beside the overthrow of the rest of their adversaries, they do also master their own weariness, sorrow, and fear, three most violent affections and three most cruel enemies.

But now doth the whole sum of all our talk finally rest in this point, that both sorts of these most holy martyrs ought we to have in admiration and reverence, and in them both laud and praise God, and as need requireth, each man as he is able, follow the steps of them both as near as God will give us grace.

Howbeit he that thus feeleth himself bold and hardy hath little need of comfort to encourage him, but perhaps rather need of counsel, to put him in fear that he do not presume too much of himself, as Peter did, and thereby suddenly stumble and take a fall. But on the other side, he that feeleth himself heavy, sorrowful, and timorous, this man, lo! hath much need of comfort to strengthen him and pluck up his heart again. Now unto either of these two sorts is this heaviness of Christ very good and profitable, to repress the overbold courage of the one, and to recomfort and relieve the faint feeble spirit of the other. For like as he that seeth himself so eager and stout, when he shall remember how humble and heavy a plight his captain Christ was in, shall haply find good cause to fear, lest his crafty enemy for the while so set him up on high, soon after to his greater grief to cast him down as low; so he that is over-fearful and faint-hearted, and standeth in much dread of himself; lest he might mishap through despair to take a fall, may have before his face this bitter agony of Christ, and ever more bethink him and muse thereupon, and so of this pure fountain drink many a wholesome draft of ghostly consolation and comfort, since here shall he behold how our most loving shepherd vouchsafeth to take up his weak, silly sheep upon his own shoulders and to play his part himself, and in his own person to express his affections, to the end that, whoso in time coming should feel himself in like sort troubled, might receive comfort thereby and be void of all despair.

Let us therefore give him as hearty thanks as we may (for surely so great as he hath deserved are we not able to give him) and in our agonies bearing in mind his agony (to whose agony never was there agony comparable) let us most instantly beseech him, that at the contemplation of his own hideous anguish, it would the rather please him to comfort us in ours. And whensoever we earnestly sue unto him, by his help to be delivered from the danger of our troublesome anguish, let us ever, as he gave us a right good example himself, end our petition with the self-same clause wherewith he ended his, "yet not as I will, but as it liketh thee." If we diligently so do, I little doubt it but that like as an angel came unto him to comfort him as he was thus in his prayer, so shall we likewise from his holy spirit receive such comfort every one of us by

our good angel as shall make us strong and able to endure those terrible storms, through which we shall sty up straightways to heaven. And to put us in some hope hereof, in like sort went Christ thither the selfsame way before us. For after he had long, to his no little pain, continued in his agony, such ghostly consolation received he, that as soon as he had visited his apostles again, straight rose he up and of his own accord did he go forth to meet the false traitor and the other tormentors that so busily sought to bring him to his passion. Then when he had so suffered as was for us expedient, he entered into his glorious kingdom, there to prepare us a place, so we forslow not to follow his example. And that our slothful sluggishness do not these clearly exclude us we humbly beseech him that for his own bitter agony, he will vouchsafe to help us in ours.

“And after he was risen up from his prayer and came to his disciples, he found them sleeping for heaviness. And he said unto them: ‘Why sleep ye? Sleep on now and take your rest. It is enough. Rise and pray that ye enter not into temptation. Lo, the hour is coming, and the son of man shall be delivered into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us go. Behold he that shall betray me is here at hand.’” (Mt 26:45-46; Mk 14:41-42)

Here lo! whereas Christ returned to his apostles the third time and found them fast asleep, albeit he had so straitly charged them there still to tarry with him and, for the great danger that was toward, continually to watch and pray, and that in the mean season the traitorous wretch Judas was so busily bent to betray his own lord and master, that he had no leisure left him so much as to think of any sleeping; in these two sorts of folk, the traitor I mean and the apostles, in their doings so far unlike, is there not set forth before us, as it were in a mirror or glass, a plain, and therewithal an heavy and horrible resemblance of the course of the world, even from that time hitherto? Why should not bishops here behold and see their own sloth and sluggishness which, would God, like as they succeed into the apostles' places, so would in their lives represent unto us their virtues, and that with no less diligence than they be glad to take upon them their authority, and do nevertheless full truly follow their slothful sluggish sleeping. For even as slow and dull are a great many of them to set forth virtue amongst the people and to maintain the truth, as Christ's enemies all that while diligently watch and travail to set up vice and lewdness and to destroy the faith; which is, as much as in them lieth, to lay hands upon Christ and cruelly crucify him again. So much more wily, as saith Christ, are the children of darkness in their kind, than are the children of light.

And albeit this similitude of apostles thus sleeping may aptly be applied unto those bishops which lie carelessly and sleep full sound, while virtue and true religion are like to run to ruin, yet cannot it well be applied unto them all, at the least wise in every point, since some be there among them, more by a great many (the more pity, alas, it is) than I would wish there were, which fall in a slumber, not for sorrow and heaviness as the apostles did, but like a sort of swine wallowing in the mire, lie fast slugging in the dead sleep of their mischievous blind affections, as men all drowned and drunken with the

pleasant must of the devil, the flesh, and the world. But of truth though it were a disposition in the apostles commendable enough to be sorrowful for their master's danger, yet that they were so overcome with sorrow that they did nought else but sleep, this was without all peradventure somewhat a fault indeed. And likewise to be sorry when the world waxeth naught, and to bewail other folks' offences, this surely cometh of a well-disposed mind, as he evidently perceived which said: "I sat alone and wept." (Lam 3:28) And in another place thus: "I fainted for sorrow of sinful persons while they forsook thy law." (Ps 119:53) This kind of heaviness may I aptly apply to that kind of heaviness that the prophet speaketh of here. But then must I so apply it, that this disposition, how good soever it be, must yet be ruled and governed by reason. For else if the mind be so drowned and oppressed with sorrow, that the courage thereof being stricken stark dead, reason giveth quite over her hold and government, and like as a faint-hearted master of a ship being discouraged at the bare noise of a storm or tempest, shrinketh from the stern, and dolefully getting himself into some several corner, suffereth the ship alone to weigh with the waves, so if a bishop fall in such a deadly sleep for sorrow, that he leaveth those things undone, which for the wealth of his flock his duty bindeth him unto, this kind of discomfort, lo! may I be bold to compare with that kind of heaviness which, as witnesseth the scripture, leadeth the straight way to hell. And to say the truth may I count it much worse too, forasmuch as in God's cause he seemeth utterly to be in despair of God.

Next unto this sort may there be placed, but yet a great deal beneath them, another sort which are cast into a discomfortable dullness, not so much for other folks' harm, as for fear of their own. And therefore the less the thing that their fear riseth upon ought to be regarded, by so much the more sinful is their fear, as where there hangeth over them no bodily peril at all, but haply some loss of worldly wealth and substance, whereas Christ would have us little pass to lose our lives in his quarrel. "For fear ye not," saith he, "those that can kill the body, and after that have no more to do; but I will show you whom you ought to fear. Fear him that after he hath killed the body, hath power beside to cast it into hell. So I say unto you, fear him."

Now seeing that he setteth forth this commandment generally unto all men, when they be in such taking that they can by no shift avoid, then unto bishops for the honour he hath put them in, giveth he a greater charge besides, as the men whom he would not have careful for their own souls alone, and keep themselves out of the way in corners, and hold their peace till they be fetched forth, and enforced either openly to profess their belief, or falsely dissimule it, but if they see their flock likely to fall in any jeopardy, boldly to step forth, and so it might turn to the behoof of their flock, willingly offer to put their lives in hazard. "For a good shepherd," saith Christ, "letteth not to bestow his life for his sheep." Then if every good shepherd letteth not to adventure his life for the safeguard of his sheep, you may be sure that he which saveth his life, and thereby hurteth his sheep, playeth no good shepherd's part.

Wherefore likewise as he that is content to lose his life for Christ's sake (and for Christ's sake doth he lose it, whosoever at Christ's commandment loseth it for his flock) doth unto everlasting life undoubtedly preserve it, so on the other side he that forsaketh Christ (as he doth that to the great hurt of his flock holdeth his peace and leaveth the truth unspoken) this man by the

saving of his life, taketh the right way to lose it altogether. And how much more grievous is his offence, that for fear in plain terms denieth him and openly forsaketh him. Such as these be, sleep not with Peter, but like Peter broad waking even plainly fall from him; howbeit yet at length when Christ shall mercifully cast his eye upon them, through his gracious aid, by wholesome tears and sorrow for their fault, may purchase their pardon therefor, so that they at Christ's merciful look and gentle call unto remembrance, having good remembrance of his words, and consideration of his passion, and sequestering themselves from those wretched fetters that have so long holden them in sin, be as willing for their parts with contrition and penance to return again unto him.

But now if there be any man so far grown in wickedness that he hideth not the truth for any fear at all, but like Arius and his fellows spreadeth abroad false doctrine either for lucre or for devilish ambition, such a one neither sleepeth with Peter, nor denieth Christ with Peter, but watcheth with wicked Judas, and with Judas pursueth Christ. In how perilous a case this person above all other especially standeth in, doth the despiteous and horrible end of Judas very well declare. And yet since the merciful goodness of God is infinite and endless, no cause hath this sort of sinners neither to despair of God's mercy. Full many an occasion to cause him to amend gave God even unto Judas. For neither did he cast him out of his company, nor put him from the dignity of his apostleship, nor as strong a thief as he was took he not from him the keeping of his purse. Besides this at his maundy and last supper, he vouchsafed to admit this traitor among the rest of his dear beloved apostles, and disdained not also to stoop down full low at the very traitor's feet, and there to wash them as filthy as they were (and indeed unlike were they not his corrupt cankered heart), yea and that with his own innocent and most holy hands. Over this, of his incomparable bounty, unto this false traitor delivered he to eat under the form of bread that selfsame blessed body of his, that he had so late made merchandise of before, and in form of wine gave he unto him that precious blood of his to drink, which the traitorous wretch, at this same very time while he was drinking thereof, devised most sinfully to shed. And in conclusion when he and his band was come for to take him, and that he there offered to kiss him, which was the privy token of his abominable treason, he most mildly and meekly refused not to receive him. Who would not have weened that any one of all these things should have moved his traitorous heart, as much as he was set upon mischief, to relent and take better ways? Moreover as touching the beginning of his repentance, whereas he confessed he had not done well, and thereupon brought back their thirty groats again, and forasmuch as they could not be received threw them quite from him, and even then openly called himself traitor, and plainly protested also that he had betrayed an innocent, in all this while may I well think that our saviour secretly wrought in his heart, to the intent if it had been possible, that is to say, if the traitor to his treason had not joined despair, he might have preserved that same wretch from destruction, which then so lately had gone about most traitorously to contrive his death.

Considering therefore that by so many manner of ways it is apparently perceived how God took marvellous compassion of this Judas all were he from an apostle fallen to be a traitor, and so sundry times excited him to purchase

his pardon, and would not suffer him any other wise to miscarry, but only through his own despair, surely cause is there none for any man to be in despair of other, as long as he live here, were he as bad as Judas altogether, but rather as the apostle giveth us gracious counsel where he saith: "Pray each of ye for other that ye may come to salvation." (Jms 5:16) If we mishap to see any man stray far out of the way, let us still have good hope that at last he will return again, and in the mean season in humble wise incessantly pray, that both it may please God to grant him grace to amend, and that he likewise for his part, by God's help, may gladly receive it, keep it when he hath it, and neither sinfully cast it off, nor through his own sloth wretchedly after lose it. So when Christ had found his apostles now thrice together asleep, he said unto them: "Why sleep ye?" As one would say: "It is no time for you to sleep now, but needly must you watch and pray, whereof I have twice already given you warning but late." And whereas they at the second time that they were taken asleep wist not what answer to make him, now being taken tardy in the self same fault a third time, and that so soon again, what excuse reasonable could they devise for themselves? Would that that the Evangelist reciteth have served them for their discharge, if they had told him they fell asleep for sorrow? But as for that, though St. Luke so sayeth indeed, yet truly doth he not commend it. Nevertheless he, though not by express words, doth yet mean no less, but that their sorrow was (as of truth it might be rightly counted) nothing at all to be misliked. But for all that, their sleeping afterward could be by no colour excused. For that kind of heaviness that might be otherwise greatly rewardable in heaven turneth some time to our great hurt and hindrance. As thus I mean, if we be so drowned therein that we make it to stand us in no stead, inasmuch as we have not recourse to God by devout and fervent prayer, desiring at his hand to be comforted, but faring like folk all comfortless, dismayed, and desperate, as though we could thereby escape the feeling of our grief and trouble, seek to comfort ourselves with sleep, and yet never the more obtain we thereby the relief that we so much labour for. And so having utterly lost that consolation which by watch in prayer we might have purchased of God, do, even while we are asleep, feel the woeful weight of our restless heart, and in our woeful blindness fall into temptations and into the wily trains of the devil.

Now then, to cut off all excuse and colour of such slothful sleeping, said Christ unto them thus: "Why sleep ye? Sleep on now and rest. It sufficeth. Arise and pray that ye fall not into temptation. Lo! the hour is almost come, and the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us go. Behold here is he at hand that shall betray me. And while Jesus was thus speaking, lo! Judas Iscariot and so forth."

When Christ had thus three times awaked his sleepy apostles, incontinent thereupon began he not slightly and in sport, as idle jesters are commonly wont to do, but with an earnest and sharp biting scorn, to rebuke them, and said unto them thus: "Sleep on now and take your rest. It is enough. Arise and pray that ye fall not into temptation. Lo! the hour draweth near and the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us go. Lo! he is not far off that shall betray Me. And while he spake these words, came Judas and so forth."

In such wise lo! doth Christ here licence his apostles to sleep, that it may right well appear he meant to refrain them from it. For he had no sooner said "Sleep," but he added by and by: "It is enough," as though he would say: "You have no need to sleep any longer now, since it is more than enough that all this while in which ye ought most specially to have watched, ye have contrary to my commandment slept. Now have ye no more leisure to sleep, no nor to sit neither. But rise must ye straightways and get you to your prayers, that ye fall not into temptation, by means whereof may ye mishap to your no little danger shamefully to forsake me. For as for sleeping, were it not therefor, ye should for me, if ye could, sleep and take your rest. But be ye assured, if you would, it shall not lie in your prayer, so fast draw they hitherward and are even almost come, which will keep you well enough from sleep, as careless as you be. For lo! the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man shall be taken into the hands of sinners; and look, he is not far hence that shall betray me." And scantily had he given them this little short admonition, but that while he was thus speaking unto them, came lo! Judas Iscariot and so forth.

