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THE
IMITATION OF CHRIST





OF THE

Imitation of Christ.







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THOMAS A KEMPIS CANONICVS REGVLARIS
 Obijt A°. mccccclxxi. xxv. Iulij. Ætat. xcii.

OF THE
IMITATION OF CHRIST.

Four Books.

By THOMAS A'KEMPIS.

WITH

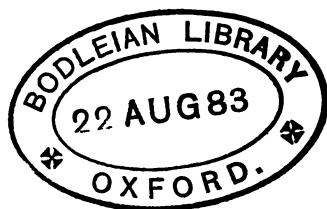
*AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY ON THE AUTHORSHIP
OF THE WORK,*

AND AN ENGRAVED PORTRAIT FROM CONTEMPORARY SOURCES



LONDON: SUTTABY & Co., AMEN CORNER.

MDCCCLXXXIII.





INTRODUCTION.



HE well-known treatise *De Imitatione Christi*, containing four books, the first of which begins "*Qui sequitur me*," was composed by Thomas Hamercken, surnamed à Kempis. Many of the early editions bear the name of John Gerson, Chancellor of Paris ; but Peter Scot, a Canon of Strasburg, who wrote an encomium of John Gerson, which is given in the Strasburg edition of 1488 of the works of Gerson, and Martin Simus of Strasburg, in the preface to his edition of all the works of Gerson, printed in 1494, both say that several works are wrongly attributed to him, one of which was the treatise *De Contemptu Mundi*, that is, the "Imitation of Christ," the author of which was Thomas, a Canon Regular.¹ Since they were contemporaries of Thomas à Kempis, their testimony is conclusive.

Moreover, in 1423, that is six years before the death of the Chancellor, his brother, who also bore the name of John Gerson, and was a Celestine Religious, compiled, at the request of Brother Anselm, another Celestine, a complete list of all the works of the Chancellor, but the "Imitation" does not appear in it.²

¹ See Àmort. *Deductio Critica*, Aug. Vind., 1761, p. 108.

² Malou. *Récherches sur le véritable auteur du livre de l'Imit.* de J. C. Tournai, 1858, p. 365.

The name of John Gerson is given in many forms : De Gersonno ;¹ Garson ;² de Gersona ;³ Gartson ;⁴ Iarson ;⁵ de Gersono ;⁶ Gersen, Canc. Par. ;⁷ Gersen, Canc. Par. ;⁸ Gersem, Canc. Par.⁹ The earliest dated MS. with the name of John Gerson is the Cod. Bretonianus or Sangermanensis, so called because it was given by Dr Le Breton in 1652 to the monastery of St Germain-des-Prés.

The rights of Thomas à Kempis to the authorship of the "Imitation" were never contested until 1616. An undated MS.,¹⁰ but which is not earlier than the middle of the fifteenth century, had been found. It bears the name of Abbas Johannes Gesen thrice, Abbas Johannes Gessen once, and Abbas Johannes Gersen once, at the end of the fourth book.

This unknown individual, about whose name even there is no certainty, the Benedictines made an Abbot of their illustrious order,¹¹ and subsequently created him Abbot of St Stephen's Monastery at Vercelli,¹² but without any proofs. This was the origin of the great controversy about the authorship of the "Imitation," a subject on which nearly three hundred books, pamphlets, and articles have been written. The Augustinian Canons

¹ Opp. Colonie, 1483, t. i.

² Ib., t. iii.

³ Opp. Esslingen, s.a., Hain, 7641.

⁴ Opp. Delft, 1482. Hain, 7657.

⁵ Opp. Utrecht, 1478-1480.

⁶ Opp. Col., 1483, t. ii.

⁷ Cod. Florentinus I., dated 1464.

⁸ Cod. Florentinus II., dated 1466.

⁹ Cod. Veronensis, dated 1467.

¹⁰ Known as the Arona Codex.

¹¹ De Imit. Christi, ed. C. Caietani, O. S. B. Romæ, 1616.

¹² De Imit. Christi, ed F. Walgrave, O. S. B. Parisiis, 1638.

Regular, and many other illustrious men, defended the just rights of Thomas à Kempis; the Benedictines pertinaciously advocated the cause of the Abbot John Gesen-Gessen-Gersen, but with this remarkable result, that up to the present time, in despite of every research, they have signally failed to obtain or to produce the very slightest evidence that a Benedictine Abbot of that name *ever existed!* They pretend that he was Abbot of St Stephen's at Vercelli from A.D. 1220 to 1240; but no trace of him can be found at Vercelli, and the Archives of St Stephen's Abbey are equally silent about him; whilst the latest historian of Vercelli, Vittorio Mandelli, gives a chronological list of those Abbots whose existence can be proved by documents, but the name of John Gesen-Gessen-Gersen is not to be found.¹ Moreover, no contemporary writer speaks of him. He is a myth. It is a mockery to talk of his claims to the authorship of the "Imitation," whilst his very existence even cannot be proved.

But there can be no doubt, as it has ever been maintained from the beginning of the Contestation in 1616, that the *Abbas Johannes Gersen* of the Arona MS. was intended for John Gerson,² the Chancellor of Paris, whose name, as has been just shown, was sometimes given as John Gersen, Chancellor of Paris. Moreover, in many of the early printed editions,³ the name John Gerson appears alone without any title; whilst in others he is described as *Magister J. Gerson* only;⁴ and his

¹ Commune di Vercelli nel Medio Evo. Vercelli, 1858, t. iii. p. 147.

² Cf. Rosweyde *Vindiciæ Kempenses*. Antv. Ex Off. Plant, 1617, p. 363.

³ e.g. Ulm. Zainer, 1487 (Hain, 9091); Venice, 1488; Milan, 1488; Venice, 1490, &c.

⁴ e.g. Strasburg, 1478; Lyons, 1489; Cologne, 1501 and 1507; &c.

name is given in both of these forms at the head of his well-known treatise *De Meditatione Cordis*, as to the authorship of which there is no doubt.¹ All this proves that although the name of John Gerson or Gersen, Chancellor of Paris, was written in many ways, there was no doubt whatever as to his individuality.

This title of *Abbas* is common to all those religious orders which have Abbots, and is not confined to the Benedictines alone. Moreover, in French, *abbé* has the double signification of Abbot, and *abbé*, a secular priest;² and in Italian, *Abate* has equally a two-fold meaning—Abbot, and a secular priest.³ This is confirmed by Du Cange, who gives *Abbas* with both these significations.⁴ In the absence, therefore, of all proof to the contrary, and with the evidence of these great authorities, the *Abbas Johannes Gersen* of the Arona

¹ Trithemius, *De Scriptoribus Ecclesiasticis*. Basileæ, 1494, f. 107.

² See *Dict. de l'Académie Française*; and also *Littre*.

³ See *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*. 5 ed. Venice, 1741.

⁴ *Ex veteribus instrumentis constat parochiales omnes Ecclesias et civitatis et diocesis habuisse ministrum unum majorem, alterum medium, tertium infimum. Minister major dicebatur ABBAS, custos, et tandem dictus est Rector. Ministri medii dicebantur Presbyteri, et tandem Capellani. Minister infimus dicebatur sacrista qui Abbati et Presbyteris inserviebat, et quæ in ecclesia minora sunt officia peragebat. Presbyteri seu Capellani habebant curam animarum in actu, i.e. habebant actuale exercitium curæ cum missas celebrarent, et Sacramenta plebi administrarent. Abbas vero, seu Rector, habebat curam in habitu, eique licebat per seipsum ministrare sacramenta: sed præsertim illius erat muneris, ut super universam parochiam invigilaret, videretque si Presbyter officio suo recte fungeretur. Hæc ferè Michael Monachus in Sanctuario Capuano qui hujusce rei exempla aliquot profert, quibus adjungenda ea quæ habet Ughellus, tom vii. Italiæ Sacræ, p. 506, et seq. et 601.*

MS. can be no other than John Gersen, Chancellor of Paris, who was appointed *curé* or parish priest of St John-en-Grève in A.D. 1405. And this is the probable solution of the fable of the Abbot John Gesen-Gessen-Gersen of St Stephen's Vercelli.

Another undated MS. of the "Imitation," which came from Vienna, is greatly valued by the Gersenists. It begins: *Incipit tractatus Johannis de imitatione christi*; above the line and between *Johannis* and *de* the scribe has added *de Canabaco*.¹

The Gersenists immediately discovered that Canabacum was Cavaglià, a hamlet near Vercelli; and consequently that John de Canabaco was Abbot John Gersen, and that he was born at Cavaglià, that is, *Caballiacum*, OR *Canabacum*.² Mark well the conjunction *or*. The unsuspecting reader would pass it over, without giving a thought as to its significance, naturally supposing from it that Cavaglià had two names in Latin, Caballiacum, or Canabacum; whereas the utmost research has failed to discover one single charter—although many hundreds have been examined—or a single document of any kind which describes Cavaglià as Canabacum. No such place as Canabacum can be found; it is as mythical as the Benedictine Abbot of St Stephen's, Vercelli, John Gersen.

An importance is given to another MS.—called the

¹ Amort. *Moralis Certitudo*, Aug. Vind. 1764, p. 31. This is known as the *Codex Allatianus* or *Biscianus*, because it belonged to Cardinal Biscia, at whose death it became the property of his secretary, Leo Allacci. It contains thirty-three ascetical treatises, one of which ends *Explicit Opus Johannis de Tambaoc*, and also a Bull of the year 1448 in the same handwriting as the "Imitation."

² De Grégory, *Hist. du livre de l'Imit. de J. C.*, Paris, 1843, v. 11. p. 14; also Mella, *Della Controversia Gerseniana*, Prato, 1875, p. 17.

Codex de Advocatis—which it does not deserve, nevertheless it is often quoted, as valuable evidence against Thomas à Kempis.¹ The text is faulty; it bears neither name nor date, but it is not earlier than the middle of the fifteenth century. It contains also John Gerson's well-known treatise, *De Meditatione Cordis*, which is given at the end of many of the early editions of the "Imitation." This MS. was purchased in 1830 by the Chevalier de Grégory, an enthusiastic Gersenist, who edited two editions of it in 1833,² to one of which he prefixed his own portrait. He had overlooked the words of the "Imitation," *Ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari*.

This is in what its importance is supposed to consist. On the inside of the oaken cover are written the names of some members of the De Avogadro family, of which the Latinized form is stated to be *De Advocatis*, with dates A.D. 1550 and 1568. Hence why this MS. is called the "*Codex de Advocatis*."

The Chev. de Grégory at once put himself into communication with the De Avogadro family; but all research failed to identify the individuals named on the cover of the MS., or to trace the De Avogadro pedigree higher than the year 1400.³

But later a most wonderful discovery was made in the family archives of the De Avogadri. Some loose sheets of what purported to be mutilated fragments of a family

¹ See preface to the Eng. vers. by the Rev. W. Benham, B.D., who quotes from "Essays on University Education, by a Monk (O. S. B.) of St Augustine's, Ramsgate." Lond., 1873.

² Paris, Didot frères: the first ed. was limited to one hundred copies. This is the only known instance where an editor or translator has presumed to prefix his own portrait to an edition of the "Imitation."

³ De Grégory, *ubi sup.*, v. II, pp. 486-488.

diary of one "Joseph De Advocatis" were found. The entries extended from A.D. 1345 to 1350! Under the year 1349 was the following entry:—

"15^{ta} Die Dominica mensis februarji post divisionem factam cum fratre meo Vincentio qui Ceredonji abitat, in signum fraterni amoris quod hoc temporalibus tantum impulsus negotis feci, dono ili preciosum Codicem de Imitatione Xpti quod ab agnatibus meis longa manu teneo nam nonnulli antenates mei hujus jam recordarunt."¹

This discovery was communicated to M. de Grégory; but all efforts on his part to obtain a sight of the original document were unsuccessful.² He could only procure copies, accompanied by the deposition of a notary, that they were *facsimiles* of what was submitted to him for his verification.³

M. De Grégory, who seems to have forgotten that the De Avogadro family could not be traced further back than the year 1400,⁴ at once concluded (1) that his MS. of the "Imitation" was the identical Codex of the "Imitation" mentioned on the loose sheet of the *Diarium* of Joseph de Advocatis, which had so providentially been preserved; (2) that the *Diarium* proved the "Imitation" to have been written before Thomas à Kempis was born; and (3) that therefore Abbot John Gersen, O. S. B., was the author; but for this conclusion, no proofs, as usual, are forthcoming. So that the much vaunted Codex de Advocatis does not help the cause of the mythical Benedictine Abbot of St Stephen's, Vercelli.

¹ De Grégory, *ubi sup.*, v. II, p. 238. The spelling is given verbatim.

² *Ib.*, p. 243.

³ These are the words of the notary:—*Per copia conforme desunta dall' originale presentatomi.* Ignazio Dionisio notajo. *Ib.*, p. 239.

⁴ See above.

It is only necessary to add that the *Diarium de Advocatis*, as it is called, is a clumsy forgery; the facsimile of the handwriting bears its own condemnation, as well as the wording of the *Diarium*, other extracts from which are given by M. de Grégory; and, what is more, the name of the probable forger of the spurious *Diarium* has been given.¹ It is therefore to be hoped that the last has been heard of the worthless *Codex de Advocatis*, and the forged *Diarium de Advocatis*.

Thomas Hamercken, surnamed à Kempis, was born at Kempen in the year 1379; went to Deventer to make his studies, 1395; was received into the Monastery of St Agnes, near Zwoll, 1400; made his profession, 1406; ordained priest, 1414, in which year he completed the first book of the "Imitation"; brought out the first three books, 1424; elected sub-prior of St Agnes, 1425; transcribed the four books of the "Imitation" at the head of his works, 1441; and died at the age of 92, in 1471.

The earliest MS. of the "Imitation," which has a date and the name of the author, is the one which came from Kirckheim, and is now in the Royal Library at Brussels.² At the foot of the first page it bears these words: *Notandum quod iste tractatus editus est a probo et egregio Magistro thoma de monte Scte Agnetis, et canonico regulari in traiecto Thomas de Kempis cinctus*, DESCRIPTUS EX MANU AUTORIS IN TRAIECTO ANNO 1425 IN SOCIATU PROVINCIALATUS.³

These important words furnish indisputable evidence that an autograph copy of the "Imitation" was preserved

¹ Revue des Questions Historiques, n. 44, October 1877, p. 49.

² No. 15137.

³ Cf. Dissertation sur l'auteur du Livre intitulé De l'Imit. de J. C. (by F. Joseph de Ghesquiére, S.J.) A Verceil, et se trouve à Paris, 1795, pp. 27, 29.

in the Mother House of the Province ; and so highly was it valued that those who wished to copy it had to go to that house for the purpose. Thus, in his lifetime, and forty-six years before his death, Thomas à Kempis was acknowledged to be the author of the "Imitation."

But the most precious of all the MSS. of the "Imitation" is the celebrated autograph copy transcribed by Thomas à Kempis at the head of his works in 1441. This is the colophon : *Finitus et completus anno domini MCCCCXLI per manus fratris thome Kempis in monte sancte agnetis prope zwollis.*

A facsimile of this MS. was published in 1879.¹

In the "Contestation," this MS. takes a prominent part. The Gersenists maintain that the words *finitus et completus per manus*, &c., are no proofs of authorship ; nevertheless, they fully establish the fact that Thomas à Kempis was, at least, the transcriber of this MS., which no one has ever sought to deny.² But when interpreted by the evidence afforded by the Kirckheim MS., the contemporary witnesses, and other proofs, they incontestably establish that Thomas à Kempis was not only the transcriber, but the author as well. This is concisely put by Mgr. Malou :—

"It is wholly impossible that an author, as humble and as pious as Thomas à Kempis, would have transcribed at the head of his works four very important treatises, which were not his. There are many copies of the works of this author transcribed by his own hand ; there is not one of them in which his treatises are mixed up in the same volume with the works of other authors. In transcribing the Four Books of the "Imita-

¹ Elliot Stock, of Paternoster Row.

² See Amort. Mor. Cert., p. 35.

tion" at the head of his works, Thomas à Kempis avows himself to be the author."¹

In contrast with this evidence it should be remembered that the first dated MS., which bears the name of John Gerson (Magister Johannes Gerson), is the Codex Sangermanensis or Bretonianus of the year 1460: whilst the Florentine MSS. of 1464 and 1466 give his name Johannes Gersen Cancellarius Parisiensis; but the mythical Benedictine Abbot of St Stephen's, Vercelli, is nowhere. And this evidence incontestably proves that the Chancellor's name was written both Gerson and Gersen.

But the additional proofs of the rights of Thomas à Kempis to the authorship are as strong as they are incontestable.

Thomas à Kempis was formed in the celebrated school of Gerard Groot, whose Latinized name is Gerardus Magnus; and who, after a brilliant career, devoted himself to a mission of reform, and began to preach "Modern Devotion"—*Devotio Moderna*. He soon collected disciples, of whom the leading ones were John Vos van Heusden, subsequently prior of Windesem, and Florent Radewyn, the beloved master of Thomas à Kempis.² They formed themselves into a community of Brothers of Common Life,—an institute which spread rapidly throughout the Low Countries and elsewhere. In accordance with his wish, his first disciples embraced the rule of Canons Regular of St Augustine, and Florent Radewyn founded the Monastery of Windesem; whilst Deventer continued to be the common Noviciate. Soon

¹ *Récherches*: ubi sup. p. 105.

² He affectionately describes his master: *Optimus inter omnes devotos devotissimus Florentius*. In vita Florentii, c. 14. Opp. Antv., 1574, f. 323 r.

the House of Mount St Agnes at Zwoll aggregated itself to that of Windesem, from which it was distant about three miles.

Now one of the features of this institute was the transcribing of MSS. Moreover, in order that the intellect of his disciples should not be made dull by the prolonged mechanical labour of transcribing, Gerard Groot required of each of them to make extracts of the most beautiful maxims of the saints and fathers, and to add thereto his own reflections, in certain books called *Rapiaria*. In this ordinance lies the first step to the compilation and composition of the "Imitation."

It is impossible to read the works written under the teachings of Gerard Groot, John Vos van Heusden, and Florent Radewyn, without coming to the conclusion that the author of the "Imitation" was educated in that school. Mgr. Malou, the late Bishop of Bruges, has published some extracts from a letter of John van Heusden and the "Imitation" in parallel columns,² and the similarity of thought and word is far too remarkable to be the result of accident.

Moreover, "the terms '*Devotus*,' '*Devotio moderna*,' were distinctive of the disciples and institutions of Gerard Groot; and the former, whether as clerks or laymen they were undergoing their probation in the noviciate of Florent Radewyn's at Deventer, or whether they had joined the Society of the Brothers of Common Life, or had been admitted into a monastery of Canons Regular, or of Carthusians, all equally bore the name of *Devoti*. The religious of the Congregation of Windesem frequently used *devotus* in their writings, in a distinct appellative sense; and Thomas à Kempis, a devout of the

¹ Recherches, &c., *ubi sup*, p. 119.

Devout, uses the words *Devotio*, *Devoti*, *Devotorum*, in this way no less than four hundred and forty times in his undisputed works.¹ The author of the "Imitation" employs the words *Devotio* and *Devoti* in precisely the same significant way that they were used by the disciples of Gerard Groot and Florent Radewyn."²

It is also worthy of notice that the celebrated *Princeps* Edition of the "Imitation," printed at Augsburg by Ginther Zainer, commences, "*Incipit libellus consolatorius AD INSTRUCTIONEM DEVOTORUM, cujus primum capitulum est de imitatione xpi,*" &c.

Secondly, It is impossible that the "Imitation" could have been written by any one but a Fleming. The author has turned many Flemish idioms into Latin; and it is most important to notice that Flemish is the only language into which the "Imitation" can be translated to the very letter. The most celebrated and crucial test is the expression *scire exterius*. *Si scires totam Bibliam EXTERIUS*. If thou didst know the whole Bible by heart (bk. i. c. 1). In Flemish "to know a thing by heart" is "to know it *outside*"—*van buyten*—which appears in all the Flemish editions.³ The Gersenist editions of the "Imitation" leave out the *exterius*. It will suffice to cite two out of several sentences which defy every attempt to translate them literally into any language save the Flemish, which gives them to the letter:—

"*Ecce in cruce totum constat et in moriendo totum jacet*" (bk. ii. c. 12 § 3).

In Flemish:—

¹ Amort, *Ded. Crit.*, p. 197.

² "Dublin Review," 3rd Ser., N. vi., p. 396.

³ The earliest German editions have *auswendig*. Cf. 2nd edition, Hain, 9115, which is a reprint of the first edition, 1486, also Augsburg, 1490 and 1539; Strasburg, 1544; and Dillingen, 1554.

ALLES BESTAET dan in het kruis, en in het sterven
LIGT ALLES.

"*Quid est homo inde melior quia reputatur ab homine major?* (bk. iii. c. 50 § 8).

In Flemish :—

WAT IS een mensch ER om, ALS hy van een ander mensch voor groot gehouden is ?

Again, "not to care about a thing," is expressed in Flemish by "not falling upon it." Compare the "Imitation": *Verus amator Christi et studiosus sectator virtutum* NON CADIT SUPER, *consolationes*" (bk. ii. c. 9).¹

Thirdly, The Gersenists maintain that the use of such words in the "Imitation" as *regratiari, pensare, querulosus, passionatus, basari, grossus, contrariare, sentimenta*, and others, prove the author of the "Imitation" to have been an Italian. They seem to have overlooked the fact that these words are also frequently used by Thomas à Kempis in his undisputed works.² But in all the early Italian translations *exterioris* is left out.³ This Flandricism was incomprehensible to the Italians, whose equivalent is *sapere a mente*.⁴

After 1584, nearly all the Italian translations bear the name of Thomas à Kempis, and in a few of them the *scire exterioris* is construed by *sapere superficialmente*, but in the majority by *saper a mente*, and in one or two by *aver a mente*.

Passing over many other points, it only remains to take the evidence of the contemporary witnesses who have deposed that Thomas à Kempis was the author of

¹ Malou, *Récherches*, &c., p. 133.

² Amort, *Plena ac Succincta Informatio*, &c., Aug. Vind., 1725, pp. 94, *Ded. Crit.*, *ubi sup.*, pp. 61 *et seq.*

³ Cf. editions printed at Venice, 1488; *ib.*, 1489; Florence, 1493; *ib.*, 1508; Venice, 1516; *ib.*, 1524; and the later ones.

⁴ *Vocab. della Crusca*, *ubi sup.*

the "Imitation." There are seventeen principal ones ; but it is sufficient to give the words of two or three of them. To appreciate the full importance of what they say, it should be borne in mind that they all deposed as to the fact more than a century before the controversy about the authorship was commenced, and they record it as a fact universally then known.

John Busch, born in 1400, became in 1420 a Canon Regular of St Augustine at Windesem, a league distant from Mount St Agnes. He died in 1479, eight years after Thomas à Kempis. In 1464 he completed the Chronicle of his order, in which he relates that a few days before the death of John Van Heusden, prior of Windesem—

"Two notable brothers of the monastery of Mount St Agnes, near Zwoll, of his order, came to Windesem to consult his prior, John Van Heusden, on certain matters. One of them was brother Thomas à Kempis, a man of holy life, who had composed many books of piety—namely, *Qui Sequitur me, De Imitatione Christi*, and others."¹

Now in the beginning of his Chronicle, Busch says:—
"Ego in virtutibus omnium novissimus, licet corde tepido, aggrediar conscribere ea, *quæ coram positus oculis ipse conspexi, aut a meis majoribus frequentius audiivi, aut a generali nostro Capitulo determinata cognovi.*"²

Here, then, is an eye-witness who speaks of one of the notable brothers of his order, and who mentions a fact which is the cause of his celebrity. He embodies it in his Chronicle as a subject on which there is no doubt, since it is known everywhere. He makes this statement in the presence of Thomas à Kempis, then living ; of the friends of Thomas à Kempis, who would have denied it

¹ Chronic. Windes., l. I., c. xxi., p. 345, ed. 1621.

² *Ubi sup, in initio.*

if it were not true ; and of the superiors of his order, who would not have allowed a falsehood to pass unchallenged.

To those capable of appreciating evidence, these words of Busch are decisive.

Another witness is Brother Herman Ryd, who was born in 1408, and entered the monastery of Wittenbroeck in 1427 at the age of nineteen. In 1447 he was sent to the monastery *Novi Operis*, near Hal, where he was conspicuous for his piety and learning.¹ He wrote a history of the various houses of the Canons Regular of the Windesem Congregation, in which he says :—

“The brother who compiled the book of the ‘Imitation’ is called or named Thomas ; he is sub-prior in the above-mentioned monastery of Mount St Agnes, near Zwoll, of the diocese of Utrecht, in the province of Cologne. This monastery is only a league distant from Windesem, which is the principal monastery, and in which the Canons Regular of the province of Cologne, of Mayence, and of Trèves hold their Chapter General every year. This writer was still living in the year 1454; and I, brother Herman, of the monastery *Novi Operis*, near Hal, in the diocese of Magdeburg, being sent that year to the said Chapter General, I spoke to the same.”²

Here is a witness who asserts that he conversed with Thomas à Kempis, the author of the “Imitation of Christ,” in 1454—that is, *seventeen years before the death* of Thomas. This evidence is too positive and precise to be doubted.

