

sent themselves to my mind, I have to consider in the presence of God, which of them will be most useful in guiding me to my end—which is always the salvation of my soul. If my only objects were to raise myself in the world, to lead a pleasant and agreeable life in the world, I might be certain of succeeding in such or such a state. But, I again repeat, this is not the end I have in view; and therefore, I should pay no attention to all this. My object is to attain everlasting life. Now, I know, or I sincerely believe I know, that in no other state can I more surely obtain it than in this particular one. I therefore conclude, that it is upon this my choice should fall.

X. After having deliberated with yourself in this manner, if you do not seem to be perfectly determined, there are two rules from the exercises of St. Ignatius, which you should observe:—

1. What advice would I give to another if he were in my place, and asked my opinion? to another who would have the same inclinations or the same defects as I? What answer should I make him, or what kind of life should I recommend him to adopt? For, when others are concerned, we are much more disinterested in general, and on that account much more likely to choose the better part. Now, why should I not have the same zeal and charity for myself, as I would have for another? If one of my friends was deliberating, and was concerned only to secure his salvation, I know what I should say to

him. And why should I not say the same to myself? O my God! deliver me from all the illusions of self-love, which blind me, and which prevent me from thinking as safely on what concerns myself, as on the affairs of my neighbour. 2. Amongst these different states of life, which would I wish to have chosen at the hour of death? For, it is then I shall form a solid estimate of things, and neither the passions nor prejudices of the world shall any longer obscure my reason. What I should therefore wish to have done at this last moment, is what I should do to-day; and this is undoubtedly the most certain and infallible rule which I can follow. If I act otherwise, I must expect that I shall one day suffer extreme regret. And would it not be the last degree of folly, to do any thing of which I shall have hereafter to repent? O my God! I thank you, for this light which you have given me. Grant, O Lord, that I may profit by it as a most excellent means of forming a Christian decision. Yes, my God, it is by this I wish to decide my lot in your presence. I desire to live in that state in which I should die with the greatest peace.—Woe be to me, if I embrace any condition which will be a source of fear and regret at the hour of my death!

XI. Without pretending to give you my formal opinion on the state of life which would suit you best, I conclude, by repeating to you, with regard to the religious state, what St. Paul said to the primitive Christians concerning celibacy.