I am not ignorant that certain both learned and right holy men do not like this exposition. And yet deny they not but that other good men, and learned too, have liked it well enough. And these folk that have liked it think not that kind of scorn strange, as have some other done, and they right godly and virtuous, howbeit not thoroughly acquainted with those phrases which, taken out of the common speech, are much used in holy scripture. For if they had, they should so often have found it elsewhere that in this place it could never have offended them.

For in scorn what could have been spoken more nippingly, and therewith all the more properly, than where the blessed apostle merrily taunted the Corinthians, desiring them to pardon him because he had put none of them to cost and charge. "What is there," saith he, "wherein I have done less for you than for other churches, saving that I have not been burdalous unto you? Forgive me this fault." (2 Cor 12:13) Or what greater taunt or more biting could there lightly be, than that wherewith the prophet of God mocked the prophets of Baal, while they called him and cried out upon his deaf image? "Cry louder," quoth he, "for your God is asleep, or gone peradventure into some other country." (1 Kgs 18:27) These places thought I good to bring forth here by the way, for the satisfying of them which (for that of an honest simplicity they cannot abide, or at leastwise do not perceive, these phrases of speech customably used in scripture) while they refused to admit such figures, do full often swerve likewise from the true sense and meaning of the scripture. Howbeit St. Augustine upon this place granteth that though he misliketh not this foresaid declaration, yet he thinketh it not to be of any necessity, since the plain words, weaneth he, without figure were sufficient. And for a proof hereof, himself doth expound the same place in that work which he wrote De Concordia Evangelistarum as followeth. "St. Matthew in these words," saith he, "seemeth to be contrary to himself. For how could he say: 'Sleep on now and rest ye,' when he added by and by after: 'Arise and let us go?' By reason of which contrariety, as it seemeth in appearance, some go about so to pronounce these fore-remembered words: 'Sleep on now and rest ye,' as though Christ, in his so saying, had rebuked them therefor, and not licenced them so to do. Which exposition might well stand if it were needful. But seeing

St. Mark doth rehearse the matter thus, that when he had said: 'Sleep on now and rest ye,' he forthwith adjoined: 'It is enough,' and afterward immediately added: 'The hour is come, lo! the Son of Man shall be betrayed,' it is to be understanden that our Lord after he had said unto them: 'Sleep on now and rest ye,' paused there awhile to the end they might sleep a little, as he licenced them to do; and then at length said unto them: 'Lo! the hour draweth on.' And therefore it is written in St. Mark: 'It is sufficient,' that is to wit, that ye have hitherto rested."

Thus hath this blessed doctor St. Augustine full wittily, as he doth in all his doings, shewed his opinion upon this place. But they that liked better the other exposition, deemed it not likely, I trow, that Christ which had already twice sharply reprov'd his apostles for sleeping, because he was then in so present peril to be taken, would upon these his biting words: "Why sleep ye?" immediately after give them respite to sleep, namely at that season when the thing, for which they should have forborn sleeping before, was even now in manner already come to pass. Howbeit now that I have here set forth these two expositions, every man shall be at his liberty to follow whether of them him list. I thought it enough for me to show you them both, and not to take upon me having so little skill as a judge to determine one way or other therein.

"Arise and pray that ye fall not into temptation." (Lk 22:46)

First willed he his apostles to watch and pray. But now after they had twice by experience in themselves learned that, through slothful sitting, unawares they fell asleep, for a ready remedy against that sluggish sleepy sickness, gave he them this lesson to rise. Which kind of remedy like as our saviour himself did teach it, so would I wish that now and then among, we would even at midnight assay it. And if we so did, then should we find not only that true that Horace saith: 'He hath half done that hath once well begun,' but also that he hath in effect all done that hath once well begun. For in striving to avoid sleep, ever more at the first brunt is the greatest conflict of all.

Wherefore we may not think by little and little to wrestle therewith and so to shake it off, but as soon as it fawneth upon us, and as it were embraceth us, and layeth us down along, we must at once with all our might stoutly cast it off, and as speedily as we can, labour to break therefrom. Which heavy slothful sleep, the very image of death, when we have once driven away, incontinent will ensue a lively lusty courage. Then if we give ourselves to meditation and prayer, we shall feel our hearts, being kept close in that dead dark time of the night, much more apt to receive comfort at God's hand than in the ruffle of the day while we shall have our eyes, our ears, and all our mind on every side, cumbered and busied with so many peevish and sundry light matters. But, O merciful saviour, whereas the bare thinking upon some trifling worldly thing sometime so bereaveth us of our sleep, that a long while after it doth keep us waking, and scanty suffereth us again to sleep at all; now while we might purchase us so great profit to our soul's ward, while our mortal enemy layeth so manifold traps and trains to take us, and while we stand in so great hazard to be utterly undone for ever, for all this wake we never the more

to pray, but lie full fast asleep, our minds all occupied with mad fantastical dreams.

But here must we still have in remembrance, that Christ bade them not only rise, but bade them rise and pray, since it is not enough to rise, unless we rise for some good purpose. Else offendeth he much more, that sinfully and maliciously watcheth in wickedness, than doth he that lewdly loseth his time in sloth and sleep.

And yet he not only willed them to pray, but besides that he shewed them how needful it was to pray, and taught them also for what they should pray. "Pray," said he, "that ye fall not into temptation." This one point did he continually beat into their heads, that prayer was a special aid and garrison to preserve them from temptation. Which whoso refuseth to receive into the castle of his soul, and by reason of sluggishness will not suffer it therein to enter, licenceth thereby the devil's soldiers who on every side doth environ it, his devilish temptations I mean, through his foolish negligence, by main force to invade it. Now as he with his own mouth thrice advised them to pray, so because he would not by his word only, but by his example too, teach them so to do, he in his own person did thrice the same himself; signifying unto us that we must pray unto the Trinity, that is to wit, the unbegotten Father, and the Son of him begotten equal with his Father, and the Holy Ghost likewise equal with them both and proceeding from them both. Of these three persons three things must we pray. For pardon for that is already past, grace to go through with that we have in hand, and wisdom warily to foresee what is to come. And this must we do not carelessly and hoverly, but devoutly and continually. From which kind of prayer, how far wide we be nowadays almost all the many of us, both every man's own conscience can show him well enough; and I beseech God that the small fruit that every day less and less doth grow thereupon, do not little and little openly at length declare it.

But forasmuch as I have here a little before inveighed as vehemently as I could against that manner of prayer where the mind, for want of earnest devotion, strayeth and wandereth about many other matters, now at this present because I would be loath, like a churlish surgeon, over boisterously to handle so common a sore whereby I might mishap to some feeble-spirited folk, not to minister a salve to ease them, but rather increase their pain, and therewith put them quite out of all comfort ever to be whole again, I have thought good to take out of Master John Gerson a plaster for them, which somewhat may assuage their grief. Who to cure the fervent anguish of the sore distempered soul, useth certain suaging salves, which are in operation in their kind much like unto those salves and plasters in Greek called anodina, that serve to ease and temper the aches of the body.

This John Gerson, an excellent learned man and a gentle handler of a troubled conscience, because, I trow, he saw some persons, for fault of minding their prayers, in themselves so much discomfited, that often times tediously without any need they were fain to repeat twice every word they said in their prayer, and yet were always never the nearer, insomuch that some time after one thing thrice repeated, they more misliked the last than the first, whereupon they conceived such weariness that they utterly lost all comfort of praying, and also for that some were likely to have given over their good custom therein for altogether, as a thing to them that so prayed either fruitless

or as they feared hurtful too, this virtuous man, I say, somewhat to assuage their grief in this behalf considered there are in prayer three things to be noted, the act, the virtue, and the habit.

And for the plainer declaration of his meaning herein, he setteth forth the matter by an example of one that goeth in pilgrimage out of France unto St. James, who some while both goeth forward on his journey, and therewithal hath his mind occupied, not only upon the saint that he is going unto, but also of the good purpose that he goeth thither for. Now doth this man all this while two ways actually continue his pilgrimage, that is to wit, as Master Gerson in the Latin tongue termeth it: *continuitate naturae et continuitate moris*; in a natural continuance, and in a moral continuance. In a natural continuance, in that he doth actually, that is to say in very deed, go forth toward that place. And in a moral continuance, for that his thought always runneth upon the matter of his pilgrimage. And he thus calleth it a moral continuance, by reason of that moral circumstance, whereby his going thither, being otherwise of itself indifferent, is in consideration of the virtuous intent he took that journey for become good and godly.

And some whiles he goeth forward on his journey when his mind is otherwise occupied, as where he mindeth neither the saint nor the place he goeth unto, but haply hath far better meditations, as while his mind runneth still upon God; now here continueth he his pilgrimage by a natural continuance as Gerson calleth it, but yet not by a moral continuance. For though he actually go forward on his voyage, yet hath he no mind actually neither of the cause of his pilgrimage, nor of his way perhaps neither. And so albeit he doth not continue his pilgrimage in moral action, yet doth he continue it morally in goodness, since the godly purpose he had at the beginning, which is privily implied in everything he doth therewhiles, giveth a moral goodness unto the whole process of his journey. Forasmuch as of the good intent he had at the first, hath all that ever he did afterward followed and ensued, even as a stone fleeth forth apace with a mighty throw, though the hand that threw it be drawn clean therefrom.

And sometimes is there a moral action when there is no natural at all, as when he sitteth him down and peradventure bethinketh him of his pilgrimage and goeth not one foot forward all the while. Finally so falleth it more times than a few, that both lacketh there a natural action and a moral too, as while he is asleep, at which time neither goeth the pilgrim by no natural action forward on his pilgrimage, nor by no moral action doth he any whit mind it neither. Howbeit in all this meanwhile doth the moral goodness, as long as he changeth not his former purpose, habitually persevere still.

So that of truth never is this pilgrimage in such sort discontinued, but that at the leastwise it endureth and remaineth habitually to his merit still, unless he determine the contrary, that is, either clearly to cast it off, or else to defer it until some other season. By this example of pilgrimage he expresseth the nature of prayer, as thus that prayer once devoutly begun can never after in such wise be interrupted but that the goodness of the first good purpose continueth and remaineth, actually, I mean, or habitually, as long as we neither leave it off willingly nor by the let of some deadly sin lose the fruit thereof.

Hereupon saith Master Gerson that these words of Christ: "Pray must you continually without intermission," (Lk 18:1) were spoken by no figure, but are to be taken plainly as they sound. Which precept good men and godly even as the words lie do verily accomplish. And this his opinion doth he verify by an old common saying among learned men. "He that liveth well always prayeth," meaning that whosoever, according to the appointment of the apostle, doth all things to the glory of God, can never after so break off his prayer once attentively begun, but that the goodness thereof, though not actually yet evermore habitually, faileth not to remain with him towards his merit in heaven.

These things doth Master John Gerson, a man of profound learning and excellent virtue, set forth in that work of his which he entituled: Of Prayer, and the Worthiness of the same. Who albeit he doth so say to comfort such faint-hearted persons as be overmuch troubled for that, in the time of their prayer, take they never so great pain to set their minds thereon, yet suddenly unawares is it carried clean away, nothing less intendeth for all that than to put other in a foolish wrong belief, as though they were in no peril at all, while they be so careless that they little pass anything to mind their prayers at all. And forsooth when we do negligently go about a matter of such importance, prayers do we say indeed, but pray do we never a deal, nor thereby, as I before said, procure we not God's favour towards us, but purchase his indignation and drive him clearly from us. For verily what marvel is it though God be wonderfully displeased, when he seeth a silly wretched man so carelessly call upon him. And cometh not he and speaketh unto God carelessly, that with his tongue saith: "Hear, good Lord, my prayer," and yet hath his heart all the while far from him, occupied upon vain foolish trifles, yea and sometime God give grace it be not upon very wicked things and abominable, insomuch that he heareth not what he saith himself, but mumbling up his ordinary accustomed prayers at adventure, maketh, as Virgil writeth, a noise, nothing minding the matter. And after we have done our prayers, for the most part in such sort go we our ways, that we had need straightways to pray again afresh, to desire pardon of God for our negligence in the first.

Christ therefore, when he said unto his apostles: "Arise and pray, that ye fall not into temptation," because he would have them know that a sleeping and cold prayer sufficed not, gave them warning by and by what danger hung over their heads. "Lo!" quoth he, "the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of sinners." As who should say: "I told you before, that one of you would betray me; at which word of mine were ye much dismayed. I told you also that the devil went busily about to sift you like wheat, but you forced not much thereon, for none answer made ye thereunto, as though his temptation were little to be passed on. But I, to make you perceive how sore a thing temptation was, told ye before that you would all forsake me. And ye answered me all that ye would never do so. Yea, and unto him that made himself surest of all told I before too that ere ever the cock crew, thrice would he deny me. Yet said he still precisely nay, and that he would rather die with me, than once deny me. And so saith all the many of ye. And because you should not set so lightly by temptation, I straitly charged ye with all diligence to watch and pray, that ye fall not into temptation. And ye

yet still took so small regard what force and violence temptation is of, that for the avoiding thereof ye cared neither to watch nor pray.

“Ye were peradventure the bolder little to esteem all the devil's violent temptations, for that when I sent you forth long since, two and two together, to preach abroad the faith, at your return again ye shewed me that even the wicked spirits were become thrall and subject unto you. Howbeit I which know both them and ye too much better than ye do yourselves, as he that made both, advised ye then out of hand that ye should not overmuch glory in any such peevish vanity, considering that that power which ye had over wicked spirits came not of your own strength, but was procured ye by me, and that not for your own sakes neither, but for other that should be converted to the faith. But I bade ye rejoice rather in that that ye might always be assured of, as that your names were written in the book of life, seeing that joy should be wholly yours, inasmuch as when ye had once attained the same, ye could never lose it after, were all the devils in hell never so much bent against ye. All this notwithstanding, the dominion that ye had then upon them hath so boldened ye that, as it seemeth, ye take their temptations to be of very small importance. And for this cause even hitherto, for all the foreknowledge I gave ye what danger was toward you this selfsame present night, yet did ye no more pass on there than if ye had been nothing near them.