The Gersenists have spared no effort to invalidate the evidence of the Chronicle of John Busch and the other contemporary witnesses, but all in vain. Dom Constan-

¹ Amort, *Mor. Cert.*, p. 49.

² Amort, *Ded. Crit.*, p. 98.

tine Caietani, O.S.B., who started the Controversy in A.D. 1616, and Dom Francis Walgrave, O.S.B., content themselves with saying that the passage in question of the Chronicle is spurious or interpolated; that Busch must have been mistaken, and that the other contemporary witnesses have been misled by him.¹ The "Chronicle of Windesem," edited by Rosweyde, was published by Peter and John Bellere at Antwerp in A.D. 1621.

But, unfortunately for them, the Gersenists have been unable to produce one single MS. copy of the "Chronicle of Windesem," by Busch, which does not contain the all-important passage. Several exist; one is in the University Library at Utrecht; another in the Royal Library at the Hague; a third in the Monastery of St Martin at Louvain;² another was in the Monastery of the Canons Regular at Rebdorff;³ the writer has examined the MS. now in the Library of the Bollandists at Brussels, and in these there is not the slightest trace of erasure, interpolation, or of tampering with the text.

Passing over the other contemporary witnesses for Thomas à Kempis, it may be as well to add that the celebrated Benedictine Abbot of Spanheim, John of Tritenheim, commonly called Trithemius, gives Thomas à Kempis as the author of the "Imitation."⁴ He spent many years in collecting materials for his work *De Scriptoribus Ecclesiasticis*, in which he says: "*Eos vero quorum certitudinem habere potui diligenter consignavi*;

¹ Responsio apologetica pro Jo. Gersen. Roma: ex typog. off. S. Cong. de Prop. Fide, 1644, pp. 118, 120.

² For the notarial deposition as to the integrity of this MS., see Amort. *Ded. Crit.*, pp. 125, 126.

³ Equally examined and tested by a notary. Amort. *Mor. Cert.*, pp. 149, 150.

⁴ *Ubi sup.*, f. 100.

nec quemquam scienter omisi cujus opuscula, ingenium et tempora scire potuissem."¹ And also in his "Annals of Hirzau," he gives Thomas à Kempis as the author of the "Imitation."² All this proves that the mythical Abbot John Gersen was unknown in the time of Trithemius ; and this evidence, therefore, in favour of Thomas à Kempis receives additional value as coming from the pen of a Benedictine Abbot of wide-spread literary fame.

Summing up, therefore, the case stands thus :—

1. There are no claims for John Gerson, Chancellor of Paris.

2. The *existence* of the mythical Benedictine Abbot John Gesen-Gessen-Gersen yet remains to be proved.

3. The partisans, either of John Gerson, the Chancellor of Paris, or of the mythical Benedictine Abbot John Gesen-Gessen-Gersen are utterly unable to silence one single contemporary witness of the many who have deposed for Thomas à Kempis.

4. The question relative to the real author of the "Imitation" is therefore definitely decided in favour of Thomas à Kempis.

The best Latin editions are those edited by F. Henry De Sommal, or Sommalius, of the Society of Jesus, Antwerp, Plantin Press, 1599, and by F. Heribert Rosweyde of the same Society, Antwerp, Plantin Press, 1617. Both these editions have been frequently reprinted, but they do not give the exact text of the autograph MS. of 1441. It has been reserved for Dr Charles Hirsche to publish the text of 1441 *verbatim*. This edition, which was printed in 1874,³ is of the utmost value and

¹ Berlin. C. Habel.

² *Ibid.*, f. 140.

³ *Annales Hirschaugenses*. Typis Monast. S. Galli, 1690, t. ii. p. 334, ad ann., 1412.

importance, and it is to be regretted that it is not more widely known.

It has long been an acknowledged fact that no author has ever surpassed Thomas à Kempis in the art of writing rhymed prose. At the end of his life of Florent Radewyn, he has given some of the notable sayings of his beloved master, amongst which this one occurs:—

“The books of the Sacred Scripture are to be preserved as the most true treasure of the church. In writing we must ourselves seek not only to write well, but also the advantage of the common good, so that the books may be correct and *well punctuated*.”¹

Now, Dr Hirsche in his careful study of the precious MS. of 1441, was struck with certain paleographic peculiarities, and a perfectly original system of punctuation; and on further investigation he found the same punctuation in the other MSS. of Thomas à Kempis written by his own hand; and what is more, this sole system is observed throughout. It is this—1st, the *punctum* or full stop, followed by a small letter, to indicate a brief pause; 2, the double punctum or colon to express a longer pause; 3, a very unusual sign, the *clivis* or flexus, which was employed in early musical notation, and indicated a still longer pause; whilst, 4, the punctum, followed by a capital letter, denoted the longest pause of all. Moreover, no note of exclamation ever appears, but only that of interrogation. A careful study of these signs soon enabled Dr Hirsche to discover the rules by which they were used.

Briefly, this punctuation of Thomas à Kempis is rhetorical rather than grammatical, and serves to point out

¹ Quædam notabilia verba dni Florentii: in fine vitæ ejusd. Opp: Antv., 1564, p. 335.

the periods of rhythm and the cadences, and rhymes, and shows that they were intentional and not written at hazard. In a word, it indicates pauses of greater or shorter duration to be observed in reading, and nothing else. And this discovery of the learned Dr Hirsche furnishes the key to the rare literary charm of the "Imitation," and the means of interpreting the deep significance of that almost divine book, as it has been frequently called. And although the rhymed language of the "Imitation" has long been known, it was reserved for Dr Hirsche to discover its full significance.¹

Dr Hirsche has been wonderfully confirmed by a contemporary of Thomas à Kempis. In 1870 the Royal Commission of History, in Belgium, published the Chronicle of Adrian de But, a monk of the celebrated Cistercian Abbey of the Dunes, which commences in the year 1431, and ends in 1483, the year in which the author died. Whilst recording the events of the year 1480, the monk of the Dunes writes as follows:—

"Hoc anno frater Thomas de Kempis de Monte Sancte Agnetis professor ordinis canonicorum regularium, multis scriptis suis edificat; hic vitam sancte Lidwigis descripsit et *quoddam volumen METRICE super illud: qui sequitur me.*"²

Descripsit METRICE! Here is evidence, as valuable as it was unexpected, that the rhythm and metre of the "Imitation" was fully known and appreciated in former days. And this explains, what hitherto had been a

¹ See his learned *Prolegomena zu einer neuen Ausgabe der Imitatio Christi nach dem Autograph des Thomas von Kempen*. Berlin, 1873.

² *Chroniques relatives à l'Histoire de la Belgique sous la domination des Ducs de Bourgogne, publiées par M. le Baron Kervyn de Lettenhove*. Bruxelles, 1870. t. i. p. 547.

puzzle,¹ that several MSS of the "Imitation" bear the name of *Musica Ecclesiastica*.²

More than six thousand editions of the "Imitation" have been catalogued, and it has been translated into forty-nine different languages, but the translation into the Chiquito tongue by F. Ignatius Chomé, of the Society of Jesus, has never been printed.³ Into some of these languages it has been translated many times—thus there are nearly eighty different ones into French, and about as many into German, and twenty-five or more into Italian, so that the various translations may be reckoned at about 320. To these must be added forty-two, or more, into verse, Latin, English, French,⁴ German, and Dutch.

The "Imitation" has been translated many times into English. The name of the first translator is unknown: the second was Mayster Wylliam Atkynson, doctor of divynyte, who executed his work "at y^e special request and commandement of y^e full excellent pryncese Margarete, moder to our soverayne lorde Kynge Henry the VII.," 1502. To this was added the translation of the fourth book, which was made from the French by the Princess herself. Other translations have been made by

¹ Cf. Malou. *Récherches, ubi sup.*, p. 184, note.

² One is in the Royal Library at Brussels (No. 15138), another in the Library of Lambeth Palace (No. 536), and a third in the Brit. Museum (Royal Coll., No. 7 B. viii.), two are in the Bodleian Lib., Oxford, &c.

³ Cf. *Ecrivains de la Comp. de Jésus, par le R. P. Augustin De Backer*. 2d ed. *sub. nom.*

⁴ There are nearly sixty editions of Corneille's version, on which he was occupied for thirty years. The first portion was printed at Rouen in 1651. The first edition of the Four Books of Corneille's translation was equally printed at Rouen in 1656; a copy of which in the Hamilton sale fetched £356.

Richard Whitford, Brigittine of Sion, *temp.* Henry VIII., and reprinted in 1556 and 1585; by B. F. (Anthony Hoskins, of the Society of Jesus), 1613; Thomas Carre, Confessor of the English Nuns at Paris, 1624; anonymous, 1640; anonymous, but by a Benedictine Monk, 1673; anonymous, 1726; Bishop Challoner, 1737; and Magot-Gretton, 1865.

Other versions of the "Imitation" into English have been by Hake, 1567; Rogers, 1584; Page, 1639; Worthington, 1652; Stanhope, 1696; Willymott, 1722; Smith, 1732; John Wesley, 1735; Lee, 1760; Payne, 1763; Keith, 1774; Dibdin, 1828; Goodwin, 1860; Benham, 1874. This last has been reprinted in the celebrated Tauchnitz Series.¹ But as these versions of the "Imitation" either leave out the fourth book, or have considerable changes in the original text of Thomas à Kempis, made to suit the teaching of the Church of England by law established, they cannot properly be included amongst the translations of the "Imitation."

The "Imitation" has been printed in every variety of size and type. The *Princeps* edition in folio (1468-1475), printed at Augsburg by Ginther Zainer of Reutlingen, is a magnificent specimen of early typography. It bears the name of Thomas à Kempis. The early Italian editions are carefully printed. The second and third German ones are very remarkable. Many editions came from the Plantin Press at Antwerp, and five from the Elzevir. Moreau of Paris brought out an edition of Marillac's translation, with the name of Thomas à Kempis in quaint cursive type in 1643. Bodoni of Parma published a large folio edition in 1793, in curious contrast with which is the Casterman edition of 1869 in small

¹ Vol. 1680.

64mo. The first work that issued from the Royal Printing Press at Paris, under the direction of Cardinal de Richelieu in 1640, was the celebrated folio edition, in fine large type of seventeen lines to a page; whilst those in microscopic type by Tross of Paris (1858) and Mame of Tours (1862) are marvels of the printers' art, and almost require a magnifying glass. In 1862 Rudolph Louis Decker printed an edition in capital letters, with red marginal lines, but unfortunately the text selected was that of the *De Advocatis* MS. Then there are many biglott editions; one triglott (Basle, 1576); one tetraglott (Venice, 1854); one heptaglott (Sulzbach, 1837); and one octoglott (Lyons, 1841); whilst in 1727, the Abbé Pellegrin turned the "Imitation" into hymns, and set them to music. In 1658, F. Antony Vanden Stock, of the Society of Jesus, published the *First Book* of the "Imitation" in chronograms—that is, letters in every line were arranged so as to give the date 1658. But not one single edition prior to that of Dom Constantine Caietani, O.S.B. of 1616, bears the name of the mythical Benedictine abbot John Gesen-Gesser-Gersen, whilst that of Dom Francis Walgrave O.S.B. of 1638 is the first which makes him abbot of Vercelli.¹

¹ Mr Benham has been quite misled by a list of editions given in "Essays on University Education," by a Monk of St Augustine's, Ramsgate. He quotes an edition "printed at Köln in 1488, headed thus: *Incipit liber primus Johannis Gersen de Imitatione*," &c., and adds that "a list of twenty-four such copies lies before me" (preface to his version). Unfortunately the Monk of Ramsgate says Augusta, which is Tübingen, not Cologne; moreover, this edition bears the name, not of Johannes Gersen, but of Johannes Gerson Cancellarius Parisiensis! Then Mr Benham continues: "The edition of De Sessa, printed at Venice in 1501, has its heading like that of Köln, quoted above." Incorrect again! De Sessa's edition, Venice, 1501, bears the name of "John Gerson Chancellor of Paris." Of the

Francis de Backer, surnamed Tolensis, from Tola, his birthplace, who had been sub-prior at Mount St Agnes, published an edition of the "Imitation," in 1575, to which he prefixed a short life of the sainted author. He mentions that there was in existence at Mount St Agnes an ancient portrait of Thomas à Kempis, which bore also his favourite motto :

"In omnibus requiem quæsiui, sed non inveni nisi in *Hoexkins ende Boexkins*":¹

"Rest I ne'er find, whichever way I look,
Save in a quiet nook, with little book ;"

and adds that it was very much faded and almost obliterated.²

In 1569, the last Prior of Mount St Agnes, F. Cuperinus, caused a portrait of Thomas à Kempis to be painted, which in the year 1617, when F. Rosweyde published his *Vindiciæ Kempenses*, was still preserved at Zwoll. This picture represented Thomas à Kempis and Mount St Agnes, and the following inscription was beneath :

remainder of the twenty-four editions, the list of which Mr Benham had before him, two do not exist—that of Caietani of 1611—and of Valsecchi of 1724—and many of the others are incorrectly described. The Gersenist writers are not remarkable for accuracy.

¹ Antv. apud. Jo. Bellerum, § 12.

² In 1563, Sebastian Castalion, who had abandoned the faith of his fathers, rewrote the "Imitation" in what he calls more elegant Latin, made some changes in the text, and left out the fourth book. The first edition was printed at Basle in this year, and Castalion's text has often been reprinted. It was to counteract the effects of Castalion's version that Francis de Tola rewrote it according to the meaning and teaching of Thomas à Kempis, in a Catholic sense, and added the fourth book.

Montanæque domus, vicinorumque locorum
 Effigiem Thomæ Kempisique vides.
 Qui sacri quondam primaria gloria dictus
 Ordinis, et phoenix delictumque gregis.
 Isula quas urbes, quas præterlabitur arces,
 Quos saltus Vechtis picta tabella refert.
 bIs denis LVstris annos si dempseris oCto,
 oCCVbVit ThoMas fVnCtlus, et astra petit.
 Hoc tibi, Dive, domus præses Cuperinus alumno
 Mnemosynon posuit, quem prece junge Deo.¹

Thomas à Kempis is described as being somewhat below middle height, with a lively countenance, his complexion was brown, his fine forehead broad and expansive, and his eyesight was so good that he never used spectacles.²

Now, when his remains were taken out of his tomb in A.D. 1672, August 3 (old style), Arnold Waeyer, a secular priest, who was doing duty at Zwoll, received them, and placed them in his chapel dedicated to St Joseph. He has deposed that the skull quite agreed with the true portrait of Thomas à Kempis, which was hung up in his chapel at Zwoll.³ Evidently this was the portrait which had been painted by order of Prior Cuperinus.

In 1606, F. Henry Sommalius, S.J., published a second edition in 4to of the works of Thomas à Kempis,⁴ which he originally edited in 1600-1601, to which he prefixed a fine engraved portrait of the sainted author, *ad vivum* :

¹ *In fine* ed. de Imit. Xti. Antv. Plantin, 1617, p. 515. The capital letters give the date of 1471, the year in which Thomas à Kempis died.

² *Ib.*, p. 505.

³ "Habeo veram effigiem Thomæ à Kempis, appensam in Sacello meo, quacum cranium convenit." See his deposition in the *Acta Sanctorum*, Propylæum ad Septem Tomos Maii, Paralipomena, pp. 106, 107 (ed. Palmé).

⁴ Anto. ex off. typ. Martini Nutii.

and there can be no doubt that this was a copy of the portrait at Zwoll. Thomas à Kempis, wearing his rochet, is seated on a mound, with a pair of beads in his hand, and at his feet is lying an open book with his favourite motto. In the background is Zwoll and Mount St Agnes, whilst at the foot of the Mount he is represented seated and reading in a cave—his “quiet nook with little book.”

Rosweyde's edition of the “Imitation” of 1617¹ contains a very fine engraving of Thomas à Kempis by the celebrated Jerome Wierx; the face agrees perfectly with the Sommalius print of 1606, from which the background is evidently taken. But the composition is different; Thomas à Kempis is represented kneeling before the Blessed Virgin Mary with her Divine Son on her knees. And this design of Wierx occurs in very many editions.

The portrait prefixed to the present volume is taken from the two engravings which have just been described.

¹ Antv. ex off. Plant.

F. S. A.







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Fírst Book.

**Admonitions, Useful for the Spiritual
Life.**



A



CHAPTER I.

*OF THE IMITATION OF CHRIST, AND CONTEMPT
OF ALL THE VANITIES OF THE WORLD.*

He that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness, saith the Lord. These are the words of Christ, which teach us to imitate His life and manners, if we would be truly enlightened, and delivered from all blindness of heart.

Let therefore our chief endeavour be to meditate upon the life of Jesus Christ.

2. The teaching of Christ exceeds all the doctrines of holy men ; and he that hath the Spirit will find therein the hidden manna.

But it happens that many, who often hear the Gospel of Christ, are yet but little affected, because they have not the Spirit of Christ.

But whosoever would fully and feelingly understand the words of Christ, must endeavour to conform his life wholly to the life of Christ.

3. What will it avail thee to engage in reasonings concerning the Trinity, if thou be void of humility, and art therefore displeasing to the Trinity.

Surely great words do not make a man holy and just ; but a virtuous life maketh him dear to God.

I had rather feel compunction, than know the definition of it.

If thou knewest the whole Bible by heart, and the sayings of all the philosophers, what would it profit thee without the love of God, and without grace?

Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, except to love God, and only to serve Him.

This is the highest wisdom, by contempt of the world to tend towards the kingdom of Heaven.

4. It is therefore vanity to seek after riches which perish, and to trust in them.

It is vanity also to strive after honours, and to climb to high degree.

It is vanity to follow the desires of the flesh, and to labour for that for which thou must afterwards suffer most grievous punishment.

Vanity it is to desire to live long, and not to be careful to live well.

It is vanity to mind only this present life, and not to make provision for those things which are to come.

It is vanity to love that which speedily passeth away, and not to hasten thither where everlasting joy awaiteth thee.

5. Call often to mind that proverb, "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing."

Endeavour therefore to withdraw thy heart from the love of visible things, and to turn thyself to the invisible.

For they that follow their lusts stain their own consciences, and lose the grace of God.

CHAPTER II.

OF HAVING A HUMBLE OPINION OF OURSELVES.



ALL men naturally desire knowledge ; but what availeth knowledge without the fear of God ?

Surely a humble peasant who serves God, is better than a proud philosopher who, to the neglect of Him, studies the course of the heavens.

Whoso knoweth himself, is lowly in his own eyes, and delighteth not in the praises of men.

If I understood all things in the world, and had not charity, what would that avail me in the sight of God, Who will judge me according to my deeds ?

2. Cease from an inordinate desire for knowledge, for therein is much distraction and deceit.

Learned men are anxious to be esteemed learned by others, and to be called wise.

There are many things the knowledge of which doth little or nothing profit the soul : And he is very unwise who minds such things rather than those that tend to hissalvation.

Many words do not satisfy the soul ; but a good life comforteth the mind, and a pure conscience giveth great confidence in God.

3. The more and the better thou knowest and understandest, the more strictly wilt thou be judged, unless thy life be also more holy.

Be not therefore puffed up because of any art or science, but rather let the knowledge given thee make thee more cautious.

If thou thinkest that thou understandest and knowest

much ; yet know that there be many more things which thou knowest not.

Affect not to be overwise, but rather acknowledge thine own ignorance.

Why wilt thou prefer thyself before others, seeing there be many more learned, and more skilful in the Scripture than thyself?

If thou wilt know or learn anything profitably, desire to be unknown, and little esteemed.

4. The highest and most profitable lesson is the true knowledge of ourselves.

To think nothing of ourselves, and to think always well and highly of others, is great wisdom and perfection.

If thou shouldest see another openly sin, or commit some heinous offence, yet oughtest thou not to esteem thyself better ; for thou knowest not how long thou mayest be able to stand.

We are all frail, but esteem none more frail than thyself.



CHAPTER III.

OF THE DOCTRINE OF TRUTH.



APPY is he whom truth by itself doth teach, not by figures and words that pass away, but as it is in itself.

Our own opinion and our own sense do often deceive us, and they discern but little.

What availeth it to cavil and dispute about dark and hidden things; for ignorance of them we shall not be reproved in the day of judgment?

It is great folly to neglect things that are profitable and necessary, and to dwell upon those which are curious and hurtful. We have eyes and see not.

2. And what have we to do with *genus* and *species*? He to whom the Eternal Word speaketh, is delivered from many opinions.

From one Word are all things, and all things utter that one; and this is the *Beginning*, which also speaketh unto us.

No man without that Word understandeth or judgeth rightly.

He to Whom all things are one, He Who reduceth all things to one, and seeth all things in one; enjoys a quiet mind, and remains at peace in God.

O God, Who art the truth, make me one with Thee in everlasting love.

It wearieth me to read and hear many things: In Thee is all that I would have and can desire.

Let all doctors hold their peace; let all creatures be silent in Thy sight; speak Thou alone unto me.

3. The more a man is at one within himself, and of single heart, so much the more and higher things doth he under-

stand without labour ; for he receiveth the light of wisdom from above.

A pure, sincere, and stable spirit is not distracted, though it be employed in many works ; for that it doeth all to the honour of God, and being at rest within, seeketh not itself in anything it doeth.

What hinders and troubles thee more than the unmortified affections of thine own heart ?

A good and devout man arrangeth beforehand within himself those things which he ought to do.

Neither do they draw him according to the desires of an inordinate inclination, but according to the direction of right reason.

Who hath a greater combat than he that laboureth to overcome himself ?

This ought to be our endeavour, to conquer ourselves, and daily wax stronger, and grow in holiness.

4. All perfection in this life hath some imperfection mixed with it ; and no knowledge of ours is without some darkness.

A humble knowledge of thyself is a surer way to God than a deep search after learning.

Yet learning and knowledge are not to be blamed, for that is good, and ordained by God ; but a good conscience and a virtuous life are always to be preferred.

But because many endeavour to get knowledge rather than to live well, they are often deceived, and reap but little or no fruit.

5. O, if men bestowed as much labour in the rooting out of vices, and the planting of virtues, as they do in moving questions, neither would there be so many evils, nor so great scandals, in the world.

Truly, at the day of judgment we shall not be examined as to what we have read, but as to what we have done ; not

as to how well we have spoken, but as to how religiously we have lived.

Tell me, where are all those Doctors and Masters, with whom thou wast well acquainted, whilst they lived and flourished in learning?

Now others occupy their places and perhaps do scarce ever think of those who went before them. In their lifetime they seemed something, but now they are not spoken of.

6. O, how quickly doth the glory of the world pass away! O that their life had been answerable to their learning! then had their study and reading been to good purpose.

How many perish by reason of vain learning, who take little care to serve God.

And because they rather choose to be great than humble they become vain in their imaginations.

He is truly great who is great in charity.

He is truly great that is little in himself, and that maketh no account of any height of honour.

He is truly wise, that accounteth all earthly things as dung, that he may gain Christ.

And he is truly learned, that doeth the will of God, and forsaketh his own will.



CHAPTER IV.

OF WISDOM AND FORETHOUGHT IN OUR ACTIONS.

WE must not give ear to every saying or suggestion, but warily and patiently ponder things according to the will of God.

But alas ; such is our weakness, that we often rather believe and speak evil than good of others.

The perfect do not easily credit everything spoken ; for they know that human frailty is prone to evil, and very subject to error in words.

2. It is great wisdom not to be rash in thy doings, nor to stand stiffly in thine own conceits.

As also not to believe every thing which thou hearest, nor immediately to relate again to others what thou hast heard or dost believe.

Consult with him that is wise and of sound judgment, and seek to be instructed by one better than thyself, rather than follow thine own inventions.

A good life maketh a man wise according to God, and giveth him experience in many things.

The more humble a man is in himself, and the more resigned unto God, the more wise and peaceful shall he be in all things.

CHAPTER V.

OF READING THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.



RUTH, not eloquence, is to be sought for in Holy Scripture.

Each part of the Scripture is to be read with the same Spirit wherewith it was written.

We should rather search after our soul's profit in the Scriptures than after subtle arguments.

We ought to read plain and devout books as willingly as those which are profound.

Let not the authority of the writer be a stumbling block, whether he be of great or small learning ; but let the love of pure truth draw thee to read. Enquire not who spoke this or that, but mark what is spoken.

2. Men pass away, but the truth of the Lord endureth for ever. God speaks unto us in sundry ways without respect of persons.

Our own curiosity often hinders us in reading the Scriptures, when we examine and discuss that which we should rather pass over without more ado.

If thou desire to profit, read with humility and faithfulness ; nor ever desire the reputation of learning.

Hear with silence the words of holy men. Let not the parables of the Elders displease thee, for they are not given without cause.

CHAPTER VI.

OF INORDINATE AFFECTIONS.

WHENSOEVER a man desireth any thing inordinately, he is presently disquieted in himself.

The proud and covetous can never rest.
The poor and humble in spirit dwell in peace.

The man that is not perfectly dead to himself is quickly tempted and overcome in trifling things.

The weak in spirit, and he that is carnal and prone to the things of sense, can hardly withdraw himself altogether from earthly desires.

Therefore he is often afflicted when he goeth about to withdraw himself from them ; and is easily angered when he is opposed.

2. And if he hath followed his appetite, he is presently disquieted with remorse ; for that he hath yielded to his passion, which helpeth him not to obtain the peace which he sought.

