

Many other shapes there are in which sin stays by us if we are not mindful to root it out thoroughly, such as want of truthfulness, thoughtlessness about others, dislike of devotion, &c.; and in this holy season we must strive to set all means at work for finding where it is and clearing away all that remains of it. Such is fasting itself, if rightly used, and not managed with as little self-denial as we can, just to keep a rule, but relieved only by what is necessary for business or health.

It is not serving God without an especial call, to do harm to our bodies, which are His own work; but the body will best serve its highest purposes, waiting on the soul in worship or meditation, when it is somewhat subdued; and even for works of mercy that require strength it is not so fit when proud and over-full. And what stays by us from sins of the body will be best found out by putting the body to some trial. So much ought to be done as to be a really painful exercise to the natural man, that a real trial may be made and a real change wrought.

Self-denial, then, will serve in the first place for chastisement, laid by our own will upon our known past sins, that, judging ourselves, we may not be judged of the Lord. This is to be not as though we could make up for them, but because we hate them, and wish to take from ourselves the ungodly pleasure we thought to gain by them.