“But now do I give you plain warning that the hour now almost is come and not the night alone. For lo! the hour draweth on, and the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of sinners. Then have ye now no longer leisure left ye to sit and sleep, but watch must ye needs. And as praying, thereto have ye in manner no respite at all. So from henceforth speak I not unto you as of a thing to come, but I charge you straightways, as the case ye be presently in requireth: Arise and let us go, lo! here is he at hand that shall betray me. If ye list not to watch that ye may fall to prayer, yet at the least-wise arise and get ye hence apace lest it shall not lie in your power to avoid an ye would. For lo! he that shall betray me is even almost here.” Unless peradventure he spake these words: “Arise and let us go,” because he would not have them shrink away for fear, but rather to make them go forth and boldly meet their enemies, like as he did himself, who drew not backward another way from them, but incontinent after these words spoken went willingly himself towards them which maliciously came to murder him. “While Jesus was thus still talking, came lo! Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, and with him a main multitude with swords and glaives sent from the high priests, the scribes, and the ancients of the people.”

Albeit nothing can be more effectual to man's soul's health and to increase all kind of virtue in every Christian heart than devoutly to remember the whole process of Christ's bitter passion, yet shall he take a further benefit thereby, which maketh or conceiveth that that is here mentioned of the sleeping of the apostles, while the Son of Man was in betraying, to be as it were a resemblance and figure of the state of the world that followed. For Christ, to redeem mankind, became verily the Son of Man, as he that came, though conceived without the seed of man, yet by propagation of our first parents, and so was the very son of Adam, and that for this intent by his passion to restore Adam's offspring (being through their forefather's default lost, and miserably cast away) into more wealth and felicity than ever they had before. Whereupon, for

all he was God, called he himself still the Son of Man, because he was very man indeed, and so by the rehearsal of his manhood, which alone was subject to death, did he evermore put us in remembrance of the benefit of his passion. And without fail God it was that died, while he died that was God. Yet did not his godhead die, but his manhood only, and not all that neither, but his body alone, if we will rather weigh the thing as it is, than as we are wont commonly to term it. For we say a man is dead, when the soul leaveth the body dead, and so departeth from it, and yet dieth not at all. But forasmuch as it liked him, not only to be called a man, but also for our salvation to take upon him man's nature too, and finally to incorporate us all in one body with himself, these I mean whom he hath by his wholesome sacraments and faith regenerated and renewed, and therewithal vouchsafed to make us partakers of such names as himself is customably called by, for scripture nameth all faithful Christian folk both gods and christ, I cannot think we should do much amiss, if we stood always in fear the time to be almost come that Christ the Son of Man shall be delivered unto sinners, as oft as we see any likelihood that Christ's mystical body, the Church of Christ I say, that is to wit, good Christian people, shall like thralls be cast into sinful wretches' hands. Which thing we have seen mishap (alas, the more pity) in one place or other these many hundred years, while divers parts of Christendom, some by the cruel Turks are assaulted, and some by sundry sects of heretics through inward division despiteously mangled and torn.

And therefore whensoever we either see or hear any such danger (be it never so far from us) anywhere to misfortune, let us then remember that it is not meet for us to sit still and sleep, but forthwith to arise, and as we may, if we cannot otherwise yet at the least wise with our prayers, to help other in their need. And we ought to care never the less for the matter because it is far from us. For if this sentence of the paynim poet in his comedy be marvellously commended, which saith: "I am a man myself, and therefore whatsoever happeneth to any other man, mine own part reckon I to be therein," how much is it to be disliked in any Christian man to sleep, and little pass what danger his even Christian be in. And to declare this Christ commanded not only those whom he had placed nearest unto him, but as well the rest whom he had caused to tarry somewhat further off, in like manner to watch and pray. And if perchance we pass not, what harm other folk feel, because they be far from us, let us yet at the least regard the peril that may fortune to fall to ourselves, since we ought of reason to fear lest their undoing may be an entry and a beginning of ours, seeing we are by daily experience taught with what force the fire runneth forth when it is once enkindled, and when the plague or pestilence reigneth, what cause there is to dread infection. Then seeing all man's help can little avail us without God preserve us from harm, let us never be unmindful what the gospel speaketh here, but ever think that Christ himself doth again earnestly say unto us, as he did then: "Why sleep you? Arise and pray that you enter not into temptation."

But now here cometh to my remembrance another point besides, which is, that Christ is then delivered into the hands of sinners, whensoever his blessed body in the holy sacrament is consecrated and handled of beastly, vicious, and most abominable priests. As often as we see any such case fall (and fall doth it, alas, too oft a great deal) let us reckon that Christ himself then speaketh these

words unto us afresh: "Why sleep you? Watch, arise, and pray, that you enter not into temptation. For the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners." For doubtless by the lewd examples of naughty priests doth vice and evil living lightly increase and creep in among the people. And the unmeeter they be (whose office it is to watch and pray for the people, to obtain God's gracious help for them) the more need perdy the people hath to watch, rise, and heartily pray for themselves, and yet not for themselves only, but for such priests also, since greatly were it for the behoof of the laity, that evil priests were amended.

Finally more specially is Christ delivered into sinners' hands among those sects of heretics, which although they do receive this blessed sacrament of the altar oftener than other do, and on this would bear the world in hand, that most of all other they have the same in reverence, yet because without any necessity, to the great dishonour of the Catholic Church, contrary to the common custom they receive it under both kinds, do nevertheless after the receiving thereof, under the colour of honouring it, shamefully blaspheme it, while some of them name it still bread and wine, and some, which is worst of all, not only bread and wine, but furthermore count it nought else but bare bread and wine alone, utterly denying the very body of Christ (albeit they call it by that name) to be contained in the said sacrament. Which point since they go about to maintain, contrary to the most evident words of scripture, contrary to the most plain interpretations of all the old holy fathers, contrary to the belief that the whole Catholic Church so many hundreds years hath most steadfastly holden, and contrary to the truth by so many thousand miracles sufficiently approved, these that are in this latter kind of heresy, which is indeed the worse of the twain, be they not, trow you, even as evil as they that this night laid hands upon Christ, and as those soldiers of Pilate too that in scorn making low curtsy to Christ as it had been to honour him, most spitefully dishonoured him, calling him in mockage king of the Jews? Like as these men kneeling and crouching do call the blessed sacrament of the altar the body of Christ, which themselves confess, for all that, they do no more believe than Pilate's soldiers believed that Christ was a king. As oft therefore as we hear any like inconvenience arise in any other nation, how far soever it be from us, let us by and by make our reckoning, that Christ still saith unto us: "Why sleep ye? Arise and pray that ye fall not into temptation." For at this point wheresoever this venomous plague reigneth most, it infecteth not all the people at once in one day, but in process of time by little and little increasing more and more, while such persons as at the first beginning can abide no heresy, afterward being content to hear of it, begin less and less to dislike it, and within a while after can endure to give ear to large lewd talk therein, and at length are quite carried away themselves therewith. This disease still creeping, as saith the apostle, forth further like a canker doth in conclusion overrun the whole country altogether. Let us then watch, rise and incessantly pray, both that all they may soon repent and amend, that are thus wretchedly led into this folly by the craft of the devil, and that God never suffer us to fall into the like temptation, nor the devil ever to raise any such of his tempestuous storms in the coasts where we dwell. But since we have gone so long out of a matter upon these mysteries, let us now return again to the history of Christ's passion.

“Then Judas when he had received of the bishops a band of soldiers, and servants of the Pharisees, came thither with lanterns and torches.” (Jn 18:3) And while Jesus was yet speaking cometh, lo! Judas Iscariot one of the twelve, and with him a main multitude with swords and glaives, sent by the high priests, the scribes, and the ancients of the people. And the traitor had given them a token.” (Mt 26:47-48; Mk 14:43-44)

This band of soldiers which, as the evangelists do mention, the bishops delivered unto the traitor, was as I suppose a sort of the Roman soldiers that Pilate licensed the bishops to take, among which company had the Pharisees, the scribes, and the ancients of the people, set their own servants, either for that they trusted not well the president Pilate's men, or else to help them with a greater number, in case perhaps upon some sudden uproar in the night Christ might by force be conveyed from them, or finally for that all his apostles (which was the thing that they perchance coveted beside) might be there so taken all at once, that none of them in the dark should in any wise escape their hands. Which their purpose that they could not bring about, was wrought by his mighty power, who was therefore taken himself alone, because it was his pleasure so to be.

Their smoky torches lighted they, and their dim lanterns, to spy out in their dark sinful blindness the bright shining sun of justice, not to be illumined by him that giveth light to every man which cometh into this world, but to put out clean his everlasting light that cannot possibly be darkened. And such were the messengers as were they that sent them, who for the maintenance of their own traditions laboured to put down the law of God. And in like manner do all they yet still in our days pursue Christ also, which to be renowned themselves, do their uttermost deavours to minish and deface the great glory of God. But now it were good diligently to note how wavering and variable the estate of man is here. For it was not yet fully five days ago, that both the gentiles for Christ's notable miracles, and his no less virtuous life adjoined thereto, sore longed to see him, and the Jews likewise as he came riding into Jerusalem with marvellous reverence received him; whereas now quite contrary the Jews and the gentiles all at once did jointly go together to take him as chief, with whom Judas being worse than either Jew or gentile not only went in company, but was also their chief guide and ringleader. And hereby did Christ at his death give all men a right good lesson, to beware that no man living should assure himself of the continuance of any worldly wealth, which is full fickle and unsure, and namely that no Christian creature whose whole confidence standeth in the heavenly inheritance, should immoderately desire any vain worldly renown.

The priests, or rather the chief priests, the Pharisees, the scribes, and the ancients of the people, caused this rabble of rascals to be sent against Christ; and surely the better nature that everything is of, the worse waxeth it at length if it once begin to fall out of course. So Lucifer who was by God created in excellency above all the angels in heaven, as soon as he suffered himself to miscarry by pride, became the foulest fiend in hell. In like case here, it was not the silly simple souls, but the ancients of the people, the scribes, the Pharisees,

the priests and the bishops, the heads and rulers of the priests, whose part it had been to have seen justice executed, and God's cause furthered, these were they, I say, that chiefly conspired together to have the bright sun of justice clearly extinguished, and the only-begotten Son of God most cruelly murdered. To such frantic folly were they brought through covetise, pride, and envy.

Yet is this point not slightly to be passed over, but advisedly to be considered, how Judas, who divers times in other places was to his reproach called by the name of a traitor, is now here, to his foul shame too, called by the honourable name of an apostle. "Lo!" saith the evangelist, "cometh Judas Iscariot one of the twelve." Judas Iscariot, I tell you, not one of the faithless paynims, not one of the Jews, Christ's mortal enemies, not one of Christ's mean disciples (and yet who would have suspected any such thing in them?) but one, alas, of Christ's own chosen apostles, is not ashamed here both to deliver his lord and master into their hands, and also to be the head captain of them that should take him himself.

Here have all men that be in office and authority a good lesson to learn, that when they hear themselves solemnly called by names of high honour, cause have they not alway therein greatly to rejoyce, and therewith to stand highly in their own conceit, but then especially to reckon the same best to beseem them, if their own conscience do shew them that, for the well doing of their duties in their offices, they do indeed deserve to bear so honourable a name. Since else may they be full sore ashamed, unless they take pleasure in such bare, vain words, seeing as many as be aloft and in authority, be they great estates, princes, dukes, emperors, priests, or bishops, if they be naught, must of this be well assured, that whensoever folk do ring in their itching ears such gay glorious titles of office, they do it not with their heart truly to honour them, but the more freely under a colour of praise covertly to control them, for those honourable rooms so unworthily used. And how little the evangelist meant to commend Judas, where he set him forth by the solemn name of his apostleship, saying: "Judas Iscariot one of the twelve," he plainly declareth in that a little after he calleth him likewise traitor. "The traitor," saith he, "had given them a token, saying: Whomsoever I shall kiss, he it is, take hold on him."

Upon this is there a question moved among, wherefore it was needful for the traitor to give his company a privy token whereby Jesus might be discerned from the rest. Whereunto some answer thus, that for this respect they agreed upon a privy token, because Christ had divers times before suddenly escaped their hands, when they went about to take him. Howbeit seeing he was wont so to escape in the daytime, even out of their hands that very well knew him, by the power of his godhead, either vanishing out of their sight, or passing through the thickest of them, while they were amazed, this privy token given to know him by could little have served them to keep him from escaping. And therefore do some other say that the one of the Jameses was so like unto Christ (for which cause they think also he was called our Lord's brother) that unless men did well eye them both, the one could not lightly be known from the other. But seeing they might have apprehended them both, and carried them both away with them into some place where they might at more leisure,

having them both together, easily have discerned them, what needed them to care for any privy token at all?

The night, as appeareth by the gospel, was far spent indeed. And albeit it was almost break of day, yet was it night still. And that it was dark too, testified the torches and lanterns which they brought thither with them, the light whereof so dimmed their sight, that in so far a distance they could not so easily discern other folk, as other might do them. And notwithstanding, by reason the moon was at the full, the night peradventure was meetly light, yet could that serve them no further, but to see afar off the bigness of their bodies, and yet not so distinctly to perceive the proportion and making of them, as thereby to know the one well from the other. Wherefore if they should rashly have rushed in upon them, and every man run at adventure to take them all at once, they might of reason somewhat have doubted lest, as it often times happeneth, among so many some might have chanced to escape, and he most specially for whom they chiefly came, since commonly such as be in greatest hazard will soonest shift for themselves.

Thus whether it was their own device, or that Judas put it first into their heads, so ordered they this wily drift, that the traitor should go foremost, by whose embracing and kiss our Lord might be marked, that when they had all once well viewed him, they might all lay hands upon him at once, and so should it be the less danger, though after any of the rest escaped them. "Then had the traitor given them a token saying: Whomsoever I shall kiss, he it is, hold him fast, and carry him warily."