Therefore true quietness of heart is gotten by resisting our passions, not by obeying them.

There is no peace in the heart of a carnal man, nor in him that is given to outward things, but in the spiritual and devout man.

CHAPTER VII.

OF VAIN HOPE AND PRIDE.



It is vain that putteth his trust in man, or in creatures.

Be not ashamed to serve others for the love of JESUS Christ ; nor to be esteemed poor in this world.

Presume not upon thyself, but place thy hope in God.

Do what lieth in thy power, and God will assist thee.

Trust not in thine own knowledge, nor in the skill of any living creature ; but rather in the grace of God, Who helpeth the humble, and bringeth down those that are proud.

2. Glory not in wealth if thou have it, nor in friends because they are powerful ; but in God Who giveth all things, and Who desireth to give thee Himself above all.

Esteem not thyself for the height of thy stature nor for the beauty of thy person, which may be disfigured and destroyed by a little sickness.

Please not thyself in thy natural gifts or wit, lest thereby thou displease God, to Whom appertaineth all the good whatsoever thou hast.

3. Esteem not thyself better than others, lest in the sight of God, Who knoweth what is in man, thou be accounted worse.

Be not proud of well-doing ; for the judgment of God is different from the judgment of men, and that often offendeth Him which pleaseth them.

If there be any good in thee, believe that there is much more in others, that so thou mayest preserve humility.

It hurteth thee not to submit to all men : but it hurteth thee most of all to prefer thyself to any of them.

The humble enjoy continual peace, but in the heart of the proud is envy, and frequent indignation.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF TOO MUCH FAMILIARITY.



AY not thy heart open to every one ; but treat of thy affairs with the wise, and such as fear God.

Converse not much with the young, nor with strangers.

Flatter not the rich ; neither do thou appear willingly before the great.

Keep company with the humble, with the devout, and with the virtuous ; and confer with them of things that edify. Be not familiar with any woman ; but commend all good women in general to God.

Desire to be familiar with God alone and His Angels, and avoid the acquaintance of men,

2. We must have love towards all, but familiarity with all is not expedient.

Sometimes it falleth out, that a person unknown to us is much esteemed, from good report ; but whose presence notwithstanding is not grateful to the eyes of those who see him.

We think sometimes to please others by our society, but we rather displease them with those bad qualities which they discover in us.

CHAPTER IX.

OF SUBJECTION AND OBEDIENCE.



T is a great matter to live in obedience, to be under a superior and not to be at our own disposing.

It is much safer to obey than to govern.

Many live under obedience, rather for necessity than for love ; such are discontented, and do murmur. Neither can they attain to freedom of mind, unless they heartily put themselves under obedience for the love of God.

Go whither thou wilt, thou shalt find no rest, but in humble subjection to the government of a superior. Many deceive themselves, imagining to find happiness in change.

2. It is true, that every one willingly doeth that which agreeth with his own liking, and inclineth most to those that are of his own mind.

But if God be amongst us, we must sometimes cease to adhere to our own opinion for the sake of peace.

Who is so wise that he can know fully all things ?

Be not therefore confident in thine own opinion ; but be willing to hear the judgment of others.

If thy thought be good, and yet thou partest with it for God, and followest the opinion of another, it shall turn to thy good.

3. I have often heard, that it is safer to hear and to take counsel, than to give it.

It may also happen, that a man's opinion may be good ; yet to refuse to yield to others when reason or a special cause requireth it, is a mark of stiffness and pride.

CHAPTER X.

OF SUPERFLUOUS WORDS.



LY the tumult of the world as much as thou canst ; for the talk of worldly affairs is a great hindrance, although it be done with sincere intention ; For we are quickly defiled, and enthralled by vanity.

Oftentimes I could wish that I had held my peace when I had spoken ; and that I had not been in company.

Why do we so willingly speak and talk one with another, when notwithstanding we seldom cease our converse before we have hurt our conscience ?

Why we so willingly talk is, for that by discoursing one with another, we seek to receive comfort one of another, and desire to ease our mind.

And we very willingly talk and think of those things which we most love or desire ; or of those things which we feel to be against us.

2. But alas, oftentimes in vain, and to no end ; for this outward comfort is the cause of no small loss of inward and divine consolation.

Therefore we must watch and pray, lest our time pass away idly.

If it be lawful and expedient for thee to speak, speak those things that may edify.

An evil habit and neglect of our own growth in grace do give too much liberty to inconsiderate speech.

Yet discourse of spiritual things doth greatly further our spiritual growth, especially when persons of one mind and one spirit associate together in God.

CHAPTER XI.

*OF OBTAINING PEACE, AND OF ZEAL FOR
GROWTH IN GRACE.*

E might enjoy much peace, if we would not busy ourselves with the words and deeds of others, and things which appertain nothing to our charge.

How can he abide long in peace, who thrusteth himself into the cares of others, who seeketh occasions abroad, who little or seldom cometh to himself?

Blessed are the single-hearted ; for they shall enjoy much peace.

2. Why were some of the Saints so perfect and contemplative? Because they laboured to mortify themselves wholly to all earthly desires ; and therefore they could with their whole heart fix themselves upon God, and be free for holy retirement.

We are too much led by our passions, and too solicitous for transitory things.

We also seldom perfectly overcome any one vice, and are not inflamed with a fervent desire to grow better every day ; therefore we remain cold and lukewarm.

3. If we were perfectly intent upon our own hearts, and not entangled with outward things, then should we be able to relish divine things, and to have some experience of heavenly contemplation.

The greatest, and indeed the whole impediment is that we are not free from passions and lusts, neither do we endeavour to walk in the perfect way of the Saints ; and when but a

small adversity befalleth us, we are too quickly dejected, and turn ourselves to human consolations.

4. If we would endeavour like brave men to stand in the battle, surely we should feel the assistance from Heaven.

For He Who giveth us occasion to fight, to the end we may get the victory, is ready to succour those that fight, and that trust in His grace.

If we esteem our progress in religious life to consist only in outward observances, our devotion will quickly be at an end.

But let us lay the axe to the root, that being free from passions, we may find rest to our souls.

5. If every year we could root out one vice, we should sooner become perfect men.

On the contrary, we now oftentimes perceive that we were better and purer at the beginning of our conversion, than after many years of our profession.

Our fervour and profiting should increase daily : but now it is accounted a great matter, if a man can retain but some part of his first zeal.

If we would do but a little violence to ourselves at the beginning, then should we be able to perform all things afterwards with ease and delight.

6. It is a hard matter to forego that to which we are accustomed, but it is harder to go against our own will.

But if we overcome not small and easy things, when shall we overcome harder things ?

Resist thy inclination in the very beginning, and unlearn evil habits, lest perhaps by little and little they draw thee to greater difficulty.

O if thou didst but consider how much inward peace unto thyself, and joy unto others, thou wouldest procure by demeaning thyself well, I think that thou wouldest be more careful of thy spiritual progress.

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE PROFIT OF ADVERSITY.

It is good that we have sometimes troubles and crosses ; for they often make a man enter into himself, and consider that he is here in banishment, and ought not to place his trust in any worldly thing.

It is good that we be sometimes contradicted, and this, although we do and intend well.

These things help often to the attaining of humility, and defend us from vain glory : for then we are more inclined to seek God for our inward witness.

2. And therefore a man should settle himself so fully in God, that he need not seek many comforts of men.

When a good man is afflicted, tempted, or troubled with evil thoughts ; then he understandeth better the great need he hath of God, without Whom he perceiveth he can do no good thing.

Then also he sorroweth, lamenteth, and prayeth, by reason of the miseries he suffereth.

Then he is weary of living longer, and wisheth that death would come, that he might depart and be with Christ.

Then also he well perceiveth, that perfect security and full peace cannot be had in this world.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF RESISTING TEMPTATION.

SO long as we live in this world we cannot be without tribulation and temptation.

Hence it is written in Job, "The life of man upon earth is a life of temptation."

Every one therefore ought to be careful about his temptations, and to watch in prayer, lest the devil find an advantage to deceive him ; for he never sleepeth, but goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

No man is so perfect and holy, but he hath some temptations, and we cannot be altogether without them.

2. Nevertheless temptations are often profitable though they be troublesome and grievous ; for in them a man is humbled, purified, and instructed.

All the Saints passed through man's tribulations and temptations, and profited thereby.

And they that could not bear temptations, became reprobate, and fell away.

There is no order so holy, nor place so secret, but there are temptations, or adversities in it.

3. There is no man that is altogether free from temptations : for the root thereof is in ourselves, who are born with inclination to evil.

When one temptation or tribulation goeth away, another cometh ; and we shall ever have something to suffer, because we are fallen from the state of our felicity.

Many seek to fly temptations, and fall more grievously into them.

By flight alone we cannot overcome, but by patience and true humility we become stronger than all our enemies.

4. He that only avoideth them outwardly, and doth not pluck them up by the roots, shall profit little ; yea temptations will the sooner return unto him, and will be more violent than before.

By little and little, and by patience with long-suffering through God's help, thou shalt more easily overcome, than by violence and thine own disquietude.

Often take counsel in temptations, and deal not roughly with him that is tempted ; but give him comfort, as thou wouldest wish to be done to thyself.

5. The beginning of all evil temptations is inconstancy of mind, and small confidence in God.

For as a ship without a helm is tossed to and fro by the waves ; so the man who is careless and forsaketh his purpose, is many ways tempted.

Fire trieth iron, and temptation a just man.

We know not oftentimes what we are able to do, but temptation shows us what we are.

Yet we must be watchful, especially in the beginning of the temptation ; for the enemy is then more easily overcome, if he be not suffered to enter the door of our hearts, but be resisted at the very gate, on his first knocking.

Wherefore one said, "Withstand the beginnings ; the remedy comes often too late, when the evil has grown strong through delay."

For first there cometh to the mind a bare thought of evil, then a strong imagination thereof, afterwards delight, and evil motion, and then consent.

And so by little and little our wicked enemy getteth complete entrance, for that he is not resisted in the beginning.

And the longer a man is negligent in resisting, the weaker

does he become daily in himself, and the stronger the enemy against him.

6. Some suffer great temptations in the beginning of their conversion ; others in the end.

Others again are much troubled almost through the whole of their life.

Some are but slightly tempted, according to the Divine wisdom and equity, which weigheth the states and deserts of man, and ordaineth all things for the welfare of His chosen ones.

7. We ought not therefore to despair when we are tempted, but so much the more fervently to pray unto God that He will vouchsafe to help us in all tribulations ; for He will surely, according to the words of St Paul, make with the temptation a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.

Let us therefore humble our souls under the hand of God in all temptations and tribulations, for He will save and exalt the humble.

8. In temptations and afflictions a man is proved, how much he hath profited ; and his reward is thereby the greater, and his graces do more eminently shine.

Neither is it any such great thing if a man be devout and fervent, when he feeleth no affliction ; but if in time of adversity he bear himself patiently, there is hope then of great growth in grace.

Some are kept from great temptations, and in small ones which do daily occur are often overcome ; to the end that, being humbled, they may never presume on themselves in great matters.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF AVOIDING RASH JUDGMENT.

URN thine eyes unto thyself, and beware thou judge not the deeds of others. In judging of others a man laboureth in vain, often erreth, and easily sinneth; but in judging and examining himself, he always laboureth fruitfully.

We often judge of things according as we fancy them; for private affection bereaves us easily of a right judgment.

If God were always the pure object of our desire, we should not be so easily troubled, through the repugnance of our carnal mind.

2. But oftentimes something lurketh within, or else occurreth from without, which draweth us after it.

Many secretly seek themselves in what they do, and know it not.

They seem also to live in good peace of mind, when things are done according to their will and opinion; but if things happen otherwise than they desire, they are straightway moved and much vexed.

Diversities of judgments and opinions cause oftentimes dissensions between friends, and between religious and devout persons.

3. An old custom is hardly broken, and no man is willing to be led farther than himself can see.

If thou dost rely more upon thine own reason or industry than upon that power which brings thee under the obedience of JESUS Christ, it will be long before thou

become illuminated ; for God will have us perfectly subject unto Him, that, being inflamed with His love, we may transcend the narrow limits of human reason.

CHAPTER XV.

OF WORKS OF CHARITY.



OR no worldly thing, nor for the love of any man, is any evil to be done ; but, yet, for the welfare of one that standeth in need, a good work is sometimes to be intermitted without any scruple, or even to be changed for a better.

For by doing this, a good work is not lost, but changed into a better.

Without charity the outward work profiteth nothing ; but whatsoever is done of charity, be it never so little and contemptible in the sight of the world, it becomes wholly fruitful.

For God weigheth more with how much love a man worketh, than how much he doeth. He doeth much that loveth much.

2. He doeth much that doeth a thing well. He doeth well that serveth the common good, rather than his own will.

Oftentimes a work seemeth to be of charity, but it is a work of the flesh, if natural inclination, self-will, hope of reward, and desire of our own interest are not absent.

3. He that hath true and perfect charity, seeketh himself in nothing : but only desireth in all things that the glory of God should be exalted.

He also envieth none, because he seeketh no private

good ; neither doth he rejoyce in himself, but wisheth above all things to be made happy in the enjoyment of God.

He attributeth nothing that is good to any man, but wholly referreth it unto God, from Whom as from their fountain all things proceed ; in Whom finally all the Saints do rest as in their highest fruition.

He that hath but one spark of true charity, will certainly discern that all earthly things are full of vanity.

CHAPTER XVI.

OF BEARING WITH THE DEFECTS OF OTHERS.



THOSE things that a man cannot amend in himself or in others, he ought to suffer patiently, until God order otherwise.

Think that perhaps it is better so for thy trial and patience, without which all our good deeds are not much to be esteemed.

Thou oughtest to pray notwithstanding when thou hast such impediments, that God would vouchsafe to help thee, and that thou mayest be able to bear them.

2. If one that is once or twice warned will not give over, contend not with him : but commit all to God, that His will may be done, and His name honoured in all His servants, Who knoweth well how to turn evil into good.

Endeavour to be patient in bearing with the defects and infirmities of others, of what sort soever they be ; for that thyself also hast many failings which must be borne with by others.

If thou canst not make thyself such an one as thou

wouldest, how canst thou expect to have another in all things to thy liking?

We are desirous to have others perfect, and yet we amend not our own faults.

3. We will have others severely corrected, and will not be corrected ourselves.

The large liberty of others displeaseth us; and yet we will not have our own desires denied us.

We will have others kept under by strict laws; but in no sort will we ourselves be restrained.

And thus it appeareth, how seldom we weigh our neighbour in the same balance with ourselves.

If all men were perfect, what should we have to suffer of our neighbour for God?

4. But now God hath thus ordered it, that we may learn to bear one another's burdens; for no man is without fault; no man but hath his burden; no man is sufficient of himself; no man is wise enough of himself; but we ought to bear with one another, comfort one another, help, instruct, and admonish one another.

Occasions of adversity soonest discover how great virtue or strength each one hath.

For occasions do not make a man frail, but they shew what he is.



CHAPTER XVII.

OF LIFE IN RETIREMENT.



THOU must learn to break thine own will in many things if thou wilt have peace and concord with others.

It is no small matter to dwell in a religious community without offence, and to continue faithful even unto death.

Blessed is he that hath there lived well, and ended happily.

If thou wilt stand firm and grow in grace, esteem thyself a pilgrim and stranger upon earth.

Thou must be contented for Christ's sake to be esteemed a fool in this world, if thou desire to lead a holy life.

2. Wearing a dress and tonsure profit little ; but change of heart and perfect mortification of the passions, make a truly religious man.

He that seeketh anything else but God, and the salvation of his soul, shall find nothing but tribulation and sorrows.

Neither can he remain long in peace, that laboureth not to be the least, and subject unto all.

3. Thou camest to serve, not to rule. Know that thou wast called to suffer and to labour, and not to spend thy time in idle talk.

Here therefore men are proved as gold in the furnace.

Here no man can stand, unless he humble himself with his whole heart for the love of God.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OF THE HOLY FATHERS.



CONSIDER the lively examples of the Holy Fathers, in whom true perfection and religion shone; and thou shalt see how little, and almost nothing, we do now in these days.

Alas! what is our life, if it be compared with theirs?

The Saints and friends of Christ served the Lord in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in labour and weariness, in watchings and fastings, in prayer and holy meditations, in many persecutions and reproaches.

2. O how many and grievous tribulations suffered the Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, and all the rest that endeavoured to follow the steps of Christ! For they hated their lives in this world, that they might keep them unto life eternal.

O how strict and self-renouncing a life led those Holy Fathers in the wilderness! How long and grievous temptations suffered they! How often were they assaulted by the enemy! What frequent and fervent prayers offered they to God! What rigorous abstinence did they use! How great zeal and care had they of their spiritual advancement! How strong a combat had they for overcoming their lusts! What pure and upright intentions kept they towards God!

In the day they laboured, and in the night they attended to continual prayer: although even when they laboured, they ceased not from mental prayer.

3. They spent all their time with profit; every hour seemed but short for the service of God. And by reason of the great

sweetness they felt in contemplation, they forgot the necessity for refreshing the body.

They renounced riches, dignities, honours, friends, and kinsfolk ; they desired nothing which appertained to the world ; they scarce took the necessaries of life ; they grudged even the attention necessary for the body.

So they were poor in earthly things, but very rich in grace and virtues.

Outwardly they were destitute, but inwardly they were refreshed with grace and divine consolation.

4. They were strangers to the world, but near and familiar friends to God.

They seemed to themselves as nothing, and to the world despicable ; but they were precious and beloved in the eyes of God.

They were grounded in true humility, lived in simple obedience, walked in love and patience : and therefore grew daily in the Spirit, and obtained great grace in the sight of God.

They were given for an example to all ; and they should more provoke us to seek after spiritual advancement, than the number of the lukewarm livers should prevail to make us remiss.

3. O how great was the fervour of all religious persons in the beginning of their holy institution !

How great was their devotion to prayer ! What ambition to excel others in virtue ! What exact discipline then flourished ! How great reverence and obedience observed they in all things !

Their footsteps yet remain to testify that they were indeed holy and perfect men ; who fighting valiantly trod the world under their feet.

Among us he is greatly accounted of, who is not a transgressor, and who can with patience endure.

6. O the lukewarmness and negligence of our times ! that we so quickly decline from the ancient fervour, and are come to pass, that very sloth and lukewarmness of spirit make our life tedious unto us.

Would to God the desire to grow in virtues did not wholly sleep in thee, who hast often seen the examples of devout persons.

CHAPTER XIX.

OF THE EXERCISES OF A RELIGIOUS PERSON.



HE life of a Religious person ought to excel in all virtues ; that he may be inwardly such as he outwardly seemeth to men.

And truly there ought to be much more within, than is perceived without. For God beholdeth us ; whom we are bound most highly to reverence wheresoever we are, and to walk in purity like angels in His sight.

Daily ought we to renew our purposes, and to stir up ourselves to greater fervour, as though this were the first day of our conversion ; and to say,

“ Help me, my God ! in this my good purpose, and in Thy holy service ; and grant that I may now this day begin perfectly ; for that which I have done hitherto is as nothing.”

2. According to our purpose shall be the success of our spiritual profiting ; and much diligence is necessary to him that will profit much.

And if he that firmly purposeth often faileth, what shall he do that seldom or but weakly purposeth anything ?

Yet in various ways it happens that we forsake our purpose,

and a slight omission of our spiritual exercises is not without loss to our souls.

The purpose of just men depends not upon their own wisdom, but upon God's grace ; on whom they rely always for what they take in hand.

For man proposes, but God disposes ; neither is the way of man in himself.

3. If an accustomed exercise be sometimes omitted, either for some act of piety, or profit to a brother ; it may easily be recovered again.

But if, out of weariness or carelessness, we lightly omit it, it is very blameworthy, and will be felt to be hurtful. Do the best we can, we shall still too easily fail in many things.

Yet must we always have some fixed purpose, and especially against those sins which do most of all hinder us.

We must diligently search into, and set in order both our outward and inward things, because both of them are of importance to our progress in godliness.

4. If thou canst not continually recollect thyself, yet do it sometimes, at least in the morning and at night.

In the morning fix thy good purpose ; and at night examine thyself what thou hast done, how thou hast behaved thyself in word, deed, and thought ; for in these perhaps thou hast oftentimes offended both God and thy neighbour.

Gird up thy loins like a man against the vile assaults of the devil ; bridle thy riotous appetite, and thou shalt be the better able to keep under the unruly motions of the flesh.

Never be entirely idle ; but either read, or write, or pray, or meditate, or endeavour to do something for the public good.

As for bodily exercises they must be used with discretion, neither are they to be practised of all men alike.

5. Devotions which belong not to the community ought

not to be exposed to public view ; for private devotions are practised most safely at home.

Nevertheless thou must beware thou neglect not those which are public, being more ready for what is private. But having fully accomplished all which thou art bound to do, if thou hast spare time, betake thee to thyself and thy devotions.

All cannot use one kind of spiritual exercise, one is useful for this person, another for that.

According to seasonableness also, divers exercises are fitting ; some suit better on working days, others on holy days.

In the time of temptation, we have need of some, and of others in time of peace and quietness.

Some suit us when we are pensive, and others when we rejoice in the Lord.

6. About the time of the chief festivals, good exercises are to be renewed, and the prayers of the godly more fervently to be implored.

From festival to festival we should purpose, as though we were then to depart, and to come to the everlasting festival.

Therefore ought we carefully to prepare ourselves at holy times, and to live more devoutly, and to keep more exactly all things that we are to observe, as though we were shortly at God's hands to receive the reward of our labours.

7. But if that reward be deferred, let us think with ourselves that we are not sufficiently prepared, and unworthy yet of so great glory which shall be revealed in us in due time ; and let us endeavour to prepare ourselves better for our departure.

“Blessed is that servant (saith St Luke) whom his Lord when he cometh shall find watching : Verily, I say unto you, He shall make him ruler over all His goods.”

CHAPTER XX.

OF THE LOVE OF SOLITUDE AND SILENCE.



SEEK a convenient time of retirement, and meditate often upon God's loving-kindness.

Meddle not with things too high for thee ; but read such things as may rather yield compunction to thy heart, than occupation to thy head.

If thou wilt withdraw thyself from speaking vainly, and from gadding idly, as also from hearkening after novelties and rumours, thou shalt find leisure enough and suitable for meditation on good things.

The greatest Saints avoided the society of men, when they could conveniently ; and did rather choose to live to God in secret.

2. One said, "As often as I have been among men, I returned home less a man than I was before."

And this we find true, when we talk long together, It is easier not to speak at all, than not to exceed in speech.

It is easier for a man to lie hid at home, than to be able sufficiently to watch over himself abroad.

He therefore that intends to attain to the more inward and spiritual things of religion, must with JESUS depart from the multitude and press of people.

No man doth safely appear abroad, but he who can abide at home.

No man doth safely speak but he that is glad to hold his peace.

No man doth safely rule, but he that is glad to be ruled.

No man doth safely rule, but he that hath learned gladly to obey.

3. No man rejoiceth safely, unless he hath within him the testimony of a good conscience.

And yet always the security of the Saints was full of the fear of God.

Neither were they the less anxious and humble in themselves, for that they shone outwardly with grace and great virtues.

But the security of bad men ariseth from pride and presumption, and in the end it deceiveth them.

Although thou seem to be a Religious person, yet never promise thyself security in this life.

4. Oftentimes those who have been in the greatest esteem and account amongst men, have fallen into the greatest danger, by overmuch self-confidence.

Wherefore to many it is more profitable not to be altogether free from temptations, but to be often assaulted, lest they should feel too safe, and so perhaps be puffed up with pride ; or else should too freely give themselves to worldly comforts.

O how good a conscience would he keep, that would never seek after transitory joy, nor entangle himself with the world.

O what great peace and quietness would he possess, that would cut off all vain anxiety, and think only upon divine things, and such as are profitable for his soul, and would place all his confidence in God.

5. No man is worthy of heavenly comfort, unless he have diligently exercised himself in holy compunction.

If thou desirest true contrition of heart, enter into thy secret chamber, and shut out the tumults of the world,
“ Commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and

be still." In thy chamber thou shalt find what abroad thou shalt too often lose.

The more thou visitest thy chamber, the more thou wilt enjoy it ; the less thou comest thereunto, the more thou wilt loathe it. If in the beginning of thy conversion thou art content to remain in it, and keep to it well, it will afterwards be to thee a dear friend, and a most pleasant comfort.

6. In silence and in stillness a religious soul advan-
tageth itself, and learneth the mysteries of Holy Scrip-
ture.

There it findeth rivers of tears, wherein it may wash and cleanse itself ; that it may be so much the more familiar with its Creator, by how much the farther off it liveth from all worldly disquiet.

Whoso therefore withdraweth himself from his acquaint-
ance and friends, God will draw near unto him with His holy
angels.

It is better for a man to live privately, and to have regard
to himself, than to neglect his soul, though he could work
wonders in the world.

It is commendable in a Religious person, seldom to go
abroad, to be unwilling to see or to be seen.

7. Why art thou desirous to see that which it is unlawful
for thee to have? The world passeth away and the lust
thereof.

The lusts of the flesh draw us to rove abroad ; but when the
time is past, what carriest thou home with thee but a
burdened conscience and distracted heart.

A merry going forth bringeth often a mournful return ; and
a joyful night maketh often a sad morning.