Lo! what avarice bringeth a man unto! Had it not been enough for thee, thou vile wretched traitor, by the privy token of a kiss to betray thine own dear master (who had so lightly exalted thee to the room of an apostle) into the hands of such cursed caitiffs, but that thou must take so much care therewithal to have him well and warily carried, for fear after he were taken, he might escape from them again? Thou wert hired but to deliver him, and other appointed to take him, to keep him, and to bring him to his judgement; and thou yet, as though thou hadst not done wretchedly enough for thine own part, meddlest with the soldiers' offices too, and as though the wicked officers that sent them had not given them sufficient charge, much need had they hardly of such a circumspect merchant as thou art, to warn and give them instruction of thine own head beside, that when they had once gotten him, they should be well ware how they carried him. What, wert thou afraid, lest when thou hadst achieved thy mischievous purpose in delivering Christ unto those ruffians, if by the soldiers' negligence Christ either should have slipped away ere they were ware, or by force taken from them maugre their teeth, the thirty groats, the worshipful reward of thine heinous offence, should not have been truly paid thee? Yes, yes, I warrant thee, full surely should they have been paid thee. But as glad as thou art now to have them, as desirous will thou be again to be rid of them when thou once hast them, howbeit in the meanwhile shalt thou work a feat, which though it shall be painful to thy master, and damnable to thyself, shall be nevertheless to a great many right wholesome and profitable.

“Then went Judas before them, and approached near unto Jesus to kiss him, and when he was come straightways preased he unto him and said: Master, good morrow, master, and kissed him. Jesus said unto him: My friend, whereto art thou come?” (Mk 26:49-50) “O Judas, doth thou betray the son of man with a kiss?” (Lk 22:48)

Albeit Judas of truth, as the history telleth us, went before this company, yet doth he further in another sense signify, that whereas there be many partners of one evil act, he that committeth it, having cause to forbear it, is in the sight of God accounted the worst of all his fellows.

“And he drew near to kiss him. And when he was come, by and by went he unto him and said: Master, good morrow, master, and kissed him.” So do they approach unto Christ, so do they salute him, so do they call him master, and so do they kiss him also, that pretending to be Christ's disciples, and in appearance shewing themselves to profess his religion, yet in very deed do by craft and subtlety their uttermost deavours clearly to overthrow it. So do they salute Christ as their master, that call him master and regard not his commandments. So do those priests likewise kiss him, which consecrate the holy body of Christ, and afterward by false doctrine and evil example of living, kill Christ's members, that is to wit, the souls of Christian men. So do those laymen salute and kiss Christ too, which would be counted for good and devout persons, for that contrary to the long-continued custom and guise of all Christendom, they do now in these later days, like good holy fathers, without any just ground, in despite and reproach of the whole Catholic Church (and therefore not without their grievous offence to Godward) by the setting on of evil priests, not alonely themselves receive the blessed body and blood of Christ under both kinds (which thing yet might somewhat be borne withal) but condemn all other that receive the same body and blood but under one kind only, which is as much to say as they condemn all Christian people that have been so many years in all parts of the world, except themselves alone. And albeit they frowardly maintain that the laity ought to receive both kinds, yet as for the thing of the sacrament, the body and blood of Christ I mean, that do the most part of them, as well laymen as priests, from either kind clearly take away, leaving no more therein but the bare names of his body and blood alone. And in this behalf are these folk not much unlike to Pilate's soldiers, who in derision of Christ upon their knees saluted him King of Jews. For even so fare they also, that with reverence kneeling upon their knees name the sacrament of the altar the body and blood of Christ, whereas they believe neither nother to be there, no more than Pilate's men believed him to be a king.

Verily all these, whom I have here rehearsed you, do, in their salutation and false traitorous kiss, plainly play us the traitor Judas's part. But now as these folk play Judas's part long after he is gone, so did Joab in a figure play his part long before he came, who (as it is written in the twentieth chapter of the Second Book of Kings) while he thus saluted Amasa: “God speed you, mine own good brother,” and with his right hand lovingly took him by the chin as though he would have kissed him, privily drew out a sword there-whiles unwares unto the other, wherewith at a stroke through both his sides he struck him stark dead at once. And a good while afore this had he by a like

train murdered Abner. But afterward, as reason was, being slain himself, he received his just reward for that wretched traitorous guile. This Judas followed the said Joab outright, whether ye consider the estate of his person, or his mischievous drift, or the vengeance of God, and the miserable end of them both, saving that Judas in every point too far exceeded Joab.

For as Joab was in great favour with his prince, so was Judas, and in much more, and with a mightier prince too. And as Joab slew his friend Amasa, so Judas slew Jesus, a far greater friend, and thereto withal his most loving master. And as Joab killed Amasa upon malice and ambition, because it was told him that Amasa was like to grow in more estimation with his prince than he, so Judas through covetise of wretched worldly winning, for a small sum of money, traitorously delivered his own master to death. And therefore as his trespass was a great deal more heinous, so was the manner of his well-deserved end much more piteous and lamentable. For whereas Joab was slain by another, Judas with his own hands most wretchedly hung himself.

But in the traitorous contriving of mischief, were the abominable enterprises of them both not much unlike, since as Joab familiarly speaking to Amasa and pretending friendly to kiss him, shamefully slew him, so came Judas gently to Christ, saluted him reverently, and kissed him lovingly, whereas nought else minded this cursed caitiff all the while, but how to deliver his dear master to death. Nevertheless though Joab by such coloured amity deceived Amasa, yet could not Judas so deceive Christ, who at his coming kindly received him, heard him salute him, refused not to be kissed of him, and as privy as he was of all his detestable treason, yet for a while so used he himself, as if he had known nothing thereof at all. And why did he this, trow ye? Was it for that he would teach us to counterfeit and dissimule, and like crafty worldly folk to avoid one wily drift by another? No, no, he meant nothing so, but rather to give us a lesson patiently and meekly to suffer all wrongs and false contrived trains, clxxxiii and not to scorn and rage, not to covet to be revenged, not by evil language uttered again to ease our shrewd stomachs, not to take any vain delight deceitfully to beguile our enemy, but against craft and falsehood to use upright dealing, and by goodness to master evil, and with sweet and sour words, to labour by all means possible, both in time and out of time, to make good men of bad, so that if any man be incurably diseased, he have none occasion to impute it to any negligence on our behalf, but to the outrage of his own mischievous disease. So Christ, like a most gracious physician, proved both these ways to cure the traitor Judas. And first beginning with gentleness: "My friend," quoth he, "for what purpose cometh thou?"

Now albeit the traitor at this word friend, somewhat began to stagger, as he that upon the remembrance of his high treason feared that by the name of friend Christ sore charged him with his wretched mortal malice, yet on the other side, as commonly evil-disposed persons be ever in good hope still to be unknown, this mad blind wretch trusted, for all he had so oft by experience perceived that Christ perfectly knew men's thoughts, and that his own treason too was meetly well touched at the supper, yet this mad fond fool, I say, forgetting all together, was ever more in good hope that Christ little wist his intent.

But forasmuch as nothing could be more harmful unto him than to be still fondly fed upon such vain hope (for it was the thing indeed that most

hindered his amendment) Christ of his goodness would no longer suffer him to conceive fond comfort in trust that he nothing wist of his false dealing, but straightways sharply added thereunto: "O Judas, dost thou betray the son of man with a kiss?" Here called he him by his name as he was wont to do, to the intent upon remembrance of old amity, the traitor's heart might have relented and fallen to repentance. His treason also openly laid he to his charge, that while he might perceive it was not unknown, he should never be ashamed to confess his fault. Over this the traitor's shameful hypocrisy did he bitterly touch, in these words: "Dost thou betray the son of man with a kiss?"

Among all sorts of mischief none can there lightly be found more odious unto God, than when we abuse things that be of their own nature good, and turn them contrariwise to serve us in our lewdness. And for this consideration doth God much mislike lying, for that the words which were by him ordained truly to express our minds by, we falsely pervert to a quite contrary use. In which sort and manner doth he grievously displease God also, that misturneth those laws that were devised to defend men from wrong, to be instruments to wrong men by. Christ therefore checked and controlled Judas for this detestable kind of offence, where he said: "O Judas, dost thou betray the son of man with a kiss? Either be thou such as thou wouldst be taken for, or plainly shew thyself as thou art indeed. For whoso under the colour of friendship worketh an unfriendly part, doubleth wretchedly his own offence thereby. Was it not enough for thee, then, O Judas, to betray the Son of Man, the son of that man forsooth I mean, through whose default all mankind had been utterly lost for ever, had not this same Son of Man, whom thou devisest to destroy, redeemed all those that be willing to be saved? Was it not enough for thee, I say, to betray this Son of Man, but thou must betray him with a kiss too, and so make that serve thee to work thy treason by, which was first invented to be an assured token of dear love and charity? I do not so much blame this company here which by forcible means openly set upon me, as I do thee, O Judas, which with a traitorous kiss dost unto these rude ruffians thus unkindly betray me." Now when Christ saw no manner of repentance in this traitor, to declare that he had much rather talk with his open enemies than a privy adversary, and therewith to cause the traitor to perceive how little he passed upon all his devilish devices, turned straight from him and, unarmed as he was, forth went he unto this armed band. For thus saith the gospel: "Then Jesus knowing all that should betide him, went forth and said unto them: 'Whom seek ye?' To whom they answered: 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus said unto them: 'I am he.' And with them stood Judas that betrayed him. And as soon as Jesus had once said: 'I am he,' they went backward and fell down upon the ground."

O sweet saviour Christ, thou that were lately so sore afraid, and lying prostrate upon the ground in most lamentable manner with a bloody sweat, didst humbly pray unto thy Father to take away the cup of thy bitter passion, art thou now suddenly so clean changed, that like a giant thou leapest out and joyfully runnest forward on thy journey, and thus courageously goeth to meet with those that seek to put thee to a painful passion, and of thine own mind discloseth thyself unto them, that confess they come to seek thee, and for all that do not know thee? Oh! Would God all faint-hearted folk would repair hither, hither I say to this place; here may they be sure to find sufficient matter of comfort, when they shall feel themselves troubled with the extreme

dread of death. For as they then suffer agonies with Christ, as they be in fear, in sorrow, in heaviness, and in pain with him, so shall they not fail (if so be they heartily pray, and persevere in the same, and therewithal wholly submit themselves to the will and pleasure of God) sensibly to feel comfort and relief with him. With whose holy spirit so shall they be recomforted, that they shall manifestly perceive the deformity of their old earthly heart by the dew of his celestial grace to be right well reformed, and by putting the wholesome cross of Christ into the water of their sorrow, the remembrance of death which was of late so bitter unto them, shall wax pleasant and sweet, and after their heaviness shall follow joy and pleasure, and after their fear, strength and courage, yea and at length death too (which before they so sore abhorred) shall they greatly long for, counting it pain to live, and gain to die, desiring to go hence and to be with Christ.

“Then came Jesus even hard unto them and asked them this question: ‘Whom seek ye?’ They answered: ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ And Judas that betrayed him stood with them. Jesus said unto them: ‘I am he.’ And as soon as Jesus had said unto them: ‘I am he,’ they went backward and fell down on the ground.”

If any man in his heart before the less esteemed Christ by reason of the fear and anguish that was so lately in him, now must this manful hardy courage of Christ recover his estimation again, considering he so boldly adventureth to go unto all this armed rout. And as sure as he is to be slain by them (for he foreknew all things that should befall unto him) yet discovereth he himself unto these wretches, albeit they know him not, and thereby voluntarily betaketh himself unto them, as a sacrifice cruelly to be killed of them.

And truly this so sudden and so great a change of reason ought much to be marvelled at in his blessed humanity. But now how good and how marvellous an opinion and estimation of him must this needs engender in all good Christian hearts, to see the power of God so wonderfully work in his tender human body? For what was the cause, trow you, that none of all those that so busily sought him could at that time know him, being so near unto them and presently talking with them? He had openly preached in the temple, he had overthrown the bankers' tables, and driven them out of the temple too, he had evermore used to be conversant abroad, he had confuted the Pharisees and fully answered the Sadducees, reprov'd the scribes, and the captious question that Herod's soldiers moved unto him by a discreet answer had he clearly avoided, with five loaves of bread he had fed seven thousand persons, the sick had he healed, and raised the dead, he had been in company of all sorts of people, Pharisees, publicans, rich, poor, good, bad, Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles. And now of all this number was there not one that could discern him, while he stood hard by them and spake unto them, neither by his visage, nor yet by his speech, as though the senders had of purpose provided such messengers as among them all that then came to fetch him, there should not one be sent thither that ever had seen him before.

Why was there none that had marked him at the leastwise by Judas's talk with him? Or by his embracing of him? Or by the kiss he gave him for a privy token whereby he might be known? What, had the traitor himself that at the same time was there among them so soon forgotten him, when he had but a little before by a kiss betrayed him? Whereof rose then this strange and wonderful chance? The reason why none of them all could know him was the selfsame

that within a little while after caused likewise that until he revealed himself, neither Mary Magdalen when she saw him, nor neither nother of his two disciples while they communed with him, wist what he was, but as they took him for some wayfaring man, so took she him but for a gardener. Finally, if you will needs learn how it happened that none of them all had any power to know him, for all he was present among them and talked with them, it came, ye may be sure, of no other cause, but even of the same that made, as ye see here, that none of them all was able to stand on his feet, as long as he spake to them. "For as soon as Jesus had said: 'I am he,' they went backward and fell flat to the ground."

Here did Christ verily prove himself to be that word of God which much more pierceth than any double sword. Some folk say indeed, the nature of lightning is such that it will melt the sword and never hurt the scabbard. But very true it is that the only voice of Christ, without any harm of their bodies, so weakened their natural strength that no power was there left in them to bear up their limbs withal.

Here telleth the evangelist that Judas stood also with them. For when he heard Christ so plainly lay his treason unto him, either for shame or for fear (for he wist well enough how fierce of nature Peter was) he drew back by and by, and retired to his company again. And why does the evangelist make mention of Judas's standing amongst them, but to make us understand that he likewise fell down with them? And surely such a wretch was Judas that in all the company there was not a worse, nor a more worthy to have a fall. But hereby meant the evangelist to give every man a general warning to take good heed what company he keepeth, for fear if he match himself with evil folk, with them may he fortune to fall. Since seldom chanceth it that whoso like a fool placeth himself in a leaking ship with such as after by misfortune be cast into the sea, doth escape alive to land, and all the rest be drowned.

None I think doubteth but that he which was able to throw them down every one with a word, could as easily have given them so sore a fall that none of them all should ever have been able to rise again. But Christ who gave them this fall to make them know that more could they not do unto him than he listed to permit them, licenced them to rise again to do that unto him that it pleased himself to suffer. "So when they were risen, he asked them again: Whom seek ye? And they answered: Jesus of Nazareth."

By this one point may every man perceive that by Christ's coming unto them they were so dismayed, so astonied and amazed, that as it seemed they were almost out of their wits. For hereof might they have been sure enough, that at that time of night and in that place should they none find but some, either of Christ's own disciples, or at the leastwise some friend of his, who would rather have conveyed them any way else than have conducted them where Jesus was. And yet did they like fools even at the first meeting fondly blab out at once, unto one whom they neither wist what he was, nor why he asked them that question, the effect of all their errand, which in any wise should have been kept close until they had achieved their purpose. For as soon as he asked them: "Whom would ye have?" they answered and said: "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered again: "I told ye that I am he, wherefore if you would have me, let these my disciples depart." As who would say: "If ye would have me, seeing I am now come to ye, and tell ye myself who I am, now ye thus know me, why

do ye not straightways take me? But of truth so far unable are ye to take me except I give you leave that (as ye have by your falling backward already right effectually proved) ye have no power so much as to stand while I do but speak to you. Nevertheless, if all these things be so soon so clean out of your minds, now once again I put you in remembrance that I am Jesus of Nazareth. Wherefore if you seek me, suffer these my disciples to depart.”

Where Christ here sayeth: “Let these my disciples depart,” that he meant not thereby to ask leave for them to go, shewed he sufficiently, I trow, by that he struck them so flat to the ground. But other whiles happeth it among them that they that go about a mischievous matter be not contented to do one mischief alone, but of their own ungracious dispositions commonly covet to add more thereto than the business they have in hand, of any necessity, requireth. And some also that help forth other men's shameful enterprises, be so forward and so more than needeth trusteth therein, that rather than leave any ungracious act undone that they are appointed unto, they will put somewhat more to it of their own heads beside. Both which sorts of folk doth Christ here privily touch, where he saith: “If you would have me, suffer these my disciples to depart. If it be my blood that the bishops, the scribes, the Pharisees, and the ancients of the people do so sore thirst for, lo! at your first seeking was I ready to meet you; and where you knew me not I disclosed myself unto you; while ye lay on the ground I stood hard by you; now you are risen here am I present for you to take me. And finally which the traitor could never have done, here deliver I myself into your hands to the end neither you nor they shall think that (as though you had not done lewdly enough to contrive my death) needs must ye shed their blood too. For which cause if ye seek me, said he, let these my disciples depart.”

He bade them let them go, but maugre their hearts he wrought to have it so. And while they were busy to have caught them, he caused his disciples to flee; and so preserving them all, clearly disappointed all those caitiffs' purpose. For declaration of which effect to follow, these words spake he beforehand unto them: “Let these my disciples depart,” whereby this his own saying also was verified: “Of all those thou gavest me have I not lost one.” (Jn 18:9) These words of Christ which the evangelist here mentioneth were those that Christ spake unto his Father the same night at his maundy: “O Holy Father save them for thy name's sake whom thou hast given unto me.” And a little after: “I have kept safe all that thou gavest me and none of them hath perished but the son of perdition, whereby the scripture is fulfilled.” Here lo! Christ prophesying that his disciples should be saved harmless although himself were taken, foreshewed thereby that he and none else preserved them. By reason whereof doth the evangelist put the same in the readers' remembrance, to let them wit that albeit Christ in this place said unto these folk: “Suffer these my disciples to depart,” himself for all that by his privy power had made open the way for them to escape.

That place of scripture that foresheweth the destruction of Judas is, by the way of prayer, prophesied in the hundred and eighth psalm of David in this manner. “Let his days be shortened and another take his room.” (Ps 109:8) These words though they were forespoken so many years before of the traitor Judas, yet until Christ so taught us, and the deed self after compared with the said words so proved the same, whether any man else save only he that spake

them did ever till that time so understand them, I cannot surely tell. For it followeth not that everything that one prophet foreseeeth is foreseen of all the rest beside, since the spirit of prophecy is to prophets proportioned by measure. Yea, and further of this opinion am I, that no man hath so clear understanding of holy scripture in all places, but that as yet there are many hidden mysteries remaining unperceived therein, such as concern either Antichrist's time or the day of judgement. Which albeit they are for the meanwhile unknown, Elias yet at his coming again shall at last openly reveal. Wherefore as the apostle spake of the wisdom of God, so may I of holy writ (wherein God hath laid up and hidden great heaps of his wisdom) right well cry out and say: "O the depth of the marvellous high wisdom and knowledge of God! How far be the judgements of God above the capacity of man's wit, and how unsearchable be his ways!" (Rom 11:33)

And yet for all this do there in every corner nowadays still start up amongst us, as it were swarms of wasps or hornets which of a certain pride call themselves, as St. Jerome termeth them, autodidactons, that is to wit, of themselves learned without any man's teaching, and boast likewise that without the commentaries of the old doctors they have found all those points open, plain, and easy, which all the ancient fathers, men of as excellent wit and no less learning than they, and over that all given to continual study, and touching the spirit of God (whereof they as much babble as they little have) as far beyond them as they passed them in godly living, confessed to be right hard and cumbrous. But now these newfound divines, that are thus suddenly sprung up of nought, which would so fain seem to know all things, besides that they vary from all those good godly men in the understanding of scripture, agree not within themselves, neither in the principal points of Christ's religion, and nevertheless every one of them bold bearing folk in hand that they have spied out the truth, as they put other of like sort to rebuke and shame, so by other do they take shame themselves. And as they altogether labour to destroy and overthrow the whole Catholic faith, so are they all the whole rabble of them brought to confusion themselves, whose wretched and foolish enterprises, God that dwelleth in heaven loud laugheth to scorn, whom I most humbly beseech, that he so laugh them not to scorn as he laugh at their eternal damnation, but inspire into their hearts his wholesome grace of repentance, whereby though they, like unthrifty prodigal children, have strayed too long, alas, abroad, they may yet at length return from whence they came unto their mother the Church afresh, to the intent we and they together agreeing in one true faith of Christ, and knit in mutual love and charity, may as his true members attain unto the glory of our captain and head, which whosoever hopeth to have out of this body, the Church, and without the right faith, doth with a vain hope lewdly deceive himself.

But now as I was about to tell you, that this prophecy was meant by Judas did Christ somewhat give warning afore, and Judas by the murdering of himself did plainly declare it, and Peter afterward so expounded it, and all the apostles too, which at length executed the same, when by lot they admitted Matthias to his room, so that then did there in very deed another take his place. And to make the matter the clearer (albeit bishops do still from time to time succeed into the apostles' places) yet into that number of the twelve, after Matthias was once chosen in Judas's stead, was there never none taken in again, but the

office of the apostles being little and little appointed unto many, both was the aforesaid prophecy fulfilled, and that holy number therewith fully at an end. Wherefore when Christ said: "Suffer these my disciples to depart," he desired not leave for them to depart, but in a manner told them that he himself licenced his disciples so to do, to verify that he had erst spoken: "Father, I have kept those that thou gavest me, and not one of them hath perished, but the son of perdition." Here methinketh it good somewhat to weigh how effectually in these words Christ foretold two things so far unlike as the desperate death of the traitor and the good success of the rest. For so certainly did he tell what should become of both parties, that he spake thereof as of a thing not to come, but rather past already. "Those that thou gavest me," said he, "them have I kept." Neither were they saved harmless by their own strength, nor preserved by any gentleness on the Jews' behalf, nor escaped away for fault of diligence in Pilate's men, but "I have safely kept them, and none of them all hath miscarried, but only the son of perdition." "For of them whom thou, O Father, gavest me, was he verily one. And I, while he at my choosing of him willingly received me, set him at free liberty to become the child of God with the remnant that received me. But as soon as he of a covetous mind fondly betook himself unto the devil and forsook me, and falsely betraying me refused to be saved by me, while he went about to destroy me he fell to be the son of perdition. And thus like a wretch wretchedly cast he himself away."

And so well assured was Christ, what end this traitor should have, and so undoubtedly shewed he that he should come to nought, that he plainly said he was already lost. This notwithstanding, all the while Christ was in taking, still stood with a full furious stomach this wretched traitor amongst those that took him, as their head captain and banner-bearer, triumphing of likelihood and rejoicing to behold what peril his own fellows and his master were in. And I verily think he looked for none other but to have had them taken and slain every one. For such is the mad naughty nature of ungrateful folk, that whom they have once unjustly dealt with, those would they gladly have rid out of the way, so sore doth their sinful wounded conscience dread the reproach of their unkind dealing. Thus was this traitor full glad, while he hoped to have had all his fellows in hold at once, and like a fool cast no perils of himself at all, nothing less mistrusting than that shortly after the dreadful sentence of God should light upon him, so that he with his own hands should most horribly hang himself.

Here have I occasion to lament and bewail the blindness of our miserable mortal nature. For many times while we are in most trouble and fear, though we know it not, be we in most surety. And contrariwise, oftentimes while we reckon ourselves surest and make most merry, then unwares stealeth death even suddenly on us. All the apostles save Judas were very sore afraid, reckoning to have been carried away and put to death with Christ. And yet were they all in case safely to escape, whereas Judas on the other side which nothing feared at all, but took a special pleasure to see them so afflicted, lost his life for ever and that in few hours after. A cruel delight it is and very unnatural, to rejoice and take comfort at others' woe and misery. Never the more cause hath any man to rejoice or to account his luck the better, for having power upon anybody's life or death, as the traitor trowed he had, when

he had gotten this band of soldiers unto him. Since of this may every man be right sure, that whomsoever he slayeth, by death shall he him follow. Yea and so uncertain is the hour of death, that the party that so boldly boasteth to despatch another first, may fortune for all that to go before himself; as it here fared by Judas, who delivered Christ to the Jews to be put to death, and yet did he first miserably murder himself.

A heavy and dreadful precedent for the whole world to beware, that no man reckon himself free from God's vengeance, that without all fear of God presumptuously attempteth mischief, never taking any recourse thereof. For all creatures do agree to work with their Creator to chastise and punish the evil. The air is ready with noisome and evil breaths to infect and poison them, the water with waves to drown them, the mountains to overwhelm them, the vales to rise up against them, the earth to gape and open under them, hell suddenly to swallow them down, and there the devil headlong deep to plunge them in flaming fiery pits that shall continue for ever. And all this while doth God alone preserve this silly wretched man for all he hath too foully forsaken him.

But he that so followeth this stubborn stiff-necked Judas, that after grace so often offered, and as oft again refused, God at length determineth to offer it him no more, this man is undoubtedly in a very miserable case, this man, I say, in how good plight so ever he fondly weeneth himself to be, and seem he to flee never so high in the air, yet walloweth he indeed full low in all sorrow and wretchedness. Wherefore let us make our prayer unto our most pitiful Saviour Christ, not each one for himself alone, but every man for other too, that we follow not the example of the obstinate traitor Judas, but without delay gladly embracing God's grace when it is offered us, may through our own repentance and his mercy, be renewed afresh to attain his endless glory.

PART II

OF THE CUTTING OF MALCHUS'S EAR, HOW HIS DISCIPLES FORSOOK HIM, AND OF THE TAKING OF CHRIST

OF THE CUTTING OF MALCHUS'S EAR

Albeit the apostles, when they first heard Christ tell them before, of the things which they now saw themselves, were thereat full sorry and sad, yet much less did it grieve them then than now, when they presently beheld them with their own eyes. For as soon as they espied so many come upon them at once, and openly said they sought Jesus of Nazareth, no longer could they stand in doubt, but that they so sought for him purposely to apprehend him.

And thereupon perceiving what was like to ensue thereon, sundry matters as in such a sudden stir very sore perplexed them. First the earnest care they had for their dear beloved master, over this the dread they stood in what might fall on themselves, and last of all the shame they had to break their bold boast and promise, where everyone precisely said he would never forsake his master, no

not to die therefor. Thus were their minds with divers perplexities diversely distracted. For as the love of their master moved them to avoid, so the fear of themselves willed them to flee. And as dread of death drove them fast away, so did the shame to break their promise persuade them still to tarry.

Again they right well remembered how Christ had before time charged that none of them for his own defence should carry neither stick nor staff, whereas now the same night he gave a contrary commandment, that whoso lacked a sword should sell his coat to buy him one withal; and all were it so, that they, being but eleven in number, and thereto so destitute of weapons that, save only two of them, never a one had any about him, except haply some knife to cut his meat withal, were sore afflicted to see such a sort of the Jews besides the Roman soldiers, all so well armed, stand there so thick thronging together about them, yet as soon as they bethought them that when they had said unto Christ: "Lo! here are two swords," Christ answered: "They are enough," they, not understanding what was the mystical meaning of the matter, suddenly asked Christ all in haste, whether they should defend him by sword, saying: "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?"

But Peter for the fervent affection he bare to his master, before he had his answer drew out his sword, and striking at the bishop's servant, cut off his right ear clean, either for that it was his chance to stand there next unto him, or else because among them all there was none so busy a braggart. And out of question it appeareth that he was some very lewd losel, for the evangelists write of him that he was servant to the bishop who was high priest or prince of the priests. And commonly, as Juvenal saith: "Great men's houses be well stored with saucy malapert merchants." And men learn by their own experience that in every country noblemen's servants be statlier and much more extreme than are their lords themselves. Now to let us know that this fellow bare some rule with the bishop, and took therefore somewhat the more upon him, St. John immediately after addeth his name too, saying, "This servant's name was Malchus," which thing the evangelist seldom useth without it be for some purpose.