So all carnal joy enters gently, but in the end it bites and
stings to death.

What canst thou see elsewhere, what thou canst not see

here? Behold the Heaven and the earth and all the elements ; for of these are all things created.

8. What canst thou see anywhere that can long continue under the sun ?

Thou thinkest perchance to satisfy thyself, but thou canst never attain it.

Couldst thou see all things present before thine eyes, what were it but a vain sight ?

Lift up thine eyes to God in the highest, and pray Him to pardon thy sins and negligences.

Leave vain things to the vain ; but be thou intent upon those things which God hath commanded thee.

Shut thy door upon thee, and call unto thee JESUS, thy Beloved.

Stay with Him in thy closet ; for thou shalt not find so great peace anywhere else.

If thou hadst not gone abroad and hearkened to idle rumours, thou wouldst the better have preserved a happy peace of mind. But since thou delightest sometimes to hear new things, it is but fit thou suffer for it some disquietude of heart.



CHAPTER XXI.

OF COMPUNCTION OF HEART.



If thou wilt make any progress in godliness, keep thyself in the fear of God, and affect not too much liberty. Restrain all thy senses under discipline, and give not thyself over to foolish mirth.

Give thyself to compunction of heart, and thou shalt gain much devotion thereby.

Compunction layeth open much good, which dissoluteness is wont quickly to destroy.

It is a wonder that any man can ever perfectly rejoice in this life if he duly consider, and thoroughly weigh his state of banishment, and the many pearls wherewith his soul is environed.

2. Through levity of heart, and small care for our failings, we feel not the real sorrows of our souls ; and so oftentimes we vainly laugh, when we have just cause to weep.

There is no true liberty nor right joy but in the fear of God accompanied with a good conscience.

Happy is he who can cast off all distracting impediments, and bring himself to the one single purpose of holy compunction.

Happy is he, who can abandon all that may defile his conscience or burden it.

Contend manfully ; one habit overcometh another.

If thou canst let others alone in their matters, they likewise will not hinder thee in thine.

3. Busy not thyself in matters which appertain to others, neither do thou entangle thyself with the affairs of thy betters.

Still have an eye to thyself first, and be sure more especially to admonish thyself before all thy friends.

If thou hast not the favour of men, be not grieved at it ; but take this to heart, that thou dost not behave thyself so warily and circumspectly as it becometh the servant of God.

It is better oftentimes and safer that a man should not have many consolations in this life, especially such as are according to the flesh.

But that we have not divine consolations at all, or do very seldom taste them, the fault is ours, because we seek not after compunction of heart, nor do altogether forsake the vain and outward comforts of this world.

4. Know that thou art unworthy of divine consolation, and that thou hast rather deserved much tribulation.

When a man hath perfect compunction, then is the whole world grievous and bitter unto him.

A good man findeth always sufficient cause for mourning and weeping.

For whether he consider his own or his neighbour's estate, he knoweth that none liveth here without tribulation.

And the more narrowly a man looketh into himself, so much the more he sorroweth.

Our sins and wickedness wherein we lie so enwrapt, that we can seldom apply ourselves to heavenly contemplations, do minister unto us matter of just sorrow and inward compunction.

5. Didst thou oftener think of thy death than of length of life, there is no question but thou wouldst be more zealous to amend.

If also thou didst but consider within thyself the infernal pains in the other world, I believe thou wouldst willingly undergo any labour or sorrow in this world, and not be afraid of the greatest austerity.

But because these things enter not the heart, and we still love those things only that delight us, therefore it is we remain cold and very dull in religion.

6. It is often our want of spirituality which maketh our miserable body so easily to complain.

Pray therefore unto the Lord with all humility, that He will vouchsafe to give thee the spirit of compunction. And say with the Prophet, "Feed me, O Lord, with the bread of tears, and give me plenteousness of tears to drink."

CHAPTER XXII.

OF THE CONSIDERATION OF HUMAN MISERY.



MISERABLE thou art, wheresoever thou be, or whithersoever thou turnest, unless thou turn thyself unto God.

Why art thou troubled when things succeed not as thou wouldst or desirest? For who is he that hath all things according to his mind? neither I nor thou, nor any man upon earth.

There is none in this world, even though he be king or bishop, without some tribulation or perplexity.

Who is then in the best case? even he who is able to suffer something for God.

2. Many weak and infirm persons say, Behold! what a happy life such an one leads; how wealthy, how great he is, in what power and dignity!

But lift up thine eyes to the riches of Heaven, and thou shalt see that all the goods of this life are nothing to be accounted of. They are very uncertain, and rather burden-

some than otherwise, because they are never possessed without anxiety and fear.

Man's happiness consisteth not in having abundance of temporal goods, but a moderate portion is sufficient for him.

Truly it is misery even to live upon the earth.

The more spiritual a man desires to be, the more bitter does this present life become to him; because he sees more clearly and perceives more sensibly the defects of human corruption.

For to eat and to drink, to sleep and to watch, to labour and to rest, and to be subject to other necessities of nature, is doubtless a great misery and affliction to a religious man, who would gladly be set loose, and freed from all sin.

3. For the inward man is much weighed down by the necessities of the body.

Therefore the Prophet prayed with great devotion to be enabled to be free from them, saying, "Bring thou me out of my distress."

But woe be to them that know not their own misery; and a greater woe to them that love this miserable and corrupt life!

For there be some who so much doat upon it, that although by labour or by begging they can scarce get necessities, yet if they might but live here always, they would care nothing for the kingdom of God.

O how senseless are these men and unbelieving in heart, who lie so deeply sunk in the earth, that they can relish nothing but carnal things.

But miserable as they are, they shall in the end feel to their cost how vile and how nothing that was which they loved.

Whereas the saints of God and all the devout friends of

Christ regarded not those things which pleased the flesh, nor those which were in repute in this life, but longed after the everlasting riches with their whole hope and earnest effort.

Their whole desire was carried upwards to things durable and invisible, that the desire of things visible might not draw them to things below.

5. O my brother, cast not away thy confidence of making progress in godliness ; there is yet time, the hour is not yet passed.

Why wilt thou defer thy good purpose from day to day? Arise and begin in this very instant, and say, Now is the time to be doing, now is the time to be striving, now is the fit time to amend myself.

When thou art ill at ease and much troubled, then is the time of earning thy reward.

Thou must pass through fire and water before thou come to a wealthy place.

Unless thou doest violence to thyself, thou shalt never get the victory over sin.

So long as we carry about us this frail body of ours, we can never be without sin, nor live without weariness and pain.

We would gladly have rest from all misery, but seeing that by sin we have lost our innocency, we have together with that lost also the true felicity.

Therefore it becomes us to have patience, and to wait for the mercy of God, till this tyranny be overpast, and mortality be swallowed up of life.

6. O how great is human frailty, which is always prone to evil!

To-day thou confessest thy sins, and to-morrow thou committest the very same which thou hast confessed.

Now, thou art purposed to look well unto thy ways, and within a while thou so behavest thyself, as though thou hadst never any such purpose at all.

Good cause have we therefore to humble ourselves, and never to have any great conceit of ourselves, since we are so frail and so inconstant.

That also may quickly be lost by our own negligence, which, by the grace of God, with much labour we have scarce at length obtained.

7. What will become of us in the end, who begin so early to wax lukewarm !

Woe be unto us, if we will so give ourselves unto ease as if all were now peace and safety, when as yet there appeareth no sign of true holiness in our conversation.

We have much need like young novices to be newly instructed again to good life, if haply there be some hope of future amendment, and greater proficiency in things spiritual.



CHAPTER XXII.

OF MEDITATION ON DEATH.



VERY quickly there will be an end of thee here : look what will become of thee in another state.

To-day we are here, to-morrow we disappear, and when we are gone, quickly also we are out of mind.

O the stupidity and hardness of man's heart, which thinketh only upon the present, and doth not rather care for what is to come !

Thou oughtest so to order thyself in all thy thoughts and actions, as if thou wert about to die.

If thou hadst a good conscience, thou wouldst not greatly fear death.

It were better to avoid sin, than to escape death.

If to-day thou art not prepared, how wilt thou be so to-morrow !

To-morrow is uncertain, and how knowest thou that thou shalt live till to-morrow !

What availeth it to live long, when there is so small amendment of our lives ?

Alas ! length of days doth not always better us, but often rather increaseth our sin.

O that we had spent but one day in this world thoroughly well !

Many there are who reckon years of conversion ; and yet slender is the fruit of amendment.

If to die be accounted dreadful, to live long may perhaps prove more dangerous.

Happy is he that always hath the hour of his death before his eyes, and daily prepareth himself to die.

If at any time thou hast seen another man die, make account that thou must also pass the same way.

3. When it is morning, think that thou mayest die before night ;

And when evening comes, dare not to promise thyself the next morning.

Be thou therefore always in readiness, and so lead thy life that death may never take thee unprepared.

Many die suddenly : for the Son of Man cometh in an hour when we think not.

When that last hour comes, thou wilt have a far different opinion of thy life that is past, and be exceeding sorry that thou hast been so careless and remiss.

4. O how wise and happy is he that laboureth to be such an one in his life, as he will desire to be found at the hour of death !

A perfect contempt of the world, a fervent desire to go forward in all virtue, a love of discipline, a laborious repentance, a ready obedience, a denying of ourselves, and an endurance of any affliction whatsoever for the love of Christ, will give us great confidence that we shall die happily.

Whilst thou art in health thou mayest do much good ; but when thou art sick, see what thou wilt be able to do.

Few by sickness grow better, and they who wander much abroad, seldom thereby become holy.

5. Trust not to friends and kindred, neither do thou put off the care of thy soul's welfare till hereafter ; for men will forget thee, sooner than thou art aware of.

It is better to look to it betime, and to send some good before thee, than to trust to the help of men.

If thou be not careful for thyself now, who will be careful for thee hereafter ?

Time now is very precious : now is the day of salvation ; now is the accepted time.

But alas ! that thou shouldst spend time idly here, in which thou mightest prepare for eternal life.

The time will come, when thou shalt desire one day or hour to amend in ; who can know that it can be granted thee ?

6. O beloved, from how great danger mightest thou deliver thyself, from how great fear free thyself, if thou wouldst be ever fearful and mindful of death !

Labour now so to live, that at the hour of death thou mayest rather rejoice than fear.

Learn to die to the world now, that you mayest begin to live with Christ then.

Learn to contemn all things now, that then thou mayest freely go to Christ.

Chastise thy body now by repentance, that thou mayest then have assured confidence.

7. Ah ! fool, why dost thou think to live long, when thou canst not promise to thyself one day.

How many have been deceived and suddenly snatched away !

How often dost thou hear these reports, Such a man is slain, another is drowned, a third has broken his neck with a fall, this man died eating, and that man playing !

One perished by fire, another by the sword, another by the plague, another was slain by thieves. Thus death is the end of all, and man's life suddenly passeth away like a shadow.

8. Who shall remember thee when thou art dead ? and who shall pray for thee ?

Do now, even now, my beloved, whatsoever thou art able to do ; for thou knowest not when thou shalt die, nor what shall befall thee after death.

Now, whilst thou hast time, heap unto thyself everlasting riches.

Think on nothing but the salvation of thy soul, care for nothing but the things of God.

Make now friends to thyself by honouring the saints of God, and imitating their actions, that when this life faileth, they may receive thee into everlasting habitations.

9. Keep thyself as a stranger and pilgrim upon the earth, who hath nothing to do with the affairs of this world.

Keep thy heart free, and lifted up to God, because here thou hast no abiding city.

Send thither thy daily prayers together with thy tears, that after death thy spirit may be found worthy to pass in happiness to the Lord. *Amen.*



CHAPTER XXIV.

*OF JUDGMENT AND THE PUNISHMENT OF
SINNERS.*

IN all things remember thy end, and see how thou wilt be able to stand before that severe Judge from Whom nothing is hid, Who is not pacified with gifts, nor admitteth any excuse, but Who will judge according to right.

O wretched and foolish sinner, who sometimes fearest the countenance of an angry man, what answer wilt thou make to God Who knoweth all thy wickedness?

Why dost thou not provide for thyself against that great day, when no man can excuse or answer for another, but every one shall have to answer for himself?

Now thy pains may profit, thy tears be accepted, thy groans be heard, thy grief bring thee peace, and purge thy soul.

2. The patient man hath a great and wholesome purgatory, who though he receive injuries, yet grieveth more for the malice of another, than for his own suffering; who prayeth willingly for his adversaries, and from his heart forgiveth their offences.

He delayeth not to ask forgiveness of whomsoever he hath offended; he is sooner moved to compassion than to anger; he often offereth violence to himself, and laboureth to bring his body wholly into subjection to the spirit.

It is better to purge out our sins, and cut off our vices here, than to keep them to be punished hereafter.

Verily we do but deceive ourselves through an inordinate love of the flesh.

3. What else is there that the fire everlasting shall feed upon, but thy sins?

The more thou sparest thyself and followest the flesh now, the more severe shall be thy punishment hereafter, and thou storest up greater fuel for that flame.

In what things a man hath sinned, in the same shall he be the more grievously punished.

There shall the slothful be pricked forward with burning goads, and the glutton tormented with extreme hunger and thirst.

There shall the luxurious and lovers of pleasure be bathed in burning pitch and stinking brimstone, and the envious, like mad dogs, shall howl for very grief.

4. There is no sin but shall have its own proper torment.

There the proud shall be filled with all confusion; the covetous shall be pinched with miserable penury.

One hour of pain there shall be more bitter than a thousand years of the sharpest penance here!

There is no quiet, no comfort for the damned there; yet here we have some intermission of our labours, and enjoy the comfort of our friends.

Be solicitous and sorrowful now, because of thy sins, that thou mayest be secure with the blessed at the day of judgment.

For then shall the righteous stand with great boldness against those who have vexed and oppressed them.

Then shall He stand to judge them, Who doth now humbly submit Himself to the censures of men.

Then shall the poor and humble have great confidence, but the proud man shall be compassed with fear on every side.

5. Then will it appear that he was wise in this world, who had learned to be despised for Christ's sake.

Then shall every affliction patiently undergone delight us, when the mouth of all iniquity shall be stopped.

Then shall all the devout rejoice, and all the profane mourn.

Then shall the mortified flesh more rejoice than that which hath been pampered with all pleasures.

Then shall the poor attire shine gloriously, and the precious robes seem vile and contemptible.

Then the poor cottage shall be more commended than the gilded palace.

Then shall constant patience more avail us than all earthly power.

Then simple obedience shall be exalted above all worldly wisdom.

6. Then shall a good and clear conscience rejoice a man more than all the learning of philosophy.

Then shall the contempt of riches weigh more than all the world's treasure.

Then shalt thou be more comforted that thou hast prayed devoutly than that thou hast fared daintily.

Then shalt thou be more glad that thou hast kept silence than that thou hast spoken much.

Then shall good works avail more than many goodly words.

Then a strict life and severe repentance shall be more pleasing than all earthly delights.

Accustom thyself now to suffer a little, that thou mayest then be delivered from more grievous pains.

Prove first here what thou canst endure hereafter.

If now thou canst endure so little, how wilt thou then be able to support eternal torments?

If now a little suffering make thee so impatient, what will everlasting fire do hereafter?

Assure thyself thou canst not have two joys ; it is impossible to take thy pleasure here in this world, and after that to reign with Christ.

7. Suppose that thou hadst up to this day lived always in honours and delights, what would it all avail thee if thou wert doomed to die at this instant ?

All therefore is vanity, except to love God and serve Him only.

For he that loveth God with all his heart is neither afraid of death, nor of punishment, nor of judgment, nor of hell ; for perfect love gives secure access to God.

But he that takes delight in sin, what marvel is it if he be afraid both of death and judgment ?

Yet it is good, although love be not yet of force to withhold thee from sin, that at least the fear of hell should restrain thee.

But he that layeth aside the fear of God, can never continue long in good estate, but falleth quickly into the snares of the devil.



CHAPTER XXV.

*OF THE ZEALOUS AMENDMENT OF OUR WHOLE
LIFE.*

Be watchful and diligent in the service of God ; and often bethink thyself wherefore thou camest hither. Was it not that thou mightest live to God, and become a spiritual man ?

Be fervent then in going forward, for shortly thou shalt receive the reward of thy labours ; there shall not be then any more fear or sorrow in thy coasts.

Labour but a little now, and thou shalt find great rest, yea, perpetual joy.

If thou continuest faithful and fervent in thy work, no doubt but that God will be faithful and liberal in rewarding thee.

Thou oughtest to have good hope of getting the victory ; but thou must not be secure, lest thou wax either negligent or proud.

2. When one that was in anxiety of mind, often wavering between fear and hope, did once, being oppressed with grief, humbly prostrate himself in a church before the altar, in prayer, and said within himself, O if I knew that I should yet persevere ! he presently heard within him an answer from God, which said, If thou didst know it, what wouldst thou do ? Do now what thou wouldst do then, and thou shalt be secure.

And being herewith comforted and strengthened, he committed himself wholly to the will of God, and his anxious wavering ceased.

Neither had he the mind to search curiously any farther, to know what should befall him ; but rather laboured to

understand what was the perfect and acceptable will of God for the beginning and accomplishing of every good work.

3. "Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."

One thing there is that draweth many back from spiritual progress, and the diligent amendment of their lives ; the fear of the difficulty, or the labour of the combat.

But they especially exceed in all virtue, who make the greatest effort to overcome those things which are most grievous and contrary unto them.

For there a man improveth most and obtaineth greatest grace, where he most overcometh himself and mortifieth himself in spirit.

4. But all men have not equally much to overcome and mortify.

Yet he that is zealous and diligent, though he have more passions, shall profit more than another that is of a more temperate disposition, if he be less fervent in the pursuit of all virtue.

Two things especially further our amendment, To withdraw ourselves violently from those vices to which our nature is most inclined, and to labour earnestly for that good which we most lack.

Be careful also diligently to avoid those things in thyself, which do commonly displease thee in others.

5. Gather some profit to thy soul wheresoever thou art ; so that if thou seest any good examples, stir up thyself to the imitation thereof.

But if thou observe anything worthy of reproof, beware thou do not the same. And if at any time thou hast done it, labour quickly to amend thyself.

As thine eye observeth others, so art thou also noted again by others:

O how sweet and pleasant a thing it is, to see brethren fervent and devout, well-mannered and well-disciplined !

And on the contrary how sad and grievous a thing it is to see them live in a dissolute and disordered state, not applying themselves to that for which they are called !

How hurtful a thing is it, when they neglect the good purposes of their vocation, and busy themselves in that which concerns them not !

6. Be mindful of the profession which thou hast made, and have always before thine eyes the remembrance of thy Saviour crucified.

Thou hast cause to be ashamed in looking upon the life of JESUS Christ, seeing thou dost not conform thyself more unto Him, though thou hast been a long time in the way of God.

A Religious man that exerciseth himself devoutly in the holy life and passion of our Lord, shall there abundantly find whatsoever is necessary and profitable ; neither shall he need to seek any better thing out of JESUS.

O if JESUS crucified would come into our hearts, how quickly and fully should we be taught !

7. A fervently Religious man taketh and beareth well all that is commanded.

But he that is negligent and lukewarm hath tribulation, and on all sides is afflicted ; for he is void of inward consolation, and is forbidden to seek outward comforts.

A Religious man who liveth not according to discipline, lieth open to great mischief, to the ruin of his soul.

He that seeketh liberty and ease, shall ever live in disquiet ; for one thing or other must displease him.

8. O that we had nothing to do but always with our whole heart and mouth to praise the Lord God !

O that thou mightest never have need to eat, or drink, or sleep ; but always to be praising God, and employing thyself

in spiritual exercises. Thou shouldst then be more happy than thou art now, when for so many necessities thou art constrained to serve thy body !

Would God there were not these necessities, but only the spiritual refreshments of the soul, which, alas, we taste too seldom !

9. When a man cometh to that estate, that he seeketh not his comfort from any creature, then doth he begin perfectly to relish God. Then shall he be contented with whatsoever doth befall.

Then shall he neither rejoice in having much, nor be sorrowful for having little ; but commit himself to God entirely and confidently, Who shall be unto him all in all ; to Whom nothing doth perish nor die, but all things do live unto Him, and serve Him without delay.

10. Remember always thy end, and that time lost never returns. Without care and diligence thou shalt never get virtue.

If thou begin to wax lukewarm, it will be evil with thee.

But if thou give thyself to fervour of spirit thou shalt find much peace, and feel less labour, by reason of the assistance of God's grace.

The fervent and diligent man is prepared for all things.

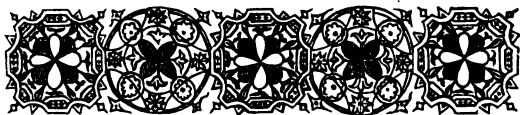
It is harder work to resist vices and passions, than to toil in bodily labours.

He that avoideth not small faults, by little and little falleth into greater.

Thou wilt always rejoice in the evening, if thou have spent the day profitably.

Be watchful over thyself, stir up thyself, admonish thyself, and whatever becomes of others neglect not thyself.

The more thou resistest thyself, the greater shall be thy spiritual profiting.



Second Book.

Admonitions Concerning Internal
Things.





CHAPTER I.

OF THE INWARD LIFE.

HE kingdom of God is within you, saith the Lord. Turn thee with thy whole heart unto the Lord, and forsake this wretched world, and thy soul shall find rest.

Learn to despise outward things, and to give thyself to things inward, and thou shalt perceive the kingdom of God to be come in thee.

"For the kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," which is not given to the unholy.

Christ will come unto thee, and show thee His own consolation, if thou prepare for Him a worthy mansion within thee.

For all His glory and beauty are from within, and there He delighteth Himself.

The inward man He often visiteth ; and hath with him sweet discourses, pleasant solace, much peace, familiarity exceeding wonderful.

2. O faithful soul, make ready thy heart for this Bridegroom, that He may vouchsafe to come unto thee, and to dwell with thee.

For He said, "If any man love Me, he will keep My words, and We will come unto him, and will make our abode with him."

Give therefore admittance unto Christ, and deny entrance to all others.

When thou hast Christ thou hast enough, and art rich. He will be thy helper in all things, so that thou shalt not need to trust in men.

For men quickly change and fail ; but Christ remaineth for ever, and standeth by us firmly unto the end.

3. There is no trust to be put in a frail and mortal man, even though he be dear unto us : neither ought we to be grieved, if sometimes he cross and contradict us.

They that to-day take thy part, to-morrow may be against thee ; and like the wind men often turn.

Put all thy trust in God, let Him be thy fear, and thy love : He shall answer for thee, and will do all things well, and as is best for thee.

Thou hast no abiding city here ; and wheresoever thou mayest be, thou art a stranger and pilgrim ; neither shalt thou ever have rest, unless thou be inwardly united unto Christ.

4. Why dost thou here gaze about, since this is not the place of thy rest ? In heaven ought to be thy home, and all earthly things are to be looked upon as it were by the way.

All things pass away, and thou with them.

Beware thou cleave not unto them, lest thou be caught and perish. Let thy thoughts be on the Most High, and thy prayers for mercy directed without ceasing unto Christ.

If thou canst not contemplate high and heavenly things, rest thyself in the passion of Christ, and dwell willingly on His sacred wounds.

For if thou fly devoutly unto the wounds and precious marks of the Lord Jesus, thou shalt feel great comfort in tribulation : neither wilt thou much care for the slights of

men, and will easily bear the words of those that reproach thee.

5. Christ was also in the world, despised of men, and in His greatest necessity forsaken by His acquaintance and friends, in the midst of reproaches.

Christ was willing to suffer and be despised ; and darest thou complain of any thing ?

Christ had adversaries and backbiters ; and dost thou wish to have all men thy friends and benefactors ?

Whence shall thy patience attain her crown, if no adversity befall thee ?

If thou art willing to suffer no contradiction, how wilt thou be the friend of Christ ?

Suffer with Christ, and for Christ, if thou desire to reign with Christ.

6. If thou but once hadst perfectly entered into the secrets of the Lord Jesus, and tasted a little of His ardent love ; then wouldst thou not regard thine own inconvenience, but wouldst rather rejoice in reproaches, if they should be cast upon thee ; for the love of JESUS maketh a man to despise himself.

A lover of JESUS and of the truth, and a true Christian, and one free from inordinate affections, can freely turn himself unto God, and lift himself above himself in spirit, and rest in full enjoyment.

7. He that judgeth of all things as they are, and not as they are esteemed to be, is truly wise, and taught of God rather than of man.

He that knoweth how to live inwardly, and to make think little of things without, neither requireth places, nor awaiteth times for performing religious exercises.

A spiritual man quickly recollecteth himself, because he never wholly poureth out himself to outward things.

He is not hindered by outward labour or business, which may be necessary for the time : but as things fall out, so he suits himself to them.

He that is well ordered and disposed within himself, careth not for the strange and perverse behaviour of men.

A man is hindered and distracted, in proportion as he draweth outward things unto himself.

8. If it were well with thee, and thou wert thoroughly purified from sin, all things would fall out to thee for good, and to thy progress.

But many things often trouble and displease thee, because thou art not yet dead unto thyself, nor separated from earthly things.

Nothing so defileth the heart of man, as the impure love of things created.

If thou refuse outward comfort, thou wilt be able to contemplate the things of Heaven, and often to receive internal joy.



CHAPTER II.

OF HUMBLE SUBMISSION.