And thereupon think I that this javel that so fiercely rushed in among them set Peter in such a heat that he first began with him, and so would stoutly have proceeded further, had not Christ stayed his bold courageous stomach, ere that he went too far. Who by and by (as he that came not to avoid death, but to suffer it, and if he had been otherwise minded, yet little need had he of any such aid) both tempered the residue of his apostles, and reprov'd Peter's outrageous zeal, and also restored the vile wretch his ear again. For the plainer declaration whereof, first answered he his other disciples to their demands, saying: "Let them alone, yet a little while longer suffer them. For I that with one word overthrew them all at once, was, as ye see, content for all that to let them rise again, and so for this once to work their wills upon me. As yet then those whom I myself do suffer, them suffer ye also. And the time is almost come, in which I shall no more suffer them to have any power upon me. And now in the meanwhile neither need have I none of your help at all." This was all his answer lo! that he made unto the rest: "Suffer them yet awhile." But severally turning unto Peter: "Put up," quoth he, "thy sword into his Place;" as though he would say: "I will not be defended by sword. And such a state have I chosen thee unto, that I will not have thee fight with this kind of

sword, but with the sword of God's word. Let this material sword, therefore, be put up into his place, that is to wit into the hands of temporal princes, as into his scabbard again, to punish malefactors withal. Ye that be apostles of my flock have another manner of sword than this, perdy, much more terrible than is any sword made of iron or steel. For by that sword, whatsoever evil person is once cast out of the Church, that is to be understanden as a rotten member cut off from my mystical body, is delivered sometime to the devil's hands only to chastise his flesh, to the end his soul may be saved, if so be there remain any hope of amendment in him, and that he may be grafted and knit into my body afresh. And other whiles if he be so desperately diseased, that he be past all recovery, then for fear the infection of him might haply hurt the whole and sound, is he perpetually condemned unto the invisible death of his soul also. And of truth so loath am I to have ye fight with this temporal sword (the meetest scabbard for which, mark well what I say unto ye, are the secular justices) that I could not advise you to occupy the spiritual sword (the use whereof pertaineth to you alone) not very often neither, but valiantly bestirring yourself with the sword of God's word (the cut whereof like a little lancing knife may let out the foul corruption of the soul, and so wound it to the great help and health thereof) as for the other terrible and dangerous sword of excommunication, that would I have you always keep within the scabbard of mercy and pity, till an urgent and wondrous necessary cause enforce you to draw it out."

Thus whereas to the remnant of his apostles he spake not passing two words or three, either for that they were meek and mild of spirit, or not so hot as Peter was, Peter's fierce unbridled braids he calmed and quieted with a far longer process. For he did not alonely bid him to put up his sword, but told him also the cause why he misliked his zeal, how well so ever he meant therein. "Why wilt thou not that I shall drink," quoth he, "of the cup that my Father hath given me?" Christ had long before shewed his apostles that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer much woe by the ancients and the scribes and the princes of the priests and in the end be slain and rise the third day again. And Peter, taking him aside, began to rebuke him in this wise: "God forbid, master, it should so fare with thee, there shall no such thing come to thee." Who turned about unto Peter and said: "Get thee hence behind me, Satan, thou hast no taste in godly matters."

Here lo! may ye see, how sharply Christ reproveth Peter, to whom a little before, when he confessed him to be the Son of God, he had said: "Blessed art thou, Simon the son of John, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this to thee but my Father that is in heaven. And I say to thee that thou art a stone, and upon this stone shall I build my church, and hell gates shall not prevail against it. And unto thee will I give the keys of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, shall be bound likewise in heaven, and so forth." And here he casteth him off in a manner, and maketh him go behind him, and plainly sheweth him that he hindereth him in his purpose, and calleth him Satan, and telleth him that he favoureth not godly things but all worldly. But why did he all this? Mary, because he discoursed him to take this death upon him, which he then told him that needs must he suffer, and that by his own will it was resolutely so determined. And therefore would he that they should not only not let him therefrom, but also follow him by the same way themselves.

“For whoso will come after me,” saith he, “must forsake himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” And besides all this he goeth forth further and declareth that if any man, when need requireth, will refuse to go to death with him, he shall not avoid bodily death thereby, but fall from that to a worse. And contrariwise whosoever will not stick to bestow his life for me, saith he, he shall not lose his life at all but change it for a better. “For he that will save his life shall lose it, and he that will lose his life for my sake shall find it. And what good getteth a man, if he win the whole world and loseth his soul withal? Or what exchange will any man make for his soul? For the Son of Man shall come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then shall he reward every man according to his doings.”

I tarry a little longer upon his place than peradventure needeth. But who is there, trow ye, that would not with these words of Christ, being so sore, so biting, and again so effectually putting us in hope of everlasting life, be moved somewhat to digress from his matter? Howbeit as concerning this present place, by these words of Christ we see well how severely Peter was here admonished to beware that he abused his zeal to the hindering of Christ's death no more. And yet once again lo! as he then did all his possible endeavour by words to counsel him to the contrary, so now laboured he as fast by main force and violence upon the like zeal to defend him therefrom. All this notwithstanding, Christ, because the fault that Peter did came of a good affection, and also inasmuch as going to his passion he demeaned himself in all points humbly, would not too sharply reprove him therefor, but first by reason corrected him, and after by telling him his fault, and at last declared also unto him that if he himself were not willing to die, little needed he to be defended either by him or any other man's aid at all, since his Father would not fail, if he would desire it of him, to send him at his need a mighty strong unvincible army of angels from heaven against those silly slaves that were come now to take him.

So first of all, as I told you, did Christ repress the fervent desire that Peter had to strike, and shewed him the reason why. “What, wilt thou not,” quoth he, “that I shall drink of the cup which my Father hath given me?” “All my life hitherto hath been a pattern of obedience and a sample of humility. Was there ever anything that I have either oftener or more earnestly taught ye, than to be obedient to your rulers, to honour your parents, to yield unto Caesar what belongeth unto him, and to God likewise whatsoever is due to him? And now that I am even at the last point of my business, and here shall make an end of all together, this godly wonderful work that I have been so long about, wouldst thou have me out of hand to mar it every whit, and refuse the cup that my Father thus offereth me, and so the Son of Man to be disobedient unto God his Father?”

After this told he Peter that he had done very evil to strike with the sword; and that declared he also by the example of the civil laws, who saith: “Whoso taketh a sword, with the sword shall he be slain.” For by the civil laws of the Romans, under which the Jews at the same time lived, whosoever without sufficient authority were spied so much as to have a sword about him to murder any man with, was in a manner in as evil case as he that had murdered one indeed. In how much more danger is he then that both draweth his sword and striketh with it too? And being so amazed and in such fear as

Peter was, I cannot well believe he was so circumspect that of purpose he forbore to strike at Malchus's head, and only smote at his ear, because he minded not to kill him, but only to make him afraid.

Here if any man will perhaps say, that one may lawfully even with the sword save an innocent and good man from the violent hands of mischievous raging ruffians, the discussing of that matter would require a longer process than were convenient for this place. But certainly, though Peter's tender loving affection towards Christ caused his offence to be somewhat the more excusable, yet that he had no lawful authority to fight for him sufficiently appeareth by that Christ had before time so precisely warned him, that he should in no wise go about to hinder his death and passion, not so much as with one word, and less than with any kind of violence.

Besides this herewith daunted he Peter's hasty courage too, by shewing him plainly that of his defence he had no need at all. "Weenest thou," quoth he, "that I cannot call unto my Father for help, and he will give me forthwith above twelve legions of angels?"

Of his own power here speaketh he but little, but of his Father's favour towards him, thereof doth he joyfully talk. For since he was going to his deathward, he would in no case greatly advance himself, nor for that while openly tell him that he was in equal power with his Father. But to have it appear that he needed to be holpen neither at Peter's hand, nor at none earthly creature's else, he shewed him that if he would but ask it, he should not fail to have, incontinent ready, sufficient assistance of angels, from his almighty Father in heaven. "Why trowest thou," quoth he, "that I cannot make request unto my Father, and he will send me straightways more than twelve legions of angels?" As though he would say: "If this be not enough to make thee know that I have no need of thy help, that thou sawest me with thine own eyes by mine only word overthrow all this mighty band, and yet never touched them (against whom if thou wouldst reckon thyself able to defend me by thine own might and strength, thou wert stark mad and much to be lamented) yet at the leastwise call to thy remembrance eftsoons, whose son thou saidst I was, when I asked you all this question: 'Whom do you say that I am?' And thou by and by inspired by God madest answer unto me again: 'Thou art Christ, the son of the living God.' Then since thou knowest by his revelation that I am the Son of God, and seeing thou canst not be ignorant that every natural father will not fail to help his child, weenest thou that if I of mine own choice were not willing to die, my Father in heaven would not be ready to help me? What, thinkest thou that if I would require it of him, I could not have more than twelve legions of angels, and that out of hand by and by without any further delay? Against so many legions of angels how should such a silly sort of vile slaves and wretches as they be, be able so much as to stand on their feet, when ten times twelve legions of such as they be could not endure to behold of one angel one angry look?"

After this fell Christ in hand with the first point again, as wherein chiefly consisted the effect of all the matter. "How shall the scriptures be fulfilled then," said he, "since so must it needs be?"

The scriptures be full of prophecies concerning Christ's death, and full are they in like manner of the mysteries of his passion, and of mankind's redemption which could never have come to pass had he not so suffered. Now

lest Peter or any other at any time after might thus mutter secretly with himself: "Sir, if thou canst, as thou sayest, obtain so many legions of thy Father, why dost thou not ask them?" To this he said: "How shall then the scriptures be fulfilled, since it is behovable to be? Then seeing by the scriptures thou dost so well perceive that this is the only way determined by God's justice and wisdom to restore mankind again to the felicity he is fallen from, now if I should heartily desire my Father to preserve me from death, what should I thereby else do but labour mine own self to hinder the same thing which I came hither for. And therefore to call angels out of heaven to assist me, what were that but utterly to debar from heaven all mankind for ever, for whose redemption and restitution into the heavenly bliss is the special cause of my coming? So that now fightest thou with thy sword, not against the wicked Jews, but rather against all mankind, inasmuch as the scriptures thou wilt not suffer to be fulfilled, nor me to drink of the cup that my Father hath given me, through which I being without spot and stain, might purge and cleanse the foul deformed spots of man's nature."

But mark you here the marvellous mildness of Christ, which was not only content to stay Peter from striking, but also for our example to do good for evil, set hand to his persecutor's ear that was stricken off, and restored it whole again.

No creature living is there, I trow, in every part so replenished with soul and life, as the letter of holy writ is full of spiritual mysteries. For as we can touch no piece of the body but it hath soul therein which giveth life and sense thereto, be it never so small a portion, so in all scripture is there no history so gross, if I may so name it, or so base, but that it is quickened with some spiritual lively mystery. Wherefore in Malchus's ear which Peter's sword cut off and by Christ's holy hand set on again, we must not only consider the history (and yet thereby may we learn many a wholesome lesson too) but deeper must we look and view besides the ghostly fruitful meaning thereof privily contained under the literal sense.

Malchus then, which in the Hebrew tongue signifieth that we call in English a king, doth not without good convenience betoken reason unto us. For reason in man ought to rule like a king, and so rule doth it indeed when submitting itself to the obedience of faith it serveth God, and him whoso serveth most ruleth like a king. But this bishop with his priests, the Pharisees, the scribes, and the ancients of the people, that were wholly given to lewd superstitions which they had matched with the law of God, under pretence of holiness labouring to destroy all godly virtue and to rid out of the way the author of true religion, do well signify and represent unto us blasphemous archheretics with their complices, the teachers and ringleaders of devilish superstition. Then as often as man's reasonable soul, rebelling against Christ's true faith, forsaketh Christ, and betaketh itself to heresies, it becometh from thenceforth that archheretic's bonds slave, whose false errors by the devil's deceitful means it followeth. Such a one, lo! keepeth still his left ear to hear sinister heresies withal, but his right ear to hear the true faith withal, that hath he utterly lost. Yet do not all men always this upon like meaning and intent, nor yet worketh it ever in every man like effect neither. For sometime of a mere set malice do some folk fall to heresies. These men's ears are not suddenly cut off at one stroke, but little and little in process of time, as the devil poureth in his poison

upon them, do they rot and putrify. And after the festered parts are once congealed, then doth the hardness thereof so stop up all the ways that no goodness can after enter. These wretches, alas, are seldom or never perfectly made whole again, since these parts that the fretting cancer hath clearly eaten up are utterly perished forever, so that nothing remaineth in them ever to be cured more.

And the ear that was upon an indiscrete zeal at one blow suddenly stricken off, and fell down to the ground, betokeneth such persons as being overcome with some sudden blind affection under the colour of truth are carried clean therefrom. Some there are again whom their own good zeal deceiveth.

Whereof Christ speaketh thus: "The time shall come in which whoso slayeth thee, shall think he doth good service unto God." (Jn 16:2) A figure of this sort of folk was the apostle St. Paul. Other are there beside which having their hearts cumbered with worldly affections, let their ears, being once cut off from hearing the celestial doctrine, lie there still upon the ground, whose miserable estate doth Christ full often pity. And the ears that were either through some hasty rash motion or unadvised zeal so smitten off from the head, with his own hand taketh he up from the ground, and with the same setteth them on fast again, and so maketh them meet to hear the true doctrine afresh. I wot right well that the old fathers, as one found one thing and some other another, have out of this one place by the gracious assistance of the Holy Ghost, gathered many and divers mysteries, all which purpose I not here to rehearse for overmuch discontinuing the process of this story.

"And Jesus said to the princes of the priests, the officers of the temple, and the ancients that came unto him: Hither come ye with swords and glaives to take me like a thief, whereas I was daily in the temple among ye and sat and taught ye, and ye laid no hands upon me. But this is your hour and the power of darkness." (Lk 22:52-53; Mt 26:55; Mk 14:48-49)

These words said Christ unto the princes of the priests, the officers of the temple, and the ancients that came to take him. But hereupon riseth there among some men a certain doubt, for that the evangelist Luke telleth that Jesus spake these words to the chief priests, the officers of the temple, and the ancients of the people, whereas the other evangelists in such sort do recite the matter, that by their writing it appeareth they sent a band of soldiers and some of their servants thither, and came not themselves at all.

This doubt do some men assoil in this wise: that Jesus in speaking these words to them whom they sent, spake it to themselves, as princes use to talk together by their ambassadors, and private persons commonly by their messengers. So whatsoever we say to the servants that is sent unto us, whereof he must again make report to him that sent him, that say we to his master himself.