REGARD not much who is for thee, or who against thee : but give all thy care to this, that God be with thee in every thing thou doest.

Have a good conscience, and God will well defend thee.

For whom God will help, no malice of man shall be able to hurt.

If thou canst be silent and suffer, without doubt thou shalt see that the Lord will help thee.

He knoweth the time and how to deliver thee, and therefore thou oughtest to resign thyself unto Him.

To God it belongeth to help and to deliver from all confusion.

To keep us more humble it is very profitable that others know and rebuke our faults.

2. When a man humbleth himself for his failings, then he easily pacifieth others, and quickly satisfieth those that are offended with him.

God protecteth the humble and delivereth him : the humble He loveth and comforteth ; unto the humble man He inclineth Himself ; unto the humble He giveth great grace ; and after his humiliation He raiseth him to glory.

Unto the humble He revealeth His secrets, and sweetly draweth and inviteth him unto Himself.

The humble man, though he suffer confusion, hath yet

much peace ; for that he resteth on God, and not on the world.

Do not think that thou hast made any progress, unless thou esteem thyself inferior to all.

CHAPTER III.

OF A GOOD PEACEABLE MAN.



FIRST, keep thyself in peace and then thou shalt be able to keep peace among others.

A peaceable man doth more good than he that is well learned.

A passionate man draweth even good into evil, and easily believeth the worst.

A good peaceable man turneth all things to good.

He that is in peace, is not suspicious. But he that is discontented and troubled, is tossed with divers suspicions : he is neither quiet himself, nor suffereth others to be quiet.

He often speaketh that which he ought not to speak ; and omitteth what it were more expedient for him to do.

He considereth what others are bound to do, and neglecteth that which he is bound to do himself.

First, therefore, have a careful zeal over thyself, and then thou mayest justly shew thyself zealous also of thy neighbour's good.

2. Thou knowest well how to excuse and colour thine own deeds, but thou art not willing to receive the excuses of others.

It were more just that thou shouldst accuse thyself, and excuse thy brother.

If thou wilt thyself be borne with, bear also with another.

Behold, how far off thou art yet from true charity and humility ; for that knows not how to be angry with any, or to be moved with indignation, but only against one's self.

It is no great matter to associate with the good and gentle ; for this is naturally pleasing to all, and every one willingly enjoyeth peace, and loveth those best that agree with him.

But to be able to live peaceably with hard and perverse persons, or with the disorderly, or with such as go contrary to us, is a great grace, and a most commendable and manly thing.

3. Some there are that keep themselves in peace, and are in peace also with others.

And there are some that neither are in peace themselves, nor suffer others to be in peace : They are troublesome to others, but always more troublesome to themselves.

And others there are that keep themselves in peace, and study to bring others unto peace.

Nevertheless, our whole peace in this miserable life consisteth rather in humble endurance.

He that knows best how to suffer, will best keep himself in peace.

That man is conqueror of himself, and lord of the world, the friend of Christ, and an heir of heaven.



CHAPTER IV.

OF PURITY OF MIND AND SIMPLE INTENTION.

BY two wings a man is lifted up from things earthly, namely, by Purity and Simplicity.

Simplicity ought to be in our affections ; purity in our intention. Purity doth apprehend and taste God : simplicity doth tend towards Him.

No good action will hinder thee, if thy heart be free from inordinate affection.

If thou intend and seek nothing else but the will of God and the good of thy neighbour, thou shalt thoroughly enjoy inward liberty.

If thy heart were sincere and upright, then every creature would be unto thee a mirror of life and a book of holy doctrine.

There is no creature so small and abject, that it representeth not the goodness of God.

2. If thou wert inwardly good and pure, then wouldst thou be able to see and understand all things well.

A pure heart penetrateth heaven and hell.

Such as every one is inwardly, so he judgeth outwardly.

If there be joy in the world, surely a man of a pure heart possesseth it.

And if there be any where tribulation and affliction, an evil conscience best knoweth it.

As iron put into the fire loseth its rust, and becometh red hot, so he that wholly turneth himself unto God, puts off all slothfulness, and is transformed into a new man.

3. When a man begins to grow lukewarm, then he is

afraid of a little labour, and willingly receives comfort from external things.

But when he once begins to overcome himself perfectly, and to walk manfully in the way of God ; then he esteemeth those things to be light, which before seemed grievous.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE CONSIDERATION OF SELF.



WE cannot trust much to ourselves, because grace oftentimes is wanting to us, and understanding also.

There is but little light in us, and that which we have we quickly lose by our negligence.

Oftentimes too we do not perceive how great is our own inward blindness.

We often do a bad act, and make a bad excuse.

We are sometimes moved with passion, and we think it to be zeal.

We reprehend small things in others, and pass over greater matters in ourselves.

We quickly enough feel and weigh what we suffer at the hands of others ; but we mind not what others suffer from us.

He that well and rightly considereth his own works, will find little cause to judge hardly another's.

2. A Christian at heart preferreth the care of himself before all other cares. And he that diligently attendeth unto himself, can easily keep silence concerning others.

Thou wilt never be thus inwardly religious, unless thou

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pass over other men's matters with silence, and look especially to thyself.

If thou attend wholly unto God and thyself, thou wilt be but little moved with whatsoever thou seest abroad.

Where art thou, when thou art not with thyself? And when thou hast run over all, what hast thou then profited, if thou hast neglected thyself?

If thou desirest peace of mind and true unity of purpose, thou must still put all other things behind thee, and look only upon thyself.

3. Thou shalt profit thyself much, if thou keep free from all temporal care.

Thou shalt suffer loss if thou take thought for any temporal thing.

Let nothing be great unto thee, nothing high, nothing pleasing, nothing acceptable, but only God Himself, or that which is of God.

Esteem all comforts vain, which thou receivest from any creature.

A soul that loveth God, despiseth all things that are inferior unto God.

God alone is everlasting, and of infinite greatness, filling all creatures : the solace of the soul, and the true joy of the heart.



CHAPTER VI.

OF THE JOY OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE.



HE glory of a good man, is the testimony of a good conscience.

Have a good conscience, and thou shalt ever have joy.

A good conscience is able to bear very much, and is very cheerful in adversities.

An evil conscience is always fearful and unquiet.

Thou shalt rest sweetly, if thy heart do not condemn thee.

Never rejoice, but when thou hast done well.

Sinners have never true joy, nor feel inward peace; because "There is no peace to the wicked," saith the Lord.

And if they should say, "We are in peace, no evil shall fall upon us, and who shall dare to hurt us?" believe them not; for upon a sudden will arise the wrath of God, and their deeds shall be brought to nought, and their thoughts shall perish.

2. To glory in tribulation, is no hard thing for him that loveth; for so to glory, is to glory in the Cross of the Lord.

That glory is short, which is given and received from men.

Sorrow always accompanieth the world's glory.

The glory of the good is in their consciences, and not in the tongues of men. The gladness of the just is of God, and in God: and their joy is of the truth.

He that desireth true and everlasting glory, careth not for that which is temporal.

And he that seeketh temporal glory, or despiseth it not from his soul, sheweth himself to have but little esteem of the glory of heaven.

He enjoyeth great tranquillity of heart, that careth neither for the praise, nor dispraise of men.

3. He will easily be content and at peace, whose conscience is pure.

Thou art not the more holy though thou be praised ; nor the more worthless for being dispraised.

What thou art, that thou art ; neither by words canst thou be made greater than what thou art in the sight of God.

If thou consider what thou art in thyself, thou wilt not care what men talk of thee.

Man looketh on the countenance, but God on the heart. Man considereth the deeds, but God weigheth the intentions.

To be always doing good, and to esteem little of one's self, is the sign of an humble soul.

To be unwilling to be comforted by any creature, is a sign of great purity and inward confidence.

4. He that seeketh no witness for his behalf from without, doth shew that he hath wholly committed himself unto God.

"For not he that commendeth himself is approved (saith Saint Paul), but whom God commendeth."

To walk in the heart with God, and not to be held in bondage by any outward affection, is the state of a spiritual man.



CHAPTER VII.

OF THE LOVE OF JESUS ABOVE ALL THINGS.

BLESSED is he that understandeth what it is to love JESUS, and to despise himself for JESUS' sake.

Thou oughtest to leave thy beloved for the Beloved ; for JESUS must be loved alone, above all things.

The love of things created is deceitful and inconstant ; the love of JESUS is faithful and constant.

He that cleaveth unto creatures, shall fall with that which is subject to fall ; he that embraceth JESUS shall stand firm for ever.

Love Him, and keep Him for thy friend, Who, when a'l go away, will not forsake thee, nor suffer thee to perish.

Sometime or other thou must be separated from all, whether thou wilt or no.

2. Keep close to JESUS both in life and in death, and commit thyself unto His faithfulness, Who, when all fail, can alone help thee.

Thy Beloved is of such nature, that He will admit of no rival ; but will have thy heart alone, and sit on His own Throne as King.

If thou couldst empty thyself perfectly from all things created, JESUS would willingly dwell with thee.

Whatsoever trust thou reposest in men, out of JESUS, is all little better than lost.

Trust not nor lean upon a reed shaken by the wind ; for that all flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof shall wither away as the flower of the field.

3. Thou wilt quickly be deceived, if thou only look to the outward appearance of men.

For, if in others thou seekest thy comfort and thy profit, thou shalt often feel loss.

If thou seekest JESUS in all things, thou shalt surely find JESUS.

But if thou seekest thyself, thou shalt also find thyself, to thine own destruction.

For if a man do not seek JESUS, he doth more hurt himself, then could the whole world and all his enemies.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF FAMILIAR CONVERSE WITH JESUS.



WHEN JESUS is present, all is well, and nothing seems difficult ; but when JESUS is absent every thing is hard.

When JESUS speaks not inwardly to us, all other comfort is worth nothing ; but if JESUS speak but one word, we feel great consolation.

Did not Mary Magdalene rise immediately from the place where she wept, when Martha said to her, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee"?

Happy hour ! when JESUS calleth from tears to spiritual joy.

How dry and hard art thou without JESUS ! How foolish and vain, if thou desire anything out of JESUS !

Is not this a greater loss, than if thou shouldst lose the whole world ?

2. What can the world profit thee without JESUS?

To be without JESUS is a grievous hell ; and to be with JESUS, a sweet paradise.

If JESUS be with thee no enemy shall be able to hurt thee.

He that findeth JESUS findeth a good treasure, yea, a good above all good.

And he that loseth JESUS loseth much indeed, yea more than the whole world !

Most poor is he who liveth without JESUS ; and he most rich who is dear to JESUS.

It requireth great skill to know how to hold converse with JESUS ; and to know how to retain JESUS, is great wisdom.

Be thou humble and peaceable, and JESUS will be with thee.

Be devout and quiet, and JESUS will stay with thee.

Thou mayest soon drive away JESUS, and lose His favour, if thou wilt turn aside to outward things.

And if thou shouldst drive Him from thee and lose Him, unto whom wilt thou flee, and whom wilt thou then seek for thy friend ?

Without a friend thou canst not well live ; and if JESUS be not above all to thee, thou shalt indeed be sad and desolate.

Therefore thou doest most foolishly, if thou trust or rejoice in any other.

It is preferable to have all the world against us, rather than to have JESUS offended with us.

Amongst all therefore that be dear unto us, let JESUS alone be especially beloved.

4. Love all for JESUS, but JESUS for Himself.

JESUS Christ alone is singularly to be loved ; and He alone is found Good and Faithful above all friends.

For Him, and in Him, let friends as well as foes be dear

unto thee ; and all these are to be prayed for, that He would make them all to know and to love Him.

Never desire to be singularly commended or beloved, for that appertaineth only unto God, who hath none like unto Himself.

Neither do thou desire that the heart of any should be set on thee, nor do thou set thy heart on the love of any ; but let JESUS be in thee, and in every good man.

5. Be pure and free within, and entangle not thy heart with any creature.

Thou oughtest to be naked and open before God, ever carrying thy heart pure towards Him, if thou wouldst be free to consider and see how sweet the Lord is.

And truly, unless thou be prevented and drawn by His grace, thou shalt never attain to that happiness of forsaking and taking leave of all, that thou alone mayest be united to Him alone.

For when the grace of God cometh unto a man, then he is made able for all things. And when it goeth away, then he is poor and weak.

In this case thou oughtest not to be cast down ; but to resign thyself calmly to God's will, and whatever comes upon thee, to endure it for the glory of JESUS Christ ; for after winter followeth summer, after night the day, and after a tempest a great calm.



CHAPTER IX.

OF THE WANT OF ALL COMFORT.

T is no hard matter to despise human comfort, when we have comfort from above.

It is much, and very much, to be able to lack both human and divine comfort ; and, for God's honour, to be willing cheerfully to endure desolation of heart ; and to seek oneself in nothing, nor to regard one's own merit.

What great matter is it, if at the coming of grace thou be cheerful and devout ? this hour is wished for by all men.

He rideth easily enough whom the grace of God carrieth.

And what marvel if he feel not his burden, who is borne up by the Almighty, and led by the Sovereign Guide ?

2. We are always willing to have something for our comfort ; and a man doth not without difficulty strip himself of self.

The holy martyr Laurence and his priest overcame the world, because whatsoever seemed delightsome in the world he despised ; and for the love of Christ he patiently suffered God's chief priest Sixtus, whom he most dearly loved, to be even taken away from him.

He therefore overcame the love of man by the love of the Creator ; and he rather chose what pleased God, than human comfort.

So also do thou learn to part even with a near and dear friend for the love of God.

Nor do thou think it hard, when thou art deserted by a friend, as knowing that we all at last must be separated one from another.

3. A man must strive long and mightily within himself, before he can fully learn to master himself, and to draw his whole heart unto God.

When a man trusteth in himself, he easily slideth unto human comforts.

But a true lover of Christ, and a diligent follower of all virtue, does not fall back on comforts, nor seek such sensible sweetnesses ; but rather prefers hard exercises, and to sustain severe labours for Christ.

4. When therefore spiritual comfort is given thee from God, receive it with thankfulness ; but understand that it is the gift of God, not thine own desert.

Be not puffed up, be not too joyful, nor vainly presumptuous ; but rather be the more humble for that gift, more wary too and fearful in all thine actions ; for that hour will pass away, and temptation will follow.

When consolation is taken from thee, do not immediately despair ; but with humility and patience wait for the heavenly visitation ; for God is able to give thee back again more ample consolation.

There is nothing new nor strange unto them that have experience in the way of God ; for the great saints and ancient prophets had oftentimes experience of such vicissitudes.

5. For which cause, one, while he was in divine grace, said, " I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved."

But in the want of it, he adds, " Thou didst turn Thy face from me, and I was troubled."

Yet in the midst of all this he doth not by any means despair, but more earnestly beseecheth the Lord, and saith, " Unto Thee, O Lord, will I cry, and I will pray unto my God."

At length, he receiveth the fruit of his prayer, and testifieth that he was heard, saying, " The Lord hath heard me, and aken pity on me ; the Lord has become my helper."

But wherein? "Thou hast turned," saith he, "my sorrow into joy, and Thou hast compassed me about with gladness."

If great saints were so dealt with, we that are weak and poor ought not to despair, if we be sometimes hot and sometimes cold; for the Spirit cometh and goeth according to the good pleasure of His own will. For which cause holy Job saith, "Thou visitest him early in the morning, and suddenly Thou provest him."

6. Whereupon then can I hope, or wherein ought I to trust, save in the great mercy of God alone, and in the only hope of heavenly grace?

For whether I have either religious brethren, or faithful friends; whether holy books, or beautiful treatises, or sweet chants and hymns; all these help but little, and have but little savour, when grace forsaketh me, and I am left in mine own poverty.

At such time there is no better remedy than patience, and the denying of myself according to the will of God.

7. I never found any so religious and devout, that he had not sometimes a withdrawing of grace, or felt not some decrease of zeal.

There was never saint so highly rapt and illuminated, who first or last was not tempted.

For he is not worthy of the high contemplation of God, who hath not been exercised with some tribulation for God's sake.

For temptation going before is wont to be a sign of comfort to follow.

For unto those that are proved by temptations heavenly comfort is promised. "To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life."

8. But divine consolation is given, that a man may be stronger in adversities.

There followeth also temptation, lest he should wax proud of any good.

The devil sleepeth not, neither is the flesh as yet dead ; therefore cease not to prepare thyself to the battle ; for on thy right hand and on thy left are enemies who never rest.

CHAPTER X.

OF GRATITUDE FOR THE GRACE OF GOD.



HY seekest thou rest, since thou art born to labour.

Dispose thyself to patience rather than to comfort, and to the bearing of the cross rather than to gladness.

What worldling is there that would not willingly receive spiritual joy and comfort if he could always have it ?

For spiritual comforts exceed all the delights of the world, and the pleasures of the flesh.

For all worldly delights are either vain or unclean ; but spiritual delights alone are pleasant and honest, sprung from virtue, and infused by God into pure minds.

But no man can always enjoy these divine comforts according to his desire ; for the time of temptation is not far away.

2. But false freedom of mind and great confidence in ourselves are very contrary to heavenly visitations.

God doeth well for us in giving the grace of comfort ; but man doeth evil in not returning all again unto God with thanksgiving.

And therefore the gifts of grace cannot flow in us, be-

cause we are unthankful to the giver, and return them not wholly to the fountain.

For grace ever attendeth him that is duly thankful ; and from the proud shall be taken that which is wont to be given to the humble.

3. I desire not that consolation that taketh from me compunction ; nor do I affect that contemplation which leadeth to haughtiness.

For all that is high is not holy ; nor all that is sweet, good ; nor every desire, pure ; nor is everything that is dear unto us pleasing to God.

Willingly do I accept that grace, whereby I may ever be found more humble, and more affected with holy fear, and may become more ready to renounce myself.

He that is taught by the gift of grace, and schooled by the withdrawing thereof, will not dare to attribute any good to himself, but will rather acknowledge himself poor and naked.

Give unto God that which is God's, and ascribe unto thyself that which is thine own ; that is, give thanks to God for His grace ; and acknowledge that to thyself alone is to be attributed sin, and the punishment due to sin.

4. Set thyself always in the lowest place and the highest shall be given thee ; for the highest cannot stand without the lowest.

The chiefest Saints before God are the least in their own judgments ; and the more glorious they are, so much the humbler within themselves.

Those that are full of truth and heavenly glory, are not desirous of empty glory.

Those that are firmly settled and grounded in God, can in no way be proud.

And they that ascribe all good unto God, whatsoever they have received, seek not glory one of another, but wish for

that glory which is from God alone ; and above all things that God may be praised in Himself, and in all His saints ; and are always tending to this very thing.

5. Be therefore thankful for the least gift, so shalt thou be meet to receive greater.

Let the least be unto thee even as the greatest, yea the most contemptible gift as of especial value.

If thou consider the worth of the giver, no gift will seem little, or of too mean esteem. For that cannot be little which is given by the most High God.

Yea, if He should give punishment and stripes, it ought to be matter of thankfulness ; because He doeth always for our welfare, whatsoever He permitted to happen unto us.

He that desireth to keep the grace of God, let him be thankful for grace given, and patient for the taking away thereof ; let him pray that it may return ; let him be cautious and humble, lest he lose it.



CHAPTER XI.

*OF THE FEWNESS OF THE LOVERS OF THE CROSS
OF JESUS.*



ANY love the heavenly kingdom of Jesus, but few care to bear His Cross.

He hath many desirous of consolation, but few of tribulation.

He findeth many companions of His table, but few of His abstinence.

All desire to rejoice with Him, few are willing to endure anything for or with Him.

Many follow JESUS unto the breaking of bread ; but few to the drinking of the cup of His passion.

Many reverence His miracles, few follow the ignominy of His cross.

Many love Jesus so long as no adversities befall them.

Many praise and bless Him so long as they receive any consolation from Him.

But if Jesus hide Himself, and leave them but a little while, they fall either into complaining, or into too much dejection of mind.

2. But they who love Jesus for His own sake, and not for some special comfort, bless Him in all tribulation and anguish of heart, as well as in the state of highest comfort.

Yea although He should never be willing to give them comfort, they notwithstanding would ever praise Him, and wish to be always giving thanks.

3. O how powerful is the pure love of Jesus, which is mixed up with no self-interest, or self-love !

Are not all those to be called mercenary, who are ever seeking consolations ?

Do they not show themselves to be rather lovers of themselves than of Christ, who are always thinking of their own profit and advantage ?

Where shall one be found who is willing to serve God for nought ?

4. Rarely is any one found so spiritual as to be stripped of all earthly things.

For where is any man to be found that is indeed poor in spirit, and thoroughly void of all leaning on creatures ?
"From afar, yea from the ends of the earth, is his value."

If a man should give all his substance, yet it is nothing.

And if he should practise great repentance, still it is little.

And if he should attain to all knowledge, he is still afar off.

And if he should be of great virtue, and of very fervent devotion, yet there is much wanting ; especially one thing, which is most necessary for him.

What is that ? That leaving all, he forsake himself, and go wholly from himself, and retain no self-love.

And when he hath done all that is to be done, so far as he knoweth, let him think that he hath done nothing.

5. Let him not think that of great weight, which is greatly esteemed ; but let him in truth pronounce himself to be an unprofitable servant, as the Truth Himself saith, "When you shall have done all things that are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants."

Then may he be truly poor and naked in spirit, and say with the Prophet, "I am desolate and afflicted."

Yet none is richer than that man, no man more powerful, no man more free ; for he knoweth how to leave all things, and to set himself in the lowest place.

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE ROYAL WAY OF THE HOLY CROSS.



NTO many this seemeth a hard speech, "Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow JESUS."

But much harder will it be to hear that last word, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

For they who now willingly hear and follow the word of the cross, shall not then fear to hear the sentence of everlasting damnation.

This sign of the cross shall be in the heaven, when the Lord shall come to judgment.

Then all the servants of the cross, who in their lifetime conformed themselves unto Christ crucified, shall draw near unto Christ the judge with great confidence.

2. Why therefore fearest thou to take up the cross which leadeth thee to a kingdom?

In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life, in the cross is protection against our enemies, in the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness, in the cross is strength of mind, in the cross joy of spirit, in the cross the height of virtue, in the cross the perfection of sanctity.

There is no salvation of the soul, nor hope of everlasting life, but in the cross.

Take up therefore thy cross and follow JESUS, and thou shalt go into life everlasting. He went before, bearing His cross, and died for thee on the cross; that thou mayest also bear thy cross and desire to die on the cross with Him.

For if thou be dead with Him, thou shalt also live with

Him. And if thou be His companion in punishment, thou shalt be partaker with Him also in glory.

3. Behold ! in the cross all doth consist, and all lieth in our dying thereon ; for there is no other way unto life, and unto true inward peace, but the way of the holy cross, and of daily mortification.

Go where thou wilt, seek whatsoever thou wilt, thou shalt not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below, than the way of the holy cross.

Dispose and order all things according to thy will and judgment ; yet thou shalt ever find, that of necessity thou must suffer somewhat, either willingly or against thy will, and so thou shalt ever find the cross.

For either thou shalt feel pain in thy body, or in thy soul thou shalt suffer tribulation.

4. Sometimes thou shalt be forsaken of God, sometimes thou shalt be troubled by thy neighbours ; and, what is more, oftentimes thou shalt be wearisome to thyself.

Neither canst thou be delivered or eased by any remedy or comfort ; for so long as it pleaseth God, thou must bear it.

For God will have thee learn to suffer tribulation without comfort ; and that thou subject thyself wholly to Him, and by tribulation become more humble.

No man hath in his heart a sympathy with the passion of Christ, so much as he who hath suffered the like himself.

The cross therefore is always ready, and every where waits for thee.

Thou canst not escape it whithersoever thou runneth ; for wheresoever thou goeth, thou carriest thyself with thee, and shalt ever find thyself.

Both above and below, without and within, which way soever thou dost turn thee, every where thou shalt find the cross ; and every where of necessity thou must hold fast

patience, if thou wilt have inward peace, and enjoy an everlasting crown.

5. If thou bear the cross cheerfully, it will bear thee, and lead thee to the desired end, namely, where there shall be an end of suffering, though here there shall not be.

If thou bear it unwillingly, thou makest for thyself a new burden, and increasest thy load, which yet notwithstanding thou must bear it.

If thou cast away one cross, without doubt thou shalt find another, and that perhaps more heavy.

6. Thinkest thou to escape that which no mortal man could ever avoid? Which of the saints in the world was without crosses, and tribulation?

For not even our Lord Jesus Christ was ever one hour without the anguish of His Passion, so long as He lived. "Christ" (saith He) "must needs suffer, and rise again from the dead, and so enter into His glory." And how dost thou seek any other way than this royal way, which is the way of the holy cross.

7. Christ's whole life was a cross and martyrdom: and dost thou seek rest and joy for thyself?

Thou art deceived, thou art deceived if thou seek any other thing than to suffer tribulations; for this whole mortal life is full of miseries, with crosses on every side.

And the higher a person hath advanced in the Spirit, so much the heavier he findeth crosses; because the grief of his banishment increaseth with his love to God.

8. Nevertheless this man, though so many ways afflicted, is not without refreshing comfort, for that he perceiveth very much benefit to accrue unto him by the bearing of his own cross.

For whilst he willingly putteth himself under it, all the

burden of tribulation is turned into the confidence of divine comfort.