Forsooth for my part, albeit I never a deal disallow this answer, yet can I better like their opinion which think that Christ spake these words to the princes of the priests, the officers of the temple, and the ancients of the people, presently face to face. For St. Luke saith not that Christ spake these words to all the princes of the priests, nor to all the officers of the temple, nor

to all the ancients of the people, but to those of them only that were come to take him. Whereby he seemeth plainly to declare that although by them all assembled together in council, this company of soldiers and their own servants were sent in all their names to apprehend Christ, yet came there thither with them some of every sort beside, as well of the ancients, and Pharisees, as also of the princes of the priests. Which opinion thoroughly agreeth with the words of St. Luke, and may stand well enough with the sayings of all the other evangelists too.

Wherefore Christ in speaking to the princes of the priests, the Pharisees, and the ancients of the people, gave them a privy warning that they should not ascribe the taking of him at that time to their own power or policy, nor peevishly glory, like folk that unhappily have good hap to do evil, as though they had wilyly and craftily compassed their matter, since none of all their fond contrived devices, whereby they endeavoured to suppress the truth, could never against him have any thing prevailed; but God's high wisdom had provided and appointed the time in which the prince of this world, the devil, should, ere he were ware, righteously lose mankind, his guilefully gotten prey, even while he most laboured unrighteously to keep it. Christ did also expressly tell them that little need had they to have hired the traitor, or to come thither with lanterns and torches by night, or so many of them together with such a band of soldiers to set upon him with swords and glaives, seeing they might without their cost and charge, without any labour, without any breaking of their sleep, and without any weapon at all, easily oftentimes have taken him, while he sat teaching openly in the temple among them.

And if they would boldly brag with themselves that they had circumspectly ordered their doings, and furthermore say that though Christ called it a thing easy to be done, yet was it indeed very hard and cumbrous, and such as could never have been brought to pass without much danger of some tumult and uproar of the people, how dangerous a matter that was to do of late right well appeared at the raising of Lazarus. For they had had experience oftener than once that, as well as the multitude loved Christ, and as much as they esteemed him for his wonderful goodness, those for all that that went about to take him and kill him, were so little afraid of sustaining any harm at their hands therefor, that had he not escaped through the midst of them by his own almighty power, they might see good likelihood that in their mischief the people would have taken their parts. So unconstant is the common people, and so soon inclined to evil. And to conclude, how little any man should regard the common people's favour, or contrariwise dread their displeasure, that that followed soon after well declared, where, as soon as Christ was once apprehended, they cried no faster before: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of our Lord," and "Hosanna in the highest," than now in a fury they cried out clean contrary: "Away, away with him and crucify him."

Whereby it is evident that it came of God himself that, until that time, those which would so fain have taken him cast perils where were none at all, and causeless quaked for fear where need was none to fear. But now as soon as the convenient time was come that by the painful death of one man, all men should be redeemed to the joyful bliss of the life everlasting, as many as unfeignedly desired it, these peevish wretched dolts thought that they by their wily wits had wilyly wrought that thing which the providence of almighty God,

with-out whose foreknowledge not so much as a sparrow lighteth on the ground, had of his great mercy from before all time determined. Wherein to shew how far they were deceived, and to teach them moreover that neither the traitor's guile, nor their own craftily contrived trains, nor all the might the Roman soldiers had, could have stood them in any stead, had he not been willing thereto himself, Christ said unto them: "But this is your hour, and the power of darkness." Which words of his doth the evangelist St. Matthew with a strong reason enforce: "And all this," saith he, "was done to accomplish that the prophets had written."

All the prophets everywhere be full of prophecies concerning Christ's death. As where it is thus: "To death was he carried like a lamb, and of him in the streets was there heard no cry." (Is 53:7) "In my hands and my feet made they deep holes." (Ps 22:16) "These wounds have I in the house of those that loved me." (Zech 13:6) "He was accounted in the number of wicked men;" (Is 53:12) "our diseases did he verily bear;" (Is 53:4) "and by his smart were we healed." (Is 53:5) "Through the sinfulness of my people was he carried to his death." (Is 53:8) The prophets in many places plainly foreshew Christ's death and passion, whose prophecies, seeing they could not but be fulfilled, it consequently followeth that the matter depended not upon man's determination, but rather that he who from before all time foresaw it and precisely determined so to have it (the Father I mean of Christ, and Christ himself likewise, and the Holy Spirit of them both, which three so always work together that nothing is there done in any creature by any one of them, but it is done equally by them all three) both foreknew and appointed the time that was most meet for the accomplishment thereof. Now when these bishops and princes of the priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, and the ancients of the people, and to make short tale, all these execrable and devilish officers, so greatly gloried in themselves for their high devices because they had taken Christ so craftily, nought else therewhiles did these mad fellows, blinded with malice, but much to their own harm and to other folks singular commodity, unwares and unwittingly busily help to achieve the blessed and resolute pleasure of almighty God (and yet not the Father's and the Holy Ghost's alone, but Christ's own will too) in procuring Christ a very short death, and mankind a blessed life in heaven, and Christ for the same honour and glory for ever. Then said Christ unto them: "But this is your hour, and the power of darkness." "Whereas heretofore ye hated me deadly, and therefore gladly would have despatched me, and might with much less business easily have done it, had not the power of God restrained you from it, yet all that while in the temple neither did you take me nor once made offer to lay any hand upon me. And why so, trow ye? Forsooth because the time and hour was not yet come which my Father of his unsearchable wisdom had by mine own consent appointed, and not any constellation of the planets, nor your subtle conveyances neither. And will ye know when? Not since Abraham's days, but from before the beginning of the world, since from before all time, ere ever Abraham was made, am I with the Father.

"This is therefore your hour and the power of darkness, this is the short while that is granted ye, and the liberty given unto darkness, that now ye may in the night which till this hour ye could never be suffered to bring to pass in the day, like monstrous ravening fowls, like screech-owls and hags, like bats, owlets,

night crows, and birds of the helly lake, go about with your bills, your talons, your teeth, and your shrill shrieking outrageously, but all in vain, thus in the dark to flee upon me. In darkness be ye, while ye ascribe my death to your own strength, and in darkness shall be your president Pilate too, as long as he shall proudly boast that he hath authority either to quit me or crucify me, who albeit mine own countrymen and bishops shall deliver me into his hands, should have no power for all that upon me, were it not given him from my Father above. And for that cause the more is their offence that shall betake me unto him.

“But this is your hour and the short power of darkness. And he that walketh in darkness wotteth not whither he goeth. So do ye neither see nor know what ye do. Therefore will I pray myself for ye that you may have pardon for that you work against me. Yet pardon shall ye not all attain, nor blind ignorance will not excuse you all neither, since you are the very cause of your ignorance yourselves. Ye put away the light yourselves, ye first pluck out both your own eyes yourselves, and after that other men's too, so that the blind leadeth the blind, till ye both fall into the pit. This is your short hour; this is the unreasonable and unruly power of darkness which now causeth you with weapon to take me, thus weaponless as I am; that is to say, cruel caitiffs a meek lamb, sinful persons a sinless innocent, the traitor his master, vile wretches their God.

“And as well as ye have power upon me now, so shall upon my disciples other provosts and emperors after me, some upon one and some upon another, have a like hour and short power of darkness. And verily the power of darkness may I right well call it. For like as whatsoever my disciples shall suffer or say, they shall neither by their own strength suffer it, nor of themselves speak it, but by my strength valiantly vanquishing all pain, through their patient sufferance save their own souls, and the Spirit of my Father shall speak in them, so they that shall persecute them and put them to death shall neither do nor say anything of themselves, but the prince of darkness who is already come and hath no power on me, as he may covertly convey his venomous poison into those tyrants and tormentors' hearts, so will he for the short while he shall be thereto licenced, utter and practise his might and power by them. And therefore must the soldiers that go in warfare with me not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the princes and potentates, against the worldly governors of these dark regions, and against the wicked spirits in the air. So shall Nero start up, by whom shall the prince of darkness slay Peter, and besides him another not as yet named Paul, who is still sore bent against me. In like manner shall other emperors and their lieutenants deal with other disciples of my flock by the said prince of darkness.

“But when the gentiles have fretted their fill, and the Jews devised their vain devices, when the kings of the earth have stood together, and the princes assembled against their lord, and against his anointed, labouring to break his bonds, and to cast from them that most sweet yolk, that God of his goodness by his bishops shall lay on their stiff necks, then shall God that dwelleth in heaven laugh them to scorn, and our Lord make them a mow. Who sitteth not as the earthly princes do in a gorgeous chariot a little above the ground, but stieth up above the west, and sitteth above cherubim, whose seat is heaven, and whose footstool is the earth, our Lord is his name. He is king of kings and

lord of lords; a dreadful king which taketh away the spirit of princes. This prince in his wrath shall speak unto them, and in his fury shall he trouble them. His Son, which is his anointed, whom he hath begotten this day, he will make king over Sion his holy hill, the hill I say that shall never be moved. And all his enemies shall he cast down to be as a footstool under his feet. Such as did there endeavour to break his bonds, and to shake his yoke from them, those shall he, spite of their teeth, rule with an iron rod, and as a brittle earthen pot in pieces all to crush them. Against them all, and against the prince of darkness that setteth them on, shall my disciples be comforted and strengthened in our Lord.

“And having the armour of God on their backs, and their loins girt with the truth, and their bodies fenced with justice, and their feet shod to be in a readiness for the gospel of peace, and in all things taking unto them the pavice of faith, and putting upon them the helmet of health, and the sword of the spirit which is the Word of God, they shall receive strength from above, and therewith stand stiff against the devils’ trains, the fair flattering speech, I mean, which he shall utter by the mouths of their persecutors, and all to allure them by flattery from the truth. And in the day of trouble shall they mightily withstand all the open assaults of Satan the devil, and on every side environed with the pavice of faith, by their bitter tears bursting out in their prayers, and their red blood gushing out in the agony of their painful passion, they shall clearly quench and put out all the fiery darts of the cursed spirit by his ministers cast violently against them. And so my blessed martyrs, following me with their cross upon them, after their victory obtained against the devil, the prince of darkness, and all his earthly ministers and soldiers thrown down under their feet, shall with great triumph be carried up aloft, and with wonderful solemnity enter into heaven.

“But ye on the other side that now extend your malice upon me, and the devilish generation that shall follow your malicious example, and those adders’ brood which will with the like malice without repentance extremely persecute my disciples hereafter, shall with perpetual shame be driven down deep into the dark flaming fire of hell. Howbeit, now for the while are ye at liberty to use and practise your power as ye list, whereof yet, because you shall not bear yourselves too bold, remember hardly how shortly it shall end, since this world that you have to work your wicked wills in shall not always endure. “But for mine elects’ sake, that they shall not be tempted above that they may bear, the time is much abridged, and shall last but as it were a very short hour, so that long shall not this hour of yours be, nor the power of darkness long endure neither, as that that only hath but the time present, which present time is evermore the shortest, since lost hath it the time past already, and the time to come hath it not yet attained. Go to, therefore, since so short is your hour, lose no part thereof, but lewdly bestow it as you have begun. And for that you seek to destroy me, what ye mind to do, come off and do it quickly, take me out of hand, but yet let these my disciples depart.”

HOW HIS DISCIPLES FORSOOK HIM

“Then all his disciples departed from him, and left him there alone.” (Mt 26:56; Mk 14:50)

By this place, lo! may a man perceive how hard and painful a thing the virtue of patience is. For many men are there very well willing even stoutly to die, how sure so ever they be thereof, so they may give stroke for stroke and wound for wound, thereby to have some part of their will fulfilled. But Mary, where all comfort of revenging is gone, there to take death so patiently as neither to strike again, nor for a stripe to yield so much as an angry word, this must I needs confess to be so sovereign a point of patience, that as yet were not the apostles themselves so strong as to be able to climb so high. Who having it fresh in their remembrance, how boldly they had promised rather to be killed with Christ than once to shrink from him, did abide at the least wise so far forth by the same, that if he would have licenced them to fight and die manfully, they shewed themselves all very ready to have died for him. Which thing Peter well declared too indeed, by that he began to practise upon Malchus. But after that our saviour would neither suffer them to fight, nor to make any manner resistance, then left they him all alone, and fled away every one.

Albeit I have been ere this in some doubt with myself, when Christ rose from his prayers to see his apostles and found them asleep, whether he went to them all in two sundry places as they were severed, or to those only whom he had taken with him somewhat aloof from the rest and placed nearest unto him, yet when I consider here these words of the evangelist that they all forsook him and ran away, I can now no more doubt, but that he went to them all and found them all asleep. For whereas they should have warily watched, as Christ had so often warned them, and prayed also, for fear of falling into temptation, they through their sleeping gave the devil occasion, while their minds were wavering and careless, to make them more inclined to fight or to flee, than to be content to take all things with patience. Whereupon at length they left him all alone, and got them clearly from him. Whereby were verified both this saying of our saviour Christ: “This night shall ye all have occasion in me to fall,” and this prophecy likewise: “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad.” (Zech 13:7)

“And after Christ went there a young man, his body all bare save only for a linen sheet that was cast about him, which he left behind him, and all naked fled away from them.” (Mk 14:51-52)

What this young man was, it is not perfectly known. Some think it was St. James that was called our Lord's brother and surnamed Justus. Some other again reckoned it was St. John the evangelist, whom our Lord ever above the rest of his apostles singularly favoured, who was as yet but young, as appeared by that he lived so many years after Christ's death. For as testifieth St. Jerome, he died in the threescore and eighth year after Christ's passion. Yet are there of the old writers that say that this young man was none of the apostles, but a servant of that house where Christ kept his maundy that night. Whose mind in that behalf am I most moved to follow. For besides that myself thinketh it

nothing likely that an apostle would have none other apparel to cover his body with but a bare linen sheet, namely so loose about him that he might lightly cast it from him, to be of this opinion leadeth me also both the process of the history, and the very words of him that wrote the same.

And among them that reckon that he was one of the apostles, the most part think it was St. John. But the self-same St. John's own words here following maketh me think that opinion to have small likelihood to be true, where he writeth thus: "And after Jesus went Simon Peter and another disciple. And that disciple was well known to the bishop, and with Jesus he entered into the bishop's hall. And Peter stood at the door without. Then forth went the other disciple that was well known to the bishop, and spake to the maid that kept the door and let Peter in." They that write that it was St. John the evangelist that followed Christ and escaped away when he was like to have been taken, do somewhat stagger hereat, that he should cast off his linen sheet and naked flee away from them. Which point as it seemed could not well stand with those things that forthwith ensued, as that he entered into the bishop's hall and let in Peter (for all men agree that that was the evangelist) and so never left him till he came to the place where he was crucified, and finally all the while he hung on the cross, stood by him with his most dearly beloved mother, one pure virgin with another, and at his recommendation took her from thenceforth as his own.