And the more the flesh is wasted by affliction, so much the more is the spirit strengthened by inward grace.

And sometimes he is so comforted with the desire of tribulation and adversity, for the love of conformity to the cross of Christ, that he would not wish to be without grief and tribulation ; because he believes that he shall be unto God so much the more acceptable, the more and the more grievous things he is permitted to suffer for Him.

This is not the power of man, but it is the grace of Christ, which can and doth so much in frail flesh ; so that what naturally it always abhors and flees from, that by fervour of spirit it encounters and loves.

9. It is not according to man's inclination to bear the cross, to love the cross, to chastise the body and bring it into subjection, to flee honours, willingly to suffer contumelies, to despise self and to wish to be despised, to endure all adversities and losses, and to desire no prosperity in this world.

If thou look to thyself, thou shalt be able of thyself to accomplish nothing of this kind.

But if thou trust in the Lord, He shall give thee strength, and the world and the flesh shall be made subject to thy command.

Neither shalt thou fear thine enemy the devil, if thou be armed with faith, and signed with the cross of Christ.

10. Set thyself therefore, like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear manfully the cross of thy Lord, Who out of love was crucified for thee.

Prepare thyself to bear many adversities and divers kinds of troubles in this miserable life ; for so it will be with thee, wheresoever thou art, and so surely thou shalt find it, wheresoever thou hide thyself.

So it must be ; nor is there any remedy nor means to escape from tribulation and sorrow, but only to endure them.

Drink of the Lord's cup with hearty affection, if thou desire to be His friend, and to have part with Him.

As for comforts, leave them to God ; let Him do therein as shall best please Him.

But do thou set thyself to suffer tribulation, and account them the greatest comforts ; for the sufferings of this present time, although thou alone couldst suffer them all, cannot worthily deserve the glory which is to come.

11. When thou shalt come to this estate, that tribulation shall seem sweet, and thou shalt relish it for Christ's sake ; then think it to be well with thee, for thou hast found a paradise upon earth.

As long as it is grievous to thee to suffer, and thou desirest to escape, so long shalt thou be ill at ease, and the desire of escaping tribulation will follow thee every where.

12. If thou dost set thyself to that thou oughtest, namely, to suffering and to death, it will quickly be better with thee, and thou shalt find peace.

Although thou shouldst have been wrapt even unto the third heaven with Paul, thou art not by this secured that thou shalt suffer no adversity. "I will shew him" (saith JESUS) "how great things he must suffer for My name."

It remaineth therefore, that thou suffer, if it please thee to love JESUS, and to constantly serve Him.

13. O that thou wert worthy to suffer something for the name of JESUS ! How great glory would remain unto thyself ; what joy would arise to all God's saints ; how great edification also to thy neighbour !

For all men recommend patience ; few, however, they are who are willing to suffer.

With great reason oughtest thou cheerfully to suffer some

little for Christ's sake ; since many suffer more grievous things for the world.

14. Know for certain that thou oughtest to lead a dying life. And the more any man dieth to himself, so much the more doth he begin to live unto God.

No man is fit to comprehend things heavenly, unless he submit himself to the bearing of adversities for Christ's sake.

Nothing is more acceptable to God, nothing more wholesome to thee in this world, than that thou suffer cheerfully for Christ.

And if thou couldst choose, thou oughtest rather to wish to suffer adversities for Christ, than to be refreshed with many consolations ; because thou wouldst thus be more like unto Christ, and more conformable to all the saints.

For our worthiness and the growth of our spiritual estate consisteth not in many sweetnesses and comforts ; but rather in the patient enduring of great afflictions and tribulations.

15. Indeed, if there had been any better thing, and more profitable to man's salvation, than suffering, surely Christ would have shewed it by word and example.

For both the disciples that followed Him, and also all who desire to follow Him, He plainly exhorteth to the bearing of the cross, and saith, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

So that when we have thoroughly read and searched all, let this be the final conclusion. "That through much tribulation we must enter unto the kingdom of God."



Third Book.
Of Internal Consolation.





CHAPTER I.

*OF CHRIST SPEAKING INWARDLY TO THE
FAITHFUL SOUL.*



WILL hearken what the Lord God will speak in me.

Blessed is the soul which heareth the Lord speaking within her, and receiveth from His mouth the word of consolation.

Blessed are the ears that gladly receive the pulses of the Divine whisper, and give no heed to the many whisperings of this world.

Blessed indeed are those ears which listen not after the voice which is sounding without, but for the Truth teaching within.

Blessed are the eyes which are shut to outward things, but intent on eternal things.

Blessed are they that enter far into inward things, and endeavour to prepare themselves, more and more, by daily exercises, for the receiving of heavenly secrets.

Blessed are they who are glad to have time to spare for God, and who shake off all worldly impediments.

2. Consider these things, O my soul, and shut up the door of thy sensual desires, that thou mayest hear what the Lord thy God shall speak in thee.

Thus saith thy Beloved, I am thy Salvation, thy Peace,

and thy Life; keep thyself with Me, and thou shalt find peace.

Let go all transitory things, and seek those that be everlasting.

What are all temporal things, but snares? and what can all creatures avail thee, if thou be forsaken by the Creator.

Bid farewell, therefore, to all things else, and labour to please thy Creator, and to be faithful unto Him, that so thou mayest be able to attain unto true blessedness.

CHAPTER II.

THAT THE TRUTH SPEAKS WITHIN US WITHOUT NOISE OF WORDS.



PEAK, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.

I am Thy servant, grant me understanding,
that I may know Thy testimonies.

Incline my heart to the words of Thy
mouth: let Thy speech distil as the dew.

The children of Israel in times past said unto Moses,
"Speak thou unto us, and we will hear: let not the Lord
speak unto us lest we die."

Not so, Lord, not so, I beseech Thee: but rather with the
prophet Samuel, I humbly and earnestly entreat, "Speak,
Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

Let not Moses speak unto me, nor any of the prophets,
but rather do thou speak, O Lord God, the inspirer and
enlightener of all the prophets; for Thou alone without
them canst perfectly instruct me, but they without Thee can
profit nothing.

2. They indeed may utter words, but they cannot give the Spirit.

Most beautifully do they speak, but if Thou be silent, they inflame not the heart.

They teach the letter, but Thou openest the sense: they bring forth mysteries, but Thou unlockest the meaning of sealed things.

They declare Thy commandments, but Thou helpst us to fulfil them.

They point out the way, but Thou givest strength to walk in it.

They work outwardly only, but Thou instructest and enlightenest the heart.

They water, but Thou givest the increase.

They cry aloud in words, but Thou impartest understanding.

3. Let not Moses therefore speak unto me, but Thou, O Lord my God, the everlasting Truth; lest I die, and prove unfruitful, if I be only warned outwardly, and not inflamed within:

Lest it turn to my condemnation,—the word heard and not fulfilled, known and not loved, believed and not observed.

Speak therefore, Lord, for Thy servant heareth; for Thou hast the words of eternal life.

Speak Thou unto me, to the comfort, however imperfect, of my soul, and to the amendment of my whole life, and to Thy praise and glory and honour everlasting.

CHAPTER III.

*THAT THE WORDS OF GOD ARE TO BE HEARD
WITH HUMILITY, AND THAT MANY WEIGH
THEM NOT.*



Y son, hear my words, words of greatest sweetness, surpassing all the knowledge of the philosophers and wise men of this world.

“My words are Spirit and Life,” and not to be weighed by the understanding of man.

They are not to be drawn forth for vain approbation, but to be heard in silence, and to be received with all humility and great affection.

AND I said, Blessed is the man whom Thou shalt instruct, O Lord, and shalt teach out of Thy law, that thou mayest give him rest from the evil days, and that he be not desolate upon earth.

2. I TAUGHT the prophets from the beginning (saith the Lord), and cease not, even to this day, to speak to all ; but many are hardened, and deaf to My voice.

Men do more willingly listen to the world than to God ; they sooner follow the desires of their own flesh, than God's good pleasure.

The world promiseth things temporal and mean, and is served with great eagerness : I promise things most high and eternal ; and yet the hearts of men remain torpid.

Who is there that in all things serveth Me with so great care as the world and its lords are served withal ? Be ashamed, O Sidon, saith the sea. And if thou ask the cause, hear wherefore.

For a small income a long journey is undertaken ; for everlasting life many will scarce once lift a foot from the ground.

The most pitiful reward is sought after ; for a single bit of money sometimes there is shameful contention ; for a vain matter and slight promise men fear not to toil day and night.

3. But alas ! for an unchangeable good, for an inestimable reward, for the highest honour, and glory without end, they grudge even the least fatigue.

Be ashamed, therefore, thou slothful and complaining servant, that they are found to be more ready to destruction than thou to life.

They rejoyce more in vanity than thou dost in the truth.

Sometimes, indeed, they are frustrated of their hope ; but My promise deceiveth none, nor sendeth him away empty that trusteth in Me.

What I have promised, I will give ; what I have said I will fulfil ; if only any man remain faithful in My love even to the end.

I am the rewarder of all good men, and the strong approver of all who are devoted to Me.

4. Write thou My words in thy heart, and meditate diligently on them ; for in time of temptation they will be very needful for thee.

What thou understandeth not when thou readeest, thou shalt know in the day of visitation.

In two ways I am wont to visit Mine elect, namely, with temptation and with consolation.

And I daily read two lessons to them, one in reproving their vices, another in exhorting them to the increase of all virtues.

He that hath My words and despiseth them, hath One that shall judge him in the last day.

5. A Prayer to implore the grace of Devotion:—

O Lord my God! Thou art to me whatsoever is good. And who am I, that I should dare to speak to Thee? I am Thy poorest, meanest servant, and a most vile worm, much more poor and contemptible than I can or dare express.

Yet do thou remember, O Lord, that I am nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing.

Thou alone art good, just, and holy; Thou canst do all things, Thou accomplishest all things, Thou fillest all things, only the sinner Thou leavest empty.

Remember Thy mercies, and fill my heart with Thy grace, Thou Who wilt not that Thy works should be void and in vain.

6. How can I bear up myself in this miserable life, unless Thou strengthen me with Thy mercy and grace? Turn not Thy face away from me; delay not Thy visitation; withdraw not Thy consolation, lest my soul become as a thirsty land.

Teach me, O Lord, to do Thy will; teach me to live worthily and humbly in Thy sight; for Thou art my wisdom, Thou dost truly know me, and didst know me before the world was made, and before I was born.



CHAPTER IV.

*THAT WE OUGHT TO LIVE IN TRUTH AND
HUMILITY BEFORE GOD.*

Y son, walk thou before Me in truth, and ever seek me in simplicity of thy heart.

He that walketh before Me in truth, shall be defended from the assaults of evil, and the truth shall set him free from seducers, and from the slanders of unjust men.

If the truth shall have made thee free, thou shalt be free indeed, and shalt not care for the vain words of men.

O LORD, it is true. According as Thou sayest: so, I beseech thee, let it be with me; let Thy truth teach me, guard me, and preserve me safe to the end.

Let it set me free from all evil affection and inordinate love; and I shall walk with thee in great liberty of heart.

2. I WILL teach thee (saith the Truth) those things which are right and pleasing in My sight.

Reflect on thy sins with great displeasure and grief; and never esteem thyself to be anything, because of any good works.

In truth thou art a sinner; thou art subject to and encumbered with many passions. Of thyself thou always tendest to nothing: speedily art thou cast down, speedily overcome, speedily disordered, speedily dissolved.

Thou hast nothing whereof thou canst glory, but many things for which thou oughtest to account thyself vile; for thou art much weaker than thou art able to comprehend.

3. And therefore let nothing seem much unto thee whatsoever thou doest.

Let nothing seem great, nothing precious and wonderful, nothing worthy of estimation, nothing high, nothing truly commendable, and to be desired, but that alone which is eternal.

Let the eternal truth be above all things pleasing to thee : Let thine own extreme unworthiness be always displeasing to thee.

Fear nothing, blame nothing, flee nothing, so much as thy vices and sins ; which ought to be more displeasing to thee than any losses whatsoever of earthly things.

Some walk not sincerely in My sight, but of curiosity and pride desire to know My secrets, and to understand the high things of God, neglecting themselves and their own salvation.

These oftentimes, when I resist them, for their pride and curiosity do fall into great temptations and sins.

4. Fear thou the judgments of God, and dread the wrath of the Almighty. Discuss not thou the works of the Most High, but search diligently thine own iniquities, in how great things thou hast offended, and how many good things thou hast neglected.

Some have their devotion only in books, some in pictures, some in outward signs and figures.

Some have Me in their mouths, but little in their hearts.

Others there are who, being illuminated in their understanding, and purged in their affection, do always pant after eternal things, are unwilling to hear of the things of this world, and serve the necessities of nature with grief ; and these perceive what the Spirit of truth speaketh in them.

For He teacheth them to despise earthly, and to love heavenly, things ; to neglect the world and to desire heaven all the day and night.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE WONDERFUL EFFECT OF DIVINE LOVE.

BLESS Thee, O Heavenly Father, Father of my Lord JESUS Christ, for that Thou hast vouchsafed to remember me a poor creature.

O Father of mercies and God of all comfort, thanks be unto Thee, Who sometimes with Thy comfort refreshest me, unworthy as I am of all comfort.

I will always bless and glorify Thee, with Thine only-begotten Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, for ever and ever.

Ah, Lord God, Thou holy lover of my soul, when Thou comest into my heart, all that is within me shall rejoice.

Thou art my glory and the exultation of my heart : Thou art my hope and refuge in the day of tribulation.

2. But because I am as yet weak in love, and imperfect in virtue, I have need to be strengthened and comforted by Thee ; visit me therefore often, and instruct me with all holy discipline.

Set me free from evil passions, and heal my heart of inordinate affections ; that being inwardly cured and thoroughly cleansed, I may be made fit to love, encouraged to suffer, steady to persevere.

3. Love is a great thing, yea, a great and thorough good ; by itself it makes everything that is heavy, light : and it bears evenly all that is uneven.

For it carries a burden which is no burden, and makes every thing that is bitter, sweet.

The noble love of JESUS impels a man to do great things,

and stirs him up to be always longing for what is more perfect.

Love desires to be high, and will not be kept back by anything low and mean.

Love desires to be free, and estranged from all worldly affections, that so its inward sight may not be hindered ; that it may not be entangled by any temporal prosperity, that it may not be subdued by any adversity.

Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing more courageous, nothing higher, nothing wider, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller nor better in heaven and earth ; because love is born of God, and cannot rest but in God, above all created things.

4. He that loveth, flieth, runneth and rejoiceth ; he is free and is not bound.

He giveth all for all, and hath all in all ; because he resteth in One High above all things, from Whom all that is good flows and proceeds.

He respecteth not the gifts, but turneth himself above all goods unto the giver.

Love oftentimes knoweth no bounds, but is fervent beyond all measure.

Love feels no burden, thinks nothing of trouble, attempts what is above its strength, pleads no excuse of impossibility ; for it thinks all things lawful for itself and all things possible.

It is therefore able to undertake all things, and it completes many things, and brings them to a conclusion, where he who does not love, faints and lies down.

5. Love watcheth, and, sleeping, slumbereth not.

Though weary, love is not tired ; though pressed, it is not straitened ; though alarmed, it is not confounded : but as a lively flame and burning torch, it forces its way upwards, and securely passes through all.

If any man love, he knoweth what is the cry of this voice.

For it is a loud cry in the ears of God, this ardent affection of the soul which saith, "My God, my Love, Thou art all mine, and I am all Thine."

6. Enlarge Thou me in love, that, with the inward palate of my heart, I may taste how sweet it is to love, and to be dissolved, and as it were to bathe myself in Thy love.

Let me be possessed by love, mounting above myself, through excessive fervour and admiration.

Let me sing the song of love, let me follow Thee, my Beloved, on high ; let my soul spend itself in Thy praise, rejoicing through love.

Let me love Thee more than myself, and love myself only for Thee ; and in Thee all that truly love Thee, as the law of love commandeth, shining out from Thyself.

7. Love is active, sincere, affectionate, pleasant, and amiable ; courageous, patient, faithful, prudent, long-suffering, manly, and never seeking itself.

For in whatever instance a person seeketh himself, there he falleth from love.

Love is circumspect, humble, and upright ; not yielding to softness, or to levity, nor attending to vain things ; it is sober, chaste, steady, quiet, and guarded in all the senses.

Love is subject, and obedient to its superiors ; unto itself mean and despised, unto God devout and thankful, trusting and hoping always in Him, even then when God imparteth no relish of sweetness unto it ; for without sorrow none liveth in love.

8. He that is not prepared to suffer all things, and to stand to the will of his Beloved, is not worthy to be called a lover of God.

A lover ought to embrace willingly all that is hard and distasteful for the sake of his Beloved : and not to turn away from Him for any contradictions.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE PROVING OF A TRUE LOVER OF CHRIST.

Y son, thou art not yet a courageous and considerate lover.

WHEREFORE sayest Thou this, O Lord ?

BECAUSE for a slight opposition thou givest over thy undertakings, and too eagerly seeketh consolation.

A courageous lover standeth firm in temptations, and giveth no credit to the crafty persuasions of the enemy. As I please him in prosperity, so in adversity I am not unpleasant to him.

2. A considerate lover regardeth not so much the gift of him who loves him, as the love of the giver.

He esteems the good will rather than the value of the gift, and sets all gifts below him whom he loves.

A noble-minded lover resteth not in the gift, but in Me above every gift.

All therefore is not lost, if sometimes thou thinkest less of Me or My saints than thou wouldest.

That good and sweet affection which thou sometimes feelest, is the effect of grace present, and is a foretaste of thy heavenly home : but hereon thou must not lean too much, for it cometh and goeth.

But to strive against evil thoughts which may befall thee, and to reject with scorn the suggestions of the devil, is a notable sign of virtue, and brings great reward.

3. Let no strange fancies therefore trouble thee, which on any subject whatever may crowd into thy mind. Keep thy

purpose with courage, and preserve an upright intention towards God.

Neither is it an illusion that sometimes thou art suddenly wrapt on high, and presently returnest again unto the accustomed vanities of thy heart.

For these thou dost rather unwillingly suffer, than commit : and so long as they displease thee, and thou strivest against them, it is matter of reward, and no loss.

4. Know that the enemy doth strive by all means to hinder thy desire to good, and to divert thee from all religious exercises ; particularly, from the reverent estimation of God's saints, from the devout commemoration of My Passion, from the profitable remembrance of thy sins, from the guard of thine own heart, and from the firm purpose of advancing in virtue.

Many evil thoughts does he suggest to thee, that so he may cause a wearisomeness and horror in thee, to call thee back from prayer and holy reading.

Humble confession is displeasing unto him ; and if he could, he would cause these to cease from Holy Communion.

Trust him not, nor heed him, although he should often set snares of deceit to entrap thee.

Charge him with it, when he suggesteth evil and unclean thoughts unto thee ; say unto him,

" Away thou unclean spirit ! blush thou miserable wretch ! most unclean art thou that bringest such things unto mine ears.

" Begone from me, thou wicked seducer ! thou shalt have no part in me : but JESUS shall be with me as a strong warrior, and thou shalt stand confounded.

" I had rather die, and undergo any torment, than consent unto thee.

" Hold thy peace and be silent ; I will hear thee no more,

though thou shouldst work me many troubles. 'The Lord is my Light, and my Salvation, whom shall I fear?'

"Though an army rose against me, yet should not my heart be afraid. The Lord is my Helper and my Redeemer."

5. Fight like a good soldier : and if thou sometimes fall through frailty, take again greater strength than before, trusting in My more abundant grace : and take great heed of vain pleasing of thyself, and of pride.

Pride brings many into error, and makes them sometimes fall into blindness almost incurable.

Let the fall of the proud, thus foolishly presuming on their own strength, serve thee for a warning, and keep thee ever humble.

CHAPTER VII.

OF CONCEALING GRACE UNDER THE GUARD OF HUMILITY.



MY son, it is more profitable for thee and more safe, to conceal the grace of devotion ; not to lift thyself on high, or to speak much thereof, or to dwell much thereon ; but rather to despise thyself, and to fear lest the grace have been given to one unworthy of it.

This affection thou must not too earnestly cleave unto, for it may be quickly changed to the contrary.

Think when thou art in grace, how miserable and needy thou art wont to be without grace.

Nor is it in this only that thy progress in spiritual life consists, that thou hast the grace of comfort ; but rather that with humility, self-denial, and patience, thou endurest the

withdrawing thereof; provided thou do not then become listless in the exercise of prayer, nor suffer the rest of thy accustomed duties to be at all neglected.

Rather do thou cheerfully perform what lieth in thee, according to the best of thy power and understanding; and do not wholly neglect thyself because of the dryness or anxiety of mind which thou feelest.

2. For there are many who, when things succeed not well with them, presently become impatient or slothful.

For the way of man is not always in his power, but it belongeth unto God to give, and to comfort, when He will, and how much He will, and whom He will; as it shall please Him, and no more.

Some unadvised persons, in their over-earnest desire of the grace of a devoted life, have overthrown themselves; because they attempted more than they were able to perform, not weighing the measure of their own weakness, but following the desire of their heart rather than the judgment of their reason.

And because they presumed on greater matters than was pleasing to God, they therefore quickly lost His grace.

They who had built themselves nests in heaven were made helpless and vile outcasts; to the end that being humbled and impoverished, they might learn not to fly with their own wings, but to trust under My feathers.

They that are yet but novices and inexperienced in the way of the Lord, unless they govern themselves by the counsel of discreet persons, may easily be deceived and broken to pieces.

3. And if they will rather follow their own notions than trust to others who are more experienced, their end will be dangerous, at least if they are unwilling to be drawn away from their own conceit.

It is seldom the case that they who are wise in their own eyes endure humbly to be governed by others.

Better it is to have a small portion of good sense, with humility and a slender understanding, than great knowledge of science with vain self-complacency.

Better it is for thee to have little, than much of that which may make thee proud.

He acts not very discreetly, who wholly gives himself over to spiritual joy, forgetting his former helplessness, and that chastened fear of the Lord, which is afraid of losing the grace which hath been offered.

Nor again is he very valiantly wise who, in time of adversity or any heaviness, at once yields too much to despairing thoughts, and reflects and thinks of Me less trustfully than he ought.

4. He who in time of peace is willing to be over secure shall be often found in time of war too much dejected and full of fears.

If thou couldest continue humble and moderate within thyself, and also couldest thoroughly govern and moderate thy spirit, thou wouldst not so quickly fall into danger and offence.

It is good counsel, that when fervour of spirit is kindled within thee, thou shouldst consider how it will be, when that light shall leave thee.

And when this happens, remember that the light may return again, which, as a warning to thyself, and for Mine own glory, I have withdrawn for a time.

5. Such trials are oftentimes more profitable, than if thou shouldst always have things prosper according to thy will.

For a man's worthiness is not to be estimated by the number of visions and comforts which he may have, or by his

skill in the Scriptures, or by his being placed in a high station.

But if he be grounded in true humility, and full of divine charity ; if he be always purely and sincerely seeking God's honour ; if he think nothing of and unfeignedly despise himself, and even rejoyce more to be despised and lowly esteemed by others.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF A MEAN CONCEIT OF OURSELVES IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.



HALL I speak unto my Lord, who am but dust and ashes? If I esteem myself to be any thing more, behold, Thou standest against me, and my iniquities bear true witness, and I cannot contradict it.

But if I abase myself, and reduce myself to nothing, and shrink from all self-esteem, and grind myself to the dust which I am, Thy grace will be favourable to me, and Thy light near unto my heart ; and all self-esteem shall be swallowed up in the valley of my nothingness, and perish for ever.

There Thou shewest thyself unto me, what I am, what I have been, and whither I am come ; for I am nothing, and I knew it not.

If I be left to myself, behold, I become nothing but mere weakness ; but if Thou for an instant look upon me, I am forthwith made strong, and am filled with new joy.

And a great marvel it is, that I am so suddenly lifted up, and so graciously embraced by thee, who of mine own weight am always sinking downward.

2. Thy love is the cause hereof, freely preventing me, and relieving me in so many necessities, guarding me also from pressing dangers, and snatching me from evils out of number.

For indeed by loving myself amiss, I lost myself ; and by seeking Thee alone, and purely loving Thee, I have found both myself and Thee, and by that love have more deeply reduced myself to nothing.

Because Thou, O dearest Lord, dealest with me above all desert, and above all that I dare hope or ask.

3. Blessed be Thou, my God ; for although I be unworthy of any benefits, yet Thy royal bounty and infinite goodness never cease to do good even to the ungrateful, and to those who are turned away far from thee.

Turn Thou us unto Thee, that we may be thankful, humble, and devout ; for Thou art our salvation, our courage, and our strength.



CHAPTER IX.

*THAT ALL THINGS ARE TO BE REFERRED
UNTO GOD, AS THEIR LAST END.*



Y son, I ought to be thy supreme and ultimate end, if thou desire to be truly blessed.

By this intention thy affections will be purified, which are too often inordinately inclined to selfishness and unto creatures.

For if in anything thou seekest thyself, immediately thou faintest and driest up.

I would therefore thou shouldst refer all things principally unto Me, for I am He Who hast given all.

Consider every thing as flowing from the Highest Good ; and therefore unto Me as their original all must return.

2. From Me, as from a living fountain, the small and the great, the poor and the rich, do draw the water of life ; and they that willingly and freely serve Me shall receive grace for grace.

But he who desires to glory in things out of Me, or to take pleasure in some private good, shall not be grounded in true joy, nor be enlarged in his heart, but shall many ways be encumbered and straitened.

Thou oughtest therefore to ascribe nothing of good to thyself, nor do thou attribute goodness unto any man ; but give all unto God, without Whom man hath nothing.

I have given all on thee, and My will is to have thee all again ; and with great strictness do I exact from thee a return of thanks.

3. This is the truth whereby vain-glory is put to flight.

And if true charity and heavenly grace enter in, there wil

be no envy nor narrowness of heart, neither will self-love busy itself.

For divine charity overcometh all things, and enlargeth all the powers of the soul.

If thou rightly judge, thou wilt rejoice in Me alone, in Me alone thou wilt hope ; for none is good save God alone, Who is to be praised above all things, and in all to be blessed.

CHAPTER X.

THAT IT IS SWEET TO DESPISE THE WORLD AND SERVE GOD.



OW I will speak again, O Lord, and will not be silent ; I will say in the ears of my God, my Lord, and my King, who is on high : " O how great is the abundance of Thy goodness, O Lord, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee."

But what art Thou to those who love Thee ? what to those who serve Thee with their whole heart ?

Truly unspeakable is the sweetness of contemplating Thee, which Thou bestowest on them that love Thee.

In this especially Thou hast shewed me the sweetness of Thy love : that when I was not, Thou madest me ; when I went far astray from thee, thou broughtest me back again, that I might serve Thee ; and that Thou hast commanded me to love Thee.

2. O fountain of love unceasing, what shall I say concerning Thee ?

How can I forget Thee, Who hast vouchsafed to remember me, even after I had wasted away and perished ?

Thou hast shewed mercy to Thy servant beyond all expectation : and hast exhibited favour and loving-kindness beyond all desert.

What return shall I make to Thee for this grace ? For it is not granted to all to forsake all, to renounce the world, and to undertake a life of religious seclusion.

Is it any great thing that I should serve Thee, Whom the whole creation is bound to serve ?

It ought not to seem much to me, to serve Thee ; but rather this doth appear much wonderful to me ; that Thou vouchsafest to receive into Thy service one so poor and unworthy, and to make him one with Thy beloved servants.

3. Behold, all things are Thine which I have, and whereby I serve Thee.

And yet contrariwise, Thou rather servest me than I Thee.

Behold, heaven and earth which Thou hast created for the service of man, are ready at hand, and do daily perform all that Thou hast commanded.

And this is little : Thou hast moreover also appointed angels to minister to man.

But that which excelleth this all is, that Thou Thyself hast vouchsafed to serve man, and hast promised that Thou wouldst give Thyself unto him.

4. What shall I give Thee for all these thousands of benefits ? I would I could serve Thee all the days of my life.

I would I were able, at least for one day, to do Thee some worthy service.

Truly Thou art worthy of all service, of all honour, and everlasting praise.

Truly Thou art my Lord, and I Thy poor servant, who am bound to serve Thee with all my might, neither ought I ever to be weary of praising Thee.

And this I wish to do, this I desire : and whatsoever is

wanting unto me, do Thou I beseech Thee, vouchsafe to supply.

5. It is a great honour, and a great glory, to serve Thee, and to despise all things for Thee.

For great grace shall be given to those who shall have willingly subjected themselves to Thy most holy service.

They who for Thy love shall have renounced all carnal delights, shall find the sweetest consolations of the Holy Ghost.

They shall attain greater freedom of mind, who for Thy Name's sake enter into the narrow way, and have left off all worldly care.

6. O sweet and delightful service of God, by which a man is made truly free and holy !

O sacred state of religious service, which makes a man equal to the angels, pleasing to God, terrible to devils, and worthy to be commended of all the faithful !

O welcome service and ever to be desired, in which we are rewarded with the greatest good, and attain to joy which shall endlessly remain with us !



CHAPTER XI.

*THAT THE LONGINGS AND DESIRES OF OUR
HEARTS ARE TO BE EXAMINED AND
MODERATED.*



Y son, there are many things thou hast not yet well learned, which thou must learn.

WHAT art these, O Lord?

THAT thou frame thy desires wholly according to My good pleasure ; and that thou be not a lover of thyself, but an earnest follower of My will.

Various longings and desires oftentimes inflame thee, and drive thee forwards with vehemence ; but do thou consider whether thou be not moved rather for thine own advantage, than for My honour.

If I be the cause, thou wilt be well content howsoever I shall ordain ; but if there lurk in thee any self-seeking, behold, this it is that hindereth thee and weigheth thee down.

2. Beware therefore thou lean not too much upon any desire, conceived without asking My counsel, lest perhaps afterwards it repent thee, or thou be displeased with that which at first pleased thee, and which thou desiredst as the best.

For not every affection which seems good is immediately to be followed ; nor is every contrary affection at the first to be avoided.

It is sometimes expedient to use restraint even in good desires, lest through unseasonable effort thou art distracted of mind ; lest by thy want of self-government thou beget a

scandal unto others ; or again, being thwarted by others and resisted, thou become suddenly confounded, and so fall.

3. Sometimes, however, thou must use violence, and resist manfully thine appetite, not regarding what the flesh would or would not ; but rather taking pains that even performe it may be made subject to the Spirit.

And so long ought it to be chastened and to be forced to remain under servitude, until it be prepared for every thing, and learn to be content with a little, and to be pleased with plain and simple things, and not to murmur against any inconvenience.

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE GROWTH OF PATIENCE IN THE SOUL, AND OF STRIVING AGAINST CONCUPISCENCE.



LORD my God patience is very necessary for me, for many things in this life do not happen as we would.

For whatsoever plans I shall devise for my own peace, my life cannot be without war and affliction.

It is so, my son. But My will is, that thou seek not that peace which is void of temptations, or which suffereth nothing contrary : But rather think that thou hast found peace, when thou art exercised with sundry tribulations, and tried in many adversities.

2. If thou say, that thou art not able to suffer much, how then wilt thou endure the fire hereafter ?

Of two evils the less is always to be chosen. That thou

mayest therefore avoid the everlasting punishment, endeavour to endure present evils patiently for God's sake.

Dost thou think that the men of this world suffer nothing or but little? Ask even those who live most at their ease, and thou shalt find it otherwise.

But thou wilt say, they have many delights, and follow their own wills, and therefore they do not much weigh their own afflictions.

Be it so, that they have whatsoever they will ; but how long dost thou think that it will last ?

3. Behold the wealthy of this world shall consume away like smoke, and there shall be no memory of their past joys.

Yea, even while they are yet alive, they do not rest in them without bitterness, and weariness, and fear.

For from the self-same thing in which they delight they oftentimes receive the penalty of sorrow.

For it is but just that having inordinately sought and followed after pleasures, they should enjoy them not without shame and bitterness.

4. O how brief, how false, how inordinate, how base, are all those pleasures.

Yet so drunken and blind are men, that they understand it not : but like dumb beasts, for the poor enjoyment of this corruptible life, they incur the death of the soul.

Thou therefore, my son, "go not after thy lusts, but refrain thyself from thine appetites." "Delight thyself in the LORD, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

5. For if thou desire true delight, and to be more plentifully comforted by Me ; behold, in the contempt of all worldly things, and in the cutting off all base delights, shall be thy blessing, and abundant comfort shall be thine.

And the more thou withdraw thyself from all solace of

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creatures, so much the sweeter and so much the more consolation shalt thou find in Me.

But at the first, thou shalt not attain unto them, without some sadness, nor without a laborious conflict.

Old inbred habits will resist, but it shall be entirely overcome by a better way.

The flesh will murmur against thee ; but with fervency of spirit thou shalt bridle it.

The old serpent will tempt and trouble thee, but by prayer he shall be put to flight, and by useful occupation thou shalt greatly stop the way against him.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF HUMBLE OBEDIENCE AFTER JESUS CHRIST.



Y son, he that endeavoureth to withdraw himself from obedience, withdraweth himself from grace ; and he who seeketh for himself private benefits, loseth those which are common.

He that doth not cheerfully and freely submit himself to his superior, sheweth that his flesh is not brought into subjection, but oftentimes struggleth and murmurs against him.

Learn thou therefore quickly to submit thyself to thy superior, if thou desire to keep thine own flesh under the yoke.

For more speedily is the outward enemy overcome, if the inward man be not disordered.

There is no worse enemy, nor one more troublesome to

the soul, than thou art unto thyself, if thou be not in harmony with the Spirit.

It is altogether necessary that thou have a true contempt for thyself, if thou desire to prevail against flesh and blood.

2. Because thou still lovest thyself too inordinately, thou art afraid to resign thyself wholly to the will of others.

And yet, what great matter is it, if thou, who art but dust and nothing, subject thyself to a man for God's sake, when I, the Almighty and the Most Highest, Who created all things of nothing, humbly subjected Myself to man for thy sake?

I became of all men the most humble and the most abject, that thou mightest overcome thy pride with my humility.

O dust, learn to be obedient. Learn to humble thyself, thou earth and clay, and to bow thyself down under the feet of all men.

Learn to break thine own will, and to yield thyself to subjection.

3. Suffer no pride to dwell in thee : but show thyself so humble and so lowly, that all may be able to walk over thee, and to tread thee down as the mire of the streets. Vain man, what hast thou to complain of?

What canst thou answer, vile sinner, to them that upbraid thee, thou who hast so often offended God, and so many times deserved hell?

But Mine eyes spared thee, because thy soul was precious in My sight ; that thou mightest know My love, and ever be thankful for My benefits ;

Also that thou mightest continually give thyself to true humility and subjection, and endure patiently to be despised.

CHAPTER XIV.

*OF CONSIDERING THE SECRET JUDGMENT OF
GOD, THAT SO WE BE NOT LIFTED UP FOR
ANYTHING GOOD IN US.*



THOU, O Lord, thunderest forth Thy judgments over me, Thou shakest all my bones with fear and trembling, and my soul is very sore afraid.

I stand astonished ; and I consider " That the heavens are not pure in Thy sight."

If in angels Thou didst find wickedness, and didst not spare even them, what shall become of me ?

Even stars fell from heaven, what then can I presume who am but dust ?

They whose works seemed commendable, have fallen into the lowest misery : and those who did eat the bread of angels, I have seen delighting themselves with the husks of swine.

2. There is therefore no holiness, if Thou, O Lord, withdraw Thine hand.

No wisdom availeth, if Thou cease to guide.

No courage helpeth, if Thou leave off to defend.

No chastity is secure, if Thou do not protect it.

No vigilance of our own availeth, if Thy sacred watchfulness be not present with us.

For, if we be left of Thee, we sink and perish ; but being visited of Thee, we are raised up and live.

Truly we are unstable, but by Thee we are established : we wax lukewarm, but by Thee we are inflamed.

3. O how humbly and meanly ought I to think of myself !

how ought I to esteem it as nothing, if I seem to have any good.

With what profound humility ought I to submit myself to Thine unfathomable judgments, O Lord ; where I find myself to be nothing else than very nothing !

O weight that cannot be measured ! O sea that cannot be passed over, where I discover nothing of myself save only and wholly nothing !

Where then can glorying hide itself ? Who can trust in his own virtue ?

All vain-glorying is swallowed up in the deep of Thy judgments over me.

4. What is all flesh in Thy sight ?

Shall the clay glory against Him that formed it !

How can he be lifted up with vain words, whose heart is truly subject to God ?

He whom the Truth hath subjected unto itself, not all the world will make him proud : neither shall he, who hath firmly settled his hope in God, be moved by the tongues of flatterers.

For even they themselves who speak are all nothing, for they will pass away with the sound of their words ; but the truth of the Lord remaineth for ever.



CHAPTER XV.

*IN EVERYTHING WHICH WE DESIRE HOW WE
OUGHT TO STAND, AND WHAT WE OUGHT TO
SAY.*



Y son, say thou thus in everything ; Lord, if this be pleasing unto Thee, so let it be.

“ Lord, if it be to Thy honour, in Thy Name let this be done.

“ Lord, if Thou see it to be expedient and profitable for me, then grant unto me that I may use this to Thine honour.

“ But if thou know it will be hurtful unto me, and no profit to the health of my soul, take away the desire from me.”

For every desire proceedeth not from the Holy Spirit, even though it seem unto a man right and good.

It is difficult to judge truly whether a good spirit or the contrary be urging thee to desire this or that ; or whether by thine own spirit thou be moved thereunto.

Many have been deceived in the end, who at the first seemed to be led by a good spirit.

2. Therefore whatever seemeth to be desirable, must always be desired and prayed for in the fear of God and with humility of heart ; and chiefly thou must commit the whole matter to Me with special resignation of thyself, and thou must say,

“ O Lord, Thou knowest what is best for us, let this or that be done, as Thou pleasest.

“ Give what Thou wilt, and how much Thou wilt, and when Thou wilt.

"Deal with me as Thou thinkest good, and as best pleaseth Thee, and is most for Thy honour.

"Set me where Thou wilt, and deal with me in all things just as Thou wilt.

"I am in Thy hand : turn me round, and turn me back again, as Thou shalt please.

"Behold, I am Thy servant, prepared for all things : for I desire not to live unto myself, but unto Thee, and O that I could do it worthily and perfectly !"

A Prayer that the will of God may be fulfilled.

3. O MOST merciful JESUS, grant to me Thy grace, that it may be with me, and work with me, and continue with me even to the end.

Grant that I may always desire and will that which is to Thee most acceptable, and most dear.

Let Thy will be mine, and let my will ever follow Thine, and agree perfectly with it.

Let my will be all one with Thy will, and let me not be able to will, or forego anything, but what Thou wiltest or dost not will.

4. Grant that I may die to all things that are in the world, and for Thy sake love to be contemned, and not known in this generation.:

Grant to me above all things to desire to rest in Thee, and in Thee to have my heart at peace.

Thou art the true peace of the heart : Thou its only rest ; out of Thee all things are full of trouble. In this peace, that is, in Thee, the one chiefest eternal Good, I will lay me down and sleep. *Amen.*

CHAPTER XVI.

*THAT TRUE COMFORT IS TO BE SOUGHT IN
GOD ALONE.*

WHATSOEVER I can desire or imagine for my comfort, I look for it not here but hereafter.

For if I could possess all the comforts of the world, and might enjoy all the delights thereof, it is certain that they could not long endure.

Wherefore, O my soul, thou canst not be fully comforted, nor have perfect refreshment, except in God, the comforter of the poor, and the helper of the humble.

Wait a little while, O my soul, wait for the divine promise, and thou shalt have abundance of all good things in heaven.

If thou inordinately desire the things that are present, thou shalt lose those which are heavenly and eternal.

Use temporal things, and desire eternal.

Thou canst not be satisfied by temporal goods, because thou art not created to enjoy them.

2. Although thou shouldst possess all created good, yet couldst thou not be happy thereby nor blessed ; but in God, Who created all things, consisteth thy whole blessedness and felicity.

Not such as is seen and commended by the foolish lovers of the world, but such as the good and faithful servants of Christ wait for, and of which the spiritual and pure in heart, whose conversation is in heaven, sometimes have a foretaste.

Vain and brief is all human consolation.

Blessed and true is the consolation which is received inwardly from the truth.

A devout man beareth every where about with him his own comforter JESUS, and saith unto Him, "Be Thou present with me, O Lord JESU, in every time and place.

"Let this be my comfort, to be willing to lack all human comfort.

"And if Thy comfort be wanting, let Thy will and just proving of me be unto me as the greatest comfort ; for Thou wilt not always be angry, neither wilt Thou chide for ever."

CHAPTER XVII.

THAT ALL OUR ANXIETIES ARE TO REST ON GOD.



Y son, suffer me to do with thee what I please
I know what is expedient for thee.

Thou thinkest as man ; thou judgest in
many things as thy feelings persuade thee.

O LORD, what Thou sayest is true. Thy
care for me is greater than all the care that I can take for
myself.

For he standeth very unsafely, who casteth not all his care
upon Thee.

O Lord, if only my will may remain right and firm to-
wards Thee, do with me whatsoever it shall please Thee.

For it cannot be any thing but good, whatsoever Thou
shalt do with me.

2. If it be Thy will that I should be in darkness, be Thou
blessed ; and if it be Thy will that I should be in light, be
Thou blessed again. If Thou vouchsafe to comfort me, be

Thou blessed ; and if Thou wilt have me afflicted, still be Thou blessed.

MY son, such as this ought to be thy state, if thou desire to walk with Me.

Thou oughtest to be as ready to suffer as to rejoice.

Thou oughtest as cheerfully to be destitute and poor, as to be full and rich.

3. O LORD, for Thy sake, I will cheerfully suffer whatsoever shall come on me with Thy permission.

From Thy hand I am willing to receive indifferently good and evil, sweet and bitter, joy and sorrow ; and for all that befalleth me I will be thankful.

Keep me safe from all sin, and I shall fear neither death nor hell.

So Thou do not cast me from Thee for ever, nor blot me out of the book of life, what tribulation befalleth me shall not hurt me.



CHAPTER XVIII.

*THAT TEMPORAL SUFFERINGS MUST BE BORNE
PATIENTLY, AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.*

Y son, I descended from heaven for thy salvation ; I took upon Me thy sorrows, not necessity but love drawing Me thereto ; that thou thyself mightest learn patience, and bear sufferings without repining.

For from the hour of My birth, even until My death on the cross, I was not without suffering and grief.

I suffered great want of things temporal ; I often heard many complaints against Me ; I endured patiently disgraces and revilings ; in return for benefits I received ingratitude ; for miracles, blasphemies ; for heavenly doctrine, reproofs.

2. O LORD, for that Thou wert patient in Thy lifetime, herein especially fulfilling the commandment of Thy Father ; it is reason that I, a most miserable sinner, should bear myself patiently according to Thy will, and for my soul's welfare endure the burden of this corruptible life as long as Thou shalt choose.

For although this present life be burdensome, yet notwithstanding it is now by Thy grace made very gainful ; and, by Thine example and the footsteps of Thy saints, more bright and endurable to the weak.

It is much more full of consolation than it was formerly under the old law, when the gate of heaven remained shut ; and the way also to heaven seemed darker when so few cared to seek after the kingdom of heaven.

Moreover also, they who then were just and such as

should be saved, could not enter into the heavenly kingdom, before the accomplishment of Thy Passion, and the satisfaction of Thy holy death.

3. O how great thanks am I bound to render unto Thee, that Thou hast vouchsafed to shew unto me and to all the faithful the good and the right way to Thine eternal kingdom.

For Thy life is our way, and by the path of holy patience we walk toward Thee, Who art our Crown.

If Thou hadst not gone before us and taught us, who would have cared to follow.

Alas, how many would remain behind and afar off, if they considered not Thine example !

Behold we are even yet lukewarm, though we have heard of so many of Thy miracles and doctrines. What would become of us, if we had not so great light whereby to follow Thee !



CHAPTER XIX.

*OF THE ENDURANCE OF INJURIES, AND OF THE
PROOF OF TRUE PATIENCE.*



WHAT is it thou sayest, My son? Cease to complain, when thou considerest My Passion, and the sufferings of holy saints.

Thou hast not yet resisted unto blood.

It is but little which thou sufferest in comparison of those who suffered so much, who were so strongly tempted, so grievously afflicted, so many ways tried and exercised.

Thou oughtest therefore to call to mind the more heavy sufferings of others, that so thou mayest the more easily bear thine own very small troubles.

And if they seem unto thee not very small, then beware lest thy impatience be the cause thereof.

However, whether they be small or whether they be great, endeavour patiently to undergo them all.

2. The better thou disposest thyself to suffering, the more wisely thou doest, and the greater thy reward. Thou shalt more easily endure it, if both in mind and by habit thou art diligently prepared thereunto.

Do not say, "I cannot endure to suffer these things at the hands of such an one, nor ought I to endure such things; for he hath done me great wrong, and reproacheth me with things which I never thought of; but of another I will willingly suffer, that is, if they are things which I shall see I ought to suffer."

Such a thought is foolish; it considereth not the virtue of patience, nor by whom it will be crowned; but rather

weigheth too exactly the persons, and the injuries offered to itself.

3. He is not truly patient, who is willing to suffer only so much as he thinks good, and from whom he pleases.

But the truly patient man minds not by whom he is exercised, whether by his superiors, by one of his equals, or by an inferior ; whether by a good and holy man, or by one that is perverse and unworthy.

But indifferently from every creature, how much, or how often, soever anything adverse befall him, he takes it all thankfully as from God, and esteems it great gain ;

For with God it is impossible that any thing, however small, if only it be suffered for God's sake, should pass without its reward.

4. Be thou therefore prepared for the fight, if thou wilt have the victory.

Without a combat thou canst not attain unto the crown of patience.

If thou art unwilling to suffer, thou refusest to be crowned. But if thou desire to be crowned, fight manfully, endure patiently.

Without labour there is no rest, nor without fighting can the victory be won.

O LORD, let that become possible to me by Thy grace, which by nature seems impossible to me.

Thou knowest that I am able to suffer but little, and that I am quickly cast down, when a slight adversity ariseth.

For Thy Name's sake, let every exercise of tribulation be made bearable unto me ; for to suffer and to be troubled for Thy sake, is very wholesome for my soul.

CHAPTER XX.

OF THE ACKNOWLEDGING OF OUR OWN INFIRMITIES; AND OF THE MISERIES OF THIS LIFE.

I WILL acknowledge my sin, and I will confess mine infirmities unto Thee, O Lord.

Oftentimes a small matter it is that makes me sad and dejected.

I resolve to act with courage, but when even small temptations come, I am at once in a great strait.

It is sometimes a very trifle, whence a great temptation arises.

And whilst I think myself safe, and when I least expect it, I sometimes find myself almost overcome by a slight breath.

2. Behold, therefore, O Lord, my low estate, and my frailty which is in every way known unto Thee.

Have mercy on me, and deliver me out of the mire, that I may not stick fast therein, and may not remain utterly cast down for ever.

This is that which strikes me down oftentimes, and confounds me in Thy sight, that I am so subject to fall, and so weak in resisting my passions.

And although I do not altogether consent, yet their continued assaults are grievous unto me; and it is very exceedingly irksome to live thus daily in conflict.

Hereby doth my weakness become known unto me, in that hateful fancies do always much more easily enter than depart.

3. Most mighty God of Israel, Thou zealous lover of faithful souls! O that Thou wouldst consider the labour and

sorrow of Thy servant, and assist him in all things whatsoever he undertaketh.

Strengthen me with heavenly courage, lest the old man, the miserable flesh, not as yet fully subject to the spirit, prevail and get the upper hand. Against this it will be needful for me to fight, as long as I breathe in this miserable life.

Alas, what a life is this, where tribulation and miseries are never wanting; where all is full of snares and enemies !

For when one tribulation or temptation goeth, another cometh ; yea and while the first conflict is yet lasting, many others come unexpected.

4. And how can a life be loved that hath so many embitterments, and is subject to so many calamities and miseries ?

How can it be called a life, that begetteth so many deaths and plagues ?

And yet it is the object of men's love, and many delight therein.

The world is oftentimes blamed for being deceitful and vain, and yet men do not easily part with it, because the desires of the flesh bear so great a sway.

But some things draw us to love the world, others to condemn it.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life draws us to the love of the world ; but the pains and miseries that justly follow them cause a hatred and loathing of the world.

5. But, alas, the fondness for vicious pleasures overcometh the mind of him who is given to the world ; and he esteemeth it a delight to be ever under thorns, because he hath neither seen nor tasted the sweetness of God, and the inward pleasantness of virtue.

But they who perfectly condemn the world, and study to live to God under holy discipline, these are not ignorant of the divine sweetness promised to those who truly forsake the world. They also very clearly see how grievously the world erreth, and how it is in many ways deceived.

CHAPTER XXI.

*THAT WE ARE TO REST IN GOD ABOVE ALL
THINGS.*



BOVE all things, and in all things, O my soul, thou shalt rest in the Lord alway, for He Himself is the everlasting rest of the saints.

Grant me, O most sweet and loving JESUS, to rest in Thee, above all creatures, above all health and beauty, above all glory and honour, above all power and dignity, above all knowledge and subtilty, above all riches and arts, above all joy and gladness, above all fame and praise, above all sweetness and comfort, above all hope and promise, above all desert and desire :

Above all gifts and benefits that Thou canst give and impart unto us, above all mirth and joyousness that the mind of man can feel :

Finally, above angels and archangels, and above all the heavenly host, above all things visible and invisible, and above all that Thou art not, O my God.

2. Because Thou, O Lord, my God, art supremely good above all ; Thou alone art most high, Thou alone most powerful, Thou alone most full and sufficient, Thou alone most sweet and most full of consolation.

Thou alone art most lovely and loving, Thou alone most noble and glorious above all things, in whom all good things together both perfectly are, and ever have been, and shall be.

And therefore whatsoever thou bestowest on me besides Thyself, or revealest unto me, is but mean and unsatisfying, whilst Thou art not seen and fully obtained.

Surely my heart cannot truly rest, nor be entirely contented, unless it rest in Thee, and rise above all gifts and all creatures whatsoever.

3. O Thou most beloved spouse of my soul, JESU Christ, Thou most pure Lover, Thou Lord of all creation ; O that I had the wings of true liberty, that I might flee away and rest in Thee !