And without question in all this while and in all these places had he ever more clothes upon him, as he that was one of Christ's disciples and none of that shameless sect of cynics. And therefore though his wisdom served him well to know that he should not stick to have his body seen all naked where need or necessity required it, yet without any cause of his own choice so to go abroad in open sight naked, the maidenly shamefastness that he had in him would not, I ween, suffer him so to do. Now to avoid this inconvenience they say that he went into some corner in the meanwhile and apparelled himself afresh, upon which point though I purpose not presently to keep any dispicions, yet is it not, as meseemeth, anything likely so to be, specially since I do here so well see that he and Peter still followed, and with Jesus entered into the house of Annas, who was father-in-law to the bishop Caiphas.

Again doth this much move me to be of their mind which supposed that this young man was none of the apostles, but some servant of the house where Christ was at his maundy, that the evangelist St. Mark doth in one self place shew, both that the apostles fled away and that yet this young man tarried still behind, where he writeth after this sort. "Then his disciples forsaking him, fled away everyone. But a certain young man followed him still." Lo! here he sayeth that the apostles fled: he saith not that some of them fled, but that they fled all. And that one tarried behind and came after Christ, not of his apostles, for gone already were they every one, but a certain young man, and as it should seem some stranger whose name either he knew not, or else thought it vain to rehearse.

So that this young man, in mine opinion, partly upon the report he had heard of Christ before, and partly for that he presently saw in him as he served him at the table where he sat with his disciples, first by the secret working of the Holy Ghost conceived a fervent affection towards him, and afterwards of his own mere devotion, when Christ after his supper departed and went his way,

he followed him, though somewhat aloof from the apostles perchance, yet still in company with them, and sat down with them and rose with them, and at last stepped in amongst them when these wretched caitiffs suddenly came upon him to take him. After this, whereas all the apostles every one for fear fled away while the soldiers were amazed and took little heed unto them, this young man as he that wist well that what love he bear to Christ was yet to no man known, was yet so much bolder still to abide thereby. But Lord, how hard a matter is it to love and not to disclose it. This young man for all he was amongst the thickest of them that mortally maligned Christ, yet by his pace and other his demeanour so betrayed he himself that they all might well perceive that he, when all the rest had forsaken him, thus followed Christ still, not to hurt him but meaning to do him service. Whereupon they espying at length that all the remnant of Christ's company were fled away, upon this young man in a great fury began to take hold, whom they saw all alone so boldly following him.

Which thing maketh me verily believe that they no less meant than to have served all the apostles in like sort, had they not while they were thus amazed suddenly escaped from them, so that thereby did that take place that Christ had by way of commandment said unto them before: "Let these my disciples depart." Which saying Christ's pleasure was should chiefly serve for his specially chosen apostles, and yet not for them only, but, the more bounteously to extend his liberal goodness, he would it should serve for this young man beside, which being not called into the blessed fellowship of his apostles, of his own accord followed them, and privily wound in among them. By means whereof did Christ both better declare his own unknown power, and the more opened the feebleness of this lewd rabble, which not only of oversight let go his eleven apostles whom they would have been loath should so have escaped them, but also, as many as they were, were not all able to keep one poor silly young man whom they had in their hold already and, as far forth as I can conjecture, with their own company closed in round about. For as fast as they held him, quickly cast he off his shirt and ran away naked from them. And verily I put no doubts at all, but that like as he followed Christ that night and could not be pulled from him, but last of all, when all his apostles were fled and gone, and not then neither until they had with great extremity and force taken hold of him, so as soon as he had opportunity he returned into Christ's flock afresh, and now liveth with Christ in everlasting bliss, where I pray God we may, and I trust in God we shall, once live with him, and then what he was shall we learn of him, and divers other things done that night which be not contained in writing shall we to our inestimable comfort much more perfectly know.

But in the mean season, to make ourselves the surer and easier passage thither, it shall stand us in no little stead, if we by this fleeing of the apostles before they were taken, and this young man's escaping after he was taken, will pick out some wholesome advertisements for our soul's behoof by the way to carry in our journey with us for the better achieving of the same. For the ancient fathers of the Church give us counsel to beware that none of us, upon overmuch confidence of our own strength, should willingly without discretion bring ourselves in danger haply to displease God. And therefore, if any man misfortune to come in such place, where he perceiveth he shall be in hazard to

be forced to offend God, there would I advise him to do as the apostles did here, which before they were taken speedily got them their way. Howbeit by this it is not meant that the apostles are to be commended for their fleeing. Which though Christ of his infinite mercy permitted them for their frailty to do, yet did he nothing praise it at all, but foretold them that the self-same night it should be an occasion for them to fall. But if we feel ourselves anything feeble and faint-hearted, then may we all so far forth follow their example and flee, as we may thereby without sin avoid the peril of further mischief. Otherwise if a man shrink away when God giveth him to abide still by it (either for his own wealth, or for theirs whom he seeth he hath cure and charge of) and boldly to trust in him, this man if he chance not to do it for saving his temporal life, or rather, to say the truth, if he do it to save his life here, this man playeth the stark fool indeed. For what greater folly can there be devised, than to set more by the short wretched time of this life than by the everlasting bliss in heaven?

But if he so do to win himself endless wealth to come, as if he hap to void for fear he might be enforced to offend God, herein doth he both very lewdly and foolishly too, since it is always accounted an heinous crime to foresake a man's master. And he that so forsaketh him that he utterly despaireth of his help, is as evil as he that runneth from his master to his mortal enemy. And what worse thing can there be imagined than upon despair of God's gracious assistance to flee and give over to his foe that place in the field which God hath himself appointed thee to keep? Again, what madness is this, for fear thou mightest mishap to displease God by tarrying, by fleeing without all peradventure deadly to offend him. Mary, when thou mayest flee and God therewith not displeaseth, then without fail better is it for thee to be going betimes than tarrying till thou be caught to fall in danger of an outrageous offence. An easy matter is it and, so be it not against God's will, a very sure also, to haste thee away in time, where on the other side to stand still by it and fight, both hard is it and dangerous.

But yet of truth this young man's example teacheth us what manner of men they be that may longest and most safely abide, and if they fortune to be taken, shall best be able to break loose out of their takers' hands again. For the said young man albeit he abode last of all, and never departed from Christ till he was laid hands on and caught, yet because he had not many clothes upon him, but only a bare plain linen sheet, and that neither surely sewed upon him, nor fast girded about him, but slightly cast on his bare body at adventure so that he might easily shake it off again, this young man I say suddenly threw it from him, and leaving it behind him in their hands that caught him, ran away from them naked, and as a man might say left them the shells to pledge, and took himself the kernel. And what betokeneth this unto us? What else, trow you, but that likewise as a great gorbellied glutton, so corpulent and fat that he can scanty go, or he that is over-pestered with many clothes, is nothing fit or handsome to run apace, so when any dangerous persecution beginneth to draw near, hardly shall that person flee and save himself therefrom, that hath many bags of riches hanging round about him. No, nor very fast will he run neither, which how little soever he hath on his back, is yet so hard and straight girt therein, that uneth can he draw his breath. For better shall he flee that hath many garments and can soon shake them off than he

that, having few, hath them yet so surely fastened about his neck that, go whithersoever he will, needs must he carry them with him. We see it happeth otherwhiles, but not so oft as I would wish we did, howbeit, lauded be God, we see it so sometime, that great, rich and substantial men are content rather to forgo all that ever they have in this world at once, than with God's displeasure sinfully to reserve any one penny thereof. These folk now although they have many clothes upon them, yet because they be not so strait girt unto them, as soon as present peril causeth them for to flee, do easily cast them off and safely escape away. Contrariwise some do we see, and of those far more than I would there were, which having but few clothes and very little substance, have nevertheless so fastened their affection to that base beggarly baggage, that sooner would they be contented to have their skin plucked from their backs than be bereaved of such beggarly trash. Such a one had need to get him away betimes. For if he be once caught by his clothes and thereby once in hand, rather will he die for it than leave his sheet behind him. And to be brief, by the example of this young man are we taught, for fear of tribulation that may suddenly fall upon us, and danger that unawares may grow towards us, in case we should have occasion to flee, ever more to be in a readiness, and neither to be so overcharged with many clothes, nor again so fast buckled in one neither, but that as soon as necessity shall force us, we may cast off our light linen sheet, and naked escape away.

Now who so list to look a little further may see here set forth for him to learn, by this young man's deed, another lesson beside of much more force and efficacy as that the body is like a garment to the soul, which the soul putteth on when it first entereth into the world, and when by death it departeth hence, casteth off again. Wherefore the soul is so much more to be esteemed than the body, as the body is more excellent than the garment that it weareth. And as mad a part were it for a man to lose his soul for the saving of his body, as if some frantic fool would rather have his body spilled than depart with his pilled cloak. For of the body in this wise speaketh Christ: "Is not the body more worth than the garment?" But mark you how highly he prizeth the soul: "Why, what art thou the better," saith he, "if thou shouldst win the whole world and sustain the loss of thy soul? Or what exchange will any man make for his soul? And I say unto you my friends: Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and when that is done are able to do no more. But I will tell you whom you ought to fear. Fear him that after he hath killed the body hath power to cast it into the fire of hell beside. So I say unto you: Fear him." Thus doth the history of this young man put us in remembrance what state our body (which is but, as it were, the garment of our soul) should be in against the coming of such extreme storms, as that it be not pampered up with over-fat feeding, and sensually addicted to foul fleshly lusts, but by means of abstinence consuming all loathsome grossness be made as light as a fine linen sheet. And also that we should not so fasten our affection thereunto, but that we could in God's cause be right glad to forgo it. This lesson learn we, lo! of this young man here, who being in wretched caitiffs' hands, rather than he would be compelled anything to do or say that should sound to Christ's dishonour, left his sheet behind him and fled away naked from them.

A like part unto this young man here played there a great while ago another young man before, the holy and innocent patriarch Joseph I mean, a notable

precedent to all that should come after, that as ware should they be in eschewing the danger of incestuous adultery, as they would to avoid the peril of their life. Upon this young Joseph, for that he was of personage comely and amiable to behold, whom Putiphar of his bond-slave had made high steward of his house, was Putiphar's wife by casting her eye upon him so sore enamoured, and incensed with her outrageous sensual lust waxed at length so frantic that, forcing for no shame both in words and countenance, undesired offered she herself unto him, and as unwilling as she found him, never ceased by sundry means to allure him. Yea, and when he plainly refused her offer, laid she hands on him, and caught him fast by his cloak, and so would this woman (Oh! What dishonesty was this!) by force have ravished this man. Who being better content to die than to commit so horrible an act, and knowing therewith how jeopardous it would be for him to stand still by it and abide the brunt, where present matter of carnal temptation was ministered unto him, and that the surest remedy for a man to master his sensuality was for to flee away, left his cloak in that beastly woman's hands and making haste away, soon got him out of doors.

Howbeit, as I was about to tell ye, it is not our cloak, gown, coat, or any other like apparel of our body which we must be content only to cast from us, rather than we would do any deadly sin, but our own body too, which is but the garment or vesture of our soul, in that respect ought we to forsake. For if we labour, with God's displeasure, sinfully to save it, then do we both lose it and our soul also. But if for God's sake we can find in our hearts patiently to bear the loss thereof, and likewise as an adder so long rubbeth his old withered skin (which, I trow, is called in Latin senecta) among thorns and briars till at last he cast it quite away, and so leaving it in the hedge cometh forth fresh and young again, so if we, according to Christ's counsel, become wise as serpents, and rubbing off this old rivelled body of ours as the adder doth his skin, among the thorns of tribulation for the love of God, leave it behind us in the world, we shall therewith become fresh and young again, and so be shortly carried up into heaven, where we shall never wax old after.

OF THE TAKING OF CHRIST

“Then came they to Jesus and laid hands upon him, and Pilate's soldiers and their captain and the Jews' servants took hold of Jesus. And when they had him fast they bound him and brought him first unto Annas who was father-in-law to Caiphas. And Caiphas was he which had given counsel to the Jews that it was expedient one man should die for the people. And all the priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, and the ancients assembled together.” (Mt 26:57; Mk 14:53)

What time they first laid hands upon Christ, therein be the writers of divers opinions. For by occasion of the evangelists' words agreeing all well enough upon the matter, but differing only in the manner of the rehearsal thereof (for one of them beginneth to tell first that that was later done, and another afterward bringeth in that that the other made no mention of at all), the interpreters of the same, not denying that to be true that any of the evangelists

writeth, every one of them hath a sundry conjecture by himself, finding yet no fault with any that holdeth the contrary. For St. Matthew and St. Mark rehearse the process of his taking in such order that a man would think that, as soon as Judas had kissed Jesus, they laid hands upon him straight. Which conjecture both divers other right famous doctors of the Church, and also the excellent learned clerk Master John Gerson in his work entitled *Monatessaron* (which work of his, so far forth as concerneth the order of Christ's passion, I have at this present specially taken upon me to follow) not only liketh and alloweth, but himself also in the framing together of the whole history of the passion plainly followeth the same.

Nevertheless in this one thing varying from his opinion, I have deemed it better to be of their mind, which are right notable writers too, that upon very probable reasons, gathered of the words of St. Luke and St. John the evangelists, do suppose that after Judas had kissed our Lord and was returned back to the soldiers and the Jews again, and after they were all, with the only words of Christ, stricken down flat to the ground, and after the chief priest's servant ('s) ear was cut off, and made whole by Christ afresh, and after he had rebuked Peter for his fighting, and stayed the rest of the apostles for (?from) making any resistance, and after he had once more spoken to the officer(s) of the Jews that were then present with him, and shewed them that they might now at their pleasure take him, which erst they could never have done, and after all the apostles were fled away, and finally after the young man whom they were not able to keep (as sure hold as they had of him) was escaped stoutly, naked as he was, from them, that then, after all this, did they first lay hands upon Jesus.

Sir Thomas More wrote no more of this work, for when he had written this far, he was in prison kept so strait, that all his books and pen and ink and paper was taken from him, and soon after was he put to death.