O when shall it be fully granted me, to consider 'in quietness of mind, and to see how sweet Thou art, my Lord God !

When shall I fully gather up myself into Thee, that by reason of my love to Thee I may not feel myself, but Thee alone, above all sense and measure, in a manner not known unto every one !

But now I oftentimes sigh, and bear my unhappiness with grief :

Because many evils occur in this vale of miseries, which do often trouble, grieve, and over-cloud me : often hinder and distract me, allure and entangle me, so that I can have no free access unto Thee, nor enjoy the sweet welcomings, which are ever ready for the blessed spirits.

O let my sighs move Thee, and my manifold desolation here on earth.

4. O JESU, Thou brightness of eternal glory, Thou comfort of the pilgrim soul, with Thee is my tongue without voice, and my very silence speaketh unto Thee.

How long doth my Lord delay to come ?

Let Him come unto me His poor despised servant, and let Him make me glad. Let Him put forth His hand, and deliver His poor servant from anguish.

Come, O come ; for without Thee I shall have no joyful day or hour ; Thou art my joy, for without Thee my table is empty.

A wretched creature am I, and as it were imprisoned and loaded with fetters, until Thou refresh me with the light of Thy presence, and grant me liberty, and shew a friendly countenance towards me.

5. Let others seek what they please instead of Thee ; but for me, nothing else doth nor shall delight me, but Thou only, my God, my hope, my everlasting salvation.

I will not hold my peace, nor cease to pray, until Thy grace return again, and Thou speak inwardly unto me.

Behold, here I am. Behold, I come unto thee, because thou hast called upon Me. Thy tears and the desire of thy soul, thy humiliation and thy contrition of heart, have inclined and brought Me unto thee.

And I said, LORD, I have called Thee, and have desired to enjoy Thee, being ready to refuse all things for Thy sake.

For Thou first hast stirred me up that I might seek Thee.

Blessed be Thou therefore, O Lord, that hast showed this goodness to Thy servant, according to the multitude of Thy mercies.

6. What hath Thy servant more to say before Thee ? he can only greatly humble himself in Thy sight, ever mindful of his own iniquity and vileness.

For there is none like unto Thee in all that is wonderful in heaven and earth.

Thy works are very good, Thy judgments true, and by Thy providence the universe is governed.

Praise therefore and glory be unto Thee, O wisdom of the Father : let my mouth, my soul, and all creatures together, praise and bless Thee.

CHAPTER XXII.

OF THE REMEMBRANCE OF GOD'S MANIFOLD BENEFITS.



PEN, O Lord, my heart in Thy law, and teach me to walk in Thy commandments.

Grant me to understand Thy will, and with great reverence and diligent consideration to remember Thy benefits, as well in general as in particular, that henceforward I may be able worthily to give Thee thanks.

But I know and confess, that I am not able, even in the least, to give Thee due thanks for the favours which Thou bestowest upon me.

I am less than the least of all Thy benefits : and when I consider Thy excellency, the greatness thereof maketh my spirit to faint.

2. All that we have in soul and body, and whatsoever we possess outwardly or inwardly, naturally or supernaturally, are Thy benefits, and do speak Thee bountiful and good, from Whom we have received all good things.

Although one have received more, another less, all notwithstanding are Thine, and without Thee even the least blessing cannot be had.

He that hath received the greatest cannot glory of his own desert, nor extol himself above others, nor insult over the lesser. For he is the greatest and the best who ascribeth least unto himself, and who in rendering thanks is the most humble and devout.

And he that esteemeth himself viler than all men, and judgeth himself most unworthy, is fittest to receive greater blessings.

But he that hath received fewer, ought not to be out of heart, nor to take it grievously, nor to envy them that are enriched with greater store; but rather to turn his mind to Thee and praise Thy goodness, for that Thou bestowest Thy gifts so bountifully, so freely, and so willingly, without respect of persons.

All things proceed from Thee, and therefore in all things Thou art to be praised.

Thou knowest what is fit to be given to every one. And why this man hath less and that more, it is not for us to judge, but for Thee Who dost exactly know every one's deserts.

4. Wherefore, O Lord God, I even esteem it a great mercy, not to have much of that which outwardly and in the opinion of men seems worthy of glory and applause.

He who considereth the poverty and unworthiness of himself, should be so far from conceiving grief or sadness, or from being cast down thereat, that he rather should take great comfort, and be glad.

For Thou, O God, hast chosen the poor and humble and the despised of this world for Thyself, to be Thy friends and servants.

Witnesses are Thine apostles themselves, whom Thou hast made princes over all the earth.

And yet they lived in the world without complaint, so

humble and simple, without all malice and deceit, that they even rejoiced to suffer reproach for Thy name ; and what the world abhorred, they embraced with great affection.

5. When therefore a man loveth Thee and acknowledgeth Thy benefits, nothing ought so to rejoice him as Thy will toward him.

And herewith he ought to be so contented and comforted, that he would as willingly be the least, as another would wish to be the greatest.

He would too be as contented in the last place as in the first ; as willing to be a despised castaway, of no name or character, as to be preferred in honour before others, and to be greater in the world than they.

For Thy will and the love of Thy glory ought to be preferred before all things, and to comfort him more, and to please him better, than all the benefits which either he hath received or may receive.



CHAPTER XXIII.

*OF FOUR THINGS THAT BRING MUCH INWARD
PEACE.*



OW will I teach thee, my son, the way of peace
and of true liberty.

O Lord, I beseech Thee, do as Thou sayest,
for this is delightful to me to hear.

Be desirous, My son, to do the will of another rather than
thine own.

Choose always to have less rather than more.

Seek always the lowest place, and to be inferior to every
one.

Wish always, and pray, that the will of God may be wholly
fulfilled in thee.

Behold, such a man entereth within the borders of peace
and rest.

2. O LORD, this short discourse of Thine containeth within
itself much perfection.

It is little in words, but full of meaning, and abundant in
fruit.

For if it could faithfully be kept by me, I should not be
easily disturbed.

For as often as I feel myself unquiet and weighed down, I
find I have strayed from this doctrine.

But Thou Who canst do all things, and ever lovest the
profiting of my soul, increase in me Thy grace, that I may

be able to fulfil Thy words, and to work out mine own salvation.

A Prayer against evil thoughts.

3. O LORD, my God, be not Thou far from me ; my God, make haste to help me: for there have risen up against me sundry thoughts, and great fears, afflicting my soul.

How shall I pass through unhurt? how shall I break them to pieces?

“I will go before thee and will humble the great ones of the earth ; I will open the doors of the prison, and reveal unto thee hidden secrets.”

Do, O Lord, as Thou sayest, and let all evil thoughts fly from before Thy face.

This is my hope, my one only consolation, to flee unto Thee in every tribulation, to trust in Thee, to call upon Thee from my inmost heart, and to wait patiently for Thy consolation.

A Prayer for Mental Illumination.

4. O merciful JESUS, enlighten Thou me with the clearness of Thine inward light, and take away all darkness from the habitation of my heart.

Repress Thou my many wandering thoughts, and break in pieces those temptations, which so violently assault me.

Fight Thou strongly for me, and vanquish the alluring desires of the flesh ; that so peace may be obtained by Thy power, and that Thine abundant praise may resound in a holy temple, that is, in a pure conscience.

Command the winds and tempests ; say unto the sea, be still ; say to the north wind, blow not ; and there shall be a great calm.

5. Send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may shine

upon the earth ; for until Thou enlighten me, I am but as earth without form and void.

Pour forth Thy grace from above, wash my heart in Thy heavenly dew, supply fresh streams of devotion to water the face of the earth, that it may bring forth fruit good and excellent.

Lift Thou up my mind which is pressed down by a load of sin, and draw up my whole desire to things heavenly ; that having tasted the sweetness of celestial happiness, it may be irksome to me even to think of earthly things.

6. Do Thou pluck me away, and deliver me from all the unlasting comfort of this world ; for no created thing can fully comfort and quiet my desires.

Join Thou me to Thyself with an inseparable band of love ; for Thou, even Thou alone, dost satisfy him that loveth Thee, and without Thee all things are vain.



CHAPTER XXIV.

*OF AVOIDING CURIOUS ENQUIRY INTO THE
LIVES OF OTHER MEN.*

Be not curious, my son, nor trouble thyself with idle cares.

What is this or that to thee? follow thou Me.

For what is it to thee, whether that man be such or such, or whether this man do or speak this or that?

Thou shalt not need to answer for others, but shalt give account for thyself; why therefore dost thou entangle thyself?

Behold, I know every one, and do see all things that are done under the sun; also I understand how it is with every one, what he thinks, what he wishes, and what his intentions are.

Unto Me therefore all things are to be committed; but do thou keep thyself in peace, and leave the unquiet to be as unquiet as they will.

Whatsoever they shall have done or said, shall come upon themselves, for Me they cannot deceive.

2. Be not careful for the shadow of a great name, or for the familiar friendship of many, or for the particular affection of men.

For these things both distract the heart, and greatly darken it.

Willingly would I speak My word, and reveal My secrets unto thee, if thou wouldst diligently observe My coming, and open unto Me the door of thine heart.

Be thou circumspect, and watchful in prayer, and in all things humble thyself.

CHAPTER XXV.

*WHEREIN FIRM PEACE OF HEART AND TRUE
SPIRITUAL PROGRESS CONSISTETH.*



Y son, I have said : " Peace I leave with you,
My peace I give unto you : not as the world
giveth, give I unto you."

Peace is what all desire, but all do not care
for the things that pertain unto true peace.

My peace is with the humble and gentle of heart ; in much
patience shall thy peace be.

If thou wilt hear Me and follow My voice, thou shalt be
able to enjoy much peace.

WHAT then shall I do, Lord ?

IN every matter look to thyself, what thou doest and
sayest ; and direct thy whole attention into this, to please
Me alone, and neither to desire nor to seek any thing besides
Me.

But of the words and deeds of others judge nothing rashly :
neither do thou entangle thyself with things not entrusted
unto thee, that thus thou mayest be little or seldom disturbed.

2. But never to feel any disturbance at all, nor to suffer
any trouble of mind or body, belongs not to this life, but to
the state of eternal rest.

Think not therefore that thou hast found true peace, if thou
feel no heaviness ; nor that all is well, if thou art vexed with
no adversary ; nor that all is perfect, if all things are done
according to thy desire.

Do not thou think highly of thyself, nor account thyself to

be specially beloved, if thou be in a state of great devotion and sweetness ; for it is not by these things that a true lover of virtue is known, nor doth the spiritual progress and perfection of a man consist in these things.

3. WHEREIN, then, O Lord, doth it consist ?

IN giving thyself up with all thy heart to the divine will, not seeking thine own interest, either in great matters or in small, either in time or in eternity.

So shalt thou keep one and the same countenance, always giving thanks both in prosperity and adversity, weighing all things equally.

Be thou so full of courage, and so patient in hope, that when inward comfort is withdrawn, thou mayest prepare thy heart to suffer greater things ; and do not justify thyself, as though thou oughtest not to suffer so great afflictions, but justify Me in whatever I appoint, and praise My holy name without ceasing.

Then thou walkest in the true way of peace, and thou shalt have a sure hope to see My face again with great delight.

Now, if thou attain to the full contempt of thyself, know that thou shalt then enjoy abundance of peace, as great as this thy state of sojourning is capable of.



CHAPTER XXVI.

*OF THE EXCELLENCY OF A FREE MIND, WHICH
IS SOONER GAINED BY PRAYER THAN BY
READING.*



LORD, it is the business of a perfect man not to withdraw his mind from thought of heavenly things, and thus to pass amidst many cares without care.

Not as one destitute of all feeling, but, by the privilege of a free mind, cleaving to no creature with inordinate affection.

2. I beseech Thee, my most gracious God, preserve me from the cares of this life, lest I should be too much entangled thereby ; and from the many necessities of the body, lest I should be ensnared by pleasure ; and from whatsoever is an obstacle to the soul, lest, broken with troubles, I should be overthrown.

I speak not of those things which worldly vanity so earnestly desireth, but of those miseries, which, as punishments and as the common curse of mortality, do weigh down and hinder the soul of Thy servant, that it cannot enter into the freedom of the Spirit so often as it would.

3. O my God, Thou sweetness ineffable, turn into bitterness all carnal comforts ; they draw me away from the love of eternal things, and in evil wise allure me by the view of some present good.

Let me not be overcome, O Lord, let me not be overcome by flesh and blood ; let not the world and the brief glory thereof deceive me ; let not the devil and his subtle fraud overtake me.

Give me strength to resist, patience to endure, and constancy to persevere.

Give me, instead of all the comforts of the world, the most sweet unction of Thy Spirit, and, in place of carnal love, pour into my heart the love of Thy name.

4. Behold ! meat, drink, clothing, and other necessities for the support of the body, are burdensome to a fervent spirit.

Grant me to use such refreshments moderately, and not to be entangled with an undue desire of them.

It is not lawful to cast away all things, because nature must be sustained ; but to require superfluities and those things that are pleasurable, the holy law forbiddeth us ; for then the flesh would rebel against the Spirit.

Herein, I beseech Thee, let Thy hand teach me, that I may not exceed the due bounds.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THAT IT IS SELF-LOVE WHICH MOST HINDERS FROM THE CHIEFEST GOOD.



Y son, thou oughtest to give all for all, and to be in nothing thyself.

Know thou that the love of thyself doth hurt thee more than any thing in the world.

According to the love and affection thou bearest to anything, so doth it cleave unto thee more or less.

If thy love be pure, simple, and well-ordered, thou shalt be free from bondage.

Do not covet that which it is not lawful for thee to have. Do not have that which may hinder thee, and may deprive thee of inward liberty.

Strange it is that thou committest not thyself wholly unto Me from the bottom of thy heart, together with all things thou canst have or desire.

2. Why dost thou consume thyself with vain grief? why weariest thyself with needless cares?

Submit to My will, and thou shalt not suffer.

If thou seek this or that, and wouldst be here or there, the better to enjoy thine own profit and pleasure, thou shalt never be at peace, nor free from trouble. For in every case somewhat will be wanting, and in every place there will be something to cross thee.

Man profiteth not therefore to obtain and multiply any outward things, but rather to despise them, and utterly to root them out of his heart.

And this thou must understand not of wealth only, but of seeking after honour also, and of the desire of vain praise, which all must pass away with this world.

No place availeth if the spirit of fervour be wanting, neither shall that peace long continue, which is sought from without.

If the state of thy heart be destitute of a true foundation, if thou stand not steadfast in Me, thou mayest change, but shalt not better thyself.

For when occasion ariseth and is laid hold of, thou wilt find more than that which thou didst flee from.

A Prayer for a Clean Heart, and Heavenly Wisdom.

4. Strengthen me, O God, by the grace of Thy Holy Spirit.

Grant me to be strengthened with might in the inner man, and to empty my heart of all useless care, that I be not drawn away with sundry desires of any thing, whether mean or precious, but that I look on all things as passing away, on myself also as soon to pass away with them.

For nothing abideth under the sun, where all things are vanity and vexation of spirit. O how wise is he that so considereth them?

5. O Lord, grant me heavenly wisdom, that I may learn above all things to seek and to find Thee, above all things to enjoy and love Thee, and to think of all other things as they really are, according to Thy wisdom.

Grant me prudently to avoid him that flattereth me, and to endure patiently him that contradicts me.

Because it is a great part of wisdom not to be moved with every wind of words, nor to give ear to a flatterer ; for thus we shall walk securely.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AGAINST THE TONGUES OF SLANDERERS.



MAKE it not grievously, my son, if some think ill of thee, and speak that which thou wouldest not willingly hear.

Thou oughtest to judge hardest of thyself, and to think no man weaker than thyself.

If thou dost walk spiritually, thou wilt not much weigh fleeting words.

It is no small wisdom to keep silence in an evil time, and in thy heart to turn thyself to Me, and not to be troubled by the judgment of men.

2. Let not thy peace depend on the tongues of men ; for whether they judge well of thee or ill, thou art not on account other than thyself. Where are true peace and true glory ? are they not in Me ?

And he that careth not to please men, nor feareth to displease them, shall enjoy much peace.

From inordinate love and vain fear ariseth all disquietness of heart and distraction of the mind.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HOW THAT WE OUGHT TO CALL UPON GOD, AND BLESS HIM WHEN TRIBULATION IS UPON US.



BLESSED be Thy Name, O Lord, for ever ; for that it is Thy will that this temptation and tribulation should come upon me.

I cannot escape it, but must needs flee unto Thee, that Thou mayest help me and turn it to my good.

Lord, I am now in affliction, and am ill at ease. I am much troubled with the present suffering.

And now, O beloved Father, what shall I say ? I am in a strait ; save Thou me from this hour.

Yet therefore came I unto this hour that Thou mightest be glorified, when I shall have been greatly humbled, and by Thee delivered.

Let it please Thee, Lord, to deliver me ; for, wretched that I am, what can I do, and whither shall I go without Thee ?

Grant me patience, O Lord, even now in this my strait. Help me, my God, and then I will not fear how grievously I may be afflicted.

2. And now in the midst of my troubles what shall I say ?

Lord, Thy will be done ! I have well deserved to be afflicted.

Surely I ought to bear it ; and O that I may bear it with patience, until the tempest be past, and all be well again, or even better !

But Thine omnipotent hand is able to take even this temptation from me, that I utterly sink not under it ; as oftentimes heretofore Thou hast done unto me, O my God, my Mercy ?

And the more difficult it is to me, so much the more easy to Thee is this change of the right hand of the Most High.

CHAPTER XXX.

OF CRAVING THE DIVINE AID, AND OF CONFIDENCE OF RECOVERING GRACE.



AM the Lord that giveth strength in the day of tribulation.

Come thou unto Me, when it is not well with thee.

This is that which most of all hindereth heavenly consolation, that thou art too slow in turning thyself unto prayer.

For before thou dost earnestly supplicate Me, thou seekest in the meanwhile many comforts, and for refreshment in outward things.

And hence it comes to pass that all doth little profit, until thou consider well that I am He Who doth rescue them that trust in Him ; and that out of Me there is neither powerful help, nor profitable counsel, nor lasting remedy.

But do thou, having now recovered breath after the tempest gather strength again in the light of My mercies : for I am at hand (saith the Lord) to repair all, not only entirely, but also abundantly and in most plentiful measure.

2. Is there anything hard to Me ? or shall I be like unto one that promiseth and performeth not ?

Where is thy faith ? stand firmly and with perseverance ; take courage and be patient ; comfort will come to thee in due time.

Wait, wait, I say, for Me : I will come and help thee.

It is a temptation that vexeth thee, and a vain fear, this that affrighteth thee.

What else doth anxiety about the future bring thee, but sorrow upon sorrow ? "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."

It is vain and unprofitable, to be disturbed about future things, which perhaps will never come to pass.

3. But it is in the nature of man to be deluded with such imaginations ; and it is a sign of a mind as yet weak to be so easily drawn away by the suggestions of the enemy.

For so that he may delude and deceive thee, he careth not whether it be by true things or false ; whether he overthrow thee with the love of present, or the fear of future things.

Let not therefore thy heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Trust in Me, and put thy confidence in My mercy.

When thou thinkest thyself farthest off from Me, oftentimes I am nearest unto thee.

When thou thinkest that almost all is lost, then oftentimes the greatest gain of reward is close at hand.

All is not lost, when a thing falleth out against thee.

Thou must not judge according to present feeling ; nor so take any grief, or give thyself over to it, from whenceso-

ever it cometh, as though all hope of escape were taken away.

4. Think not thyself wholly left, although for a time I have sent thee some tribulation, or even have withdrawn thy desired comfort ; for this is the way to the kingdom of heaven.

And without doubt it is more expedient for thee and the rest of My servants, that ye be exercised with adversities, than that ye should have all things according to your desires.

I know the secret thoughts of thy heart, and that it is very expedient for thy welfare, that thou be sometimes left without spiritual enjoyment, lest perhaps thou shouldst be puffed up with thy prosperous estate, and shouldst be willing to please thyself in that which thou art not.

That which I have given, I can take away ; and can restore it again when I please.

5. When I give it, it is Mine ; when I withdraw it, I take not anything that is thine ; for every good and every perfect gift is Mine.

If I send thee affliction, or any cross whatsoever, repine not, nor let thy heart fail thee : I can quickly succour thee, and turn all thy heaviness into joy.

Yet I am righteous and greatly to be praised, when I deal thus with thee.

6. If thou be wise, thou wilt never mourn dejectedly for any adversity, but rather wilt rejoice and give thanks.

Yea, thou wilt account this thine especial joy, that I afflict thee with sorrows, and do not spare thee.

"As My Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you," said I unto My beloved disciples ; whom I sent not out to temporal joys, but to great conflicts ; not to honour, but to contempt ; not to idleness, but to labours ; not to rest, but that they should with patience bring forth much fruit. Remember thou these words, O My son !

CHAPTER XXXI.

*OF NEGLECT OF ALL CREATURES, IN ORDER TO
FIND OUT THE CREATOR:*



LORD, I stand much in need of yet greater grace, if I shall attain to that state, where neither man nor any creature shall be a hindrance unto me.

For as long as anything holds me back, I cannot freely take my flight to Thee.

He desired to fly freely who said, "Oh! that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest!"

What is more quiet than the single eye? and who more free than he that desireth nothing upon earth?

A man ought therefore to mount above all creatures, and perfectly to renounce himself, and to see that Thou, the Creator of all things, hast nothing amongst creatures like unto Thyself.

Unless a man be set free from all creatures, he cannot entirely attend unto divine things.

And therefore are there so few contemplative, for that few can wholly withdraw themselves from things perishing.

2. To obtain this, there is need of much grace, to elevate the soul, and carry it away above itself.

And unless a man be uplifted in spirit, and be freed from all creatures, and wholly united unto God, whatsoever he knoweth, and whatsoever he hath, is of no account.

A long while shall he be little, and lie grovelling below, whoever he be that esteemeth any thing great, but the one only infinite eternal Good.

And whatsoever is not God, is nothing, and ought to be accounted as nothing.

There is great difference between the wisdom of a devout man, and the knowledge of a learned man.

Far more noble is that learning which floweth from above, from the divine influence, than that which is painfully gotten by the wit of man.

3. There are many that desire contemplation, but they practise not those things that are needful thereunto.

A great hindrance it is, that men rest in signs and in the things of sense, and take little heed to mortify themselves.

I know not what it is, by what spirit we are led, nor what we pretend, we that seem to be called spiritual, that we take so much pains, and are so full of anxiety about transitory things, and so rarely think of our own inward concerns with full recollection of mind.

4. Alas, presently, after a slight recollection, we rush again into outward things, and weigh not our works with diligent examination.

We heed not where our affections lie, nor bewail the impurity that is in our actions.

For "all flesh had corrupted his way," and therefore did the great deluge ensue.

Since, then, the inward affection is much corrupted, the action thence proceeding must needs be corrupted also, a proof of the absence of all inward vigour.

From a pure heart proceedeth the fruit of a good life.

5. We ask how much man has done: but from what principle he acts is not so diligently considered.

We enquire whether he be courageous, rich, handsome, skilful, a good writer, a good singer, or a good labourer; but how poor he is in spirit, how patient and meek, how devout and spiritual, is seldom spoken of.

Nature respecteth the outward things of a man, grace turneth itself to the inward.

The one is often disappointed ; the other hath her trust in God, and so is not deceived.

CHAPTER XXXII.

*OF SELF-DENIAL, AND RENOUNCING EVERY
EVIL APPETITE.*



THOU canst not possess perfect liberty unless thou wholly renounce thyself.

They are but in fetters who merely seek their own interest, and are lovers of themselves. Covetous are they, curious, wanderers, always seeking what is soft and delicate, not the things of JESUS Christ, but oftentimes devising and framing that which will not continue.

For all that is not of God shall perish.

Keep this short and complete saying : " Forsake all and thou shalt find all." Forego desire and thou shalt find rest.

Consider this well, and when thou hast fulfilled it, thou shalt understand all things.

O LORD, this is not the work of one day, nor children's sport ; yea, rather in this short word is included all religious perfection.

MY son, thou oughtest not to turn back, nor at once to be cast down, when thou hearest of the way of the perfect;

but rather to be stirred up to higher things, and at least in longing desire to sigh after them.

I would it were so with thee, and thou wert arrived at this, to be no longer a lover of thyself, but to stand merely at My beck, and at His Whom I have appointed a father over thee ; then thou shouldst exceedingly please Me, and all thy life would pass away in joy and peace.

Thou hast yet many things to part with, which unless thou wholly resign thou shalt not attain to that which thou desirest.

“ I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest become rich ; ” that is, heavenly wisdom, which treadeth under foot all lower things.

Set little by earthly wisdom, and study not to please others.

3. I said, that mean things must be bought with things which seem precious and of great esteem among men.

For true heavenly wisdom doth seem very mean, of small account, and almost forgotten among men, as having no high thoughts of itself, nor seeking to be magnified upon earth. Many indeed praise it with their lips, but in their life they are far from it ; yet is it the precious pearl, which is hidden from many.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

*OF INCONSTANCY OF HEART, AND OF HAVING
OUR FINAL INTENTIONS DIRECTED UNTO GOD.*

Y son, trust not to thy feeling, for whatever it be now, it will quickly be changed towards some other thing.

As long as thou livest, thou art subject to change, even against thy will ; so that thou art at one time merry, at another sad ; at one time quiet, at another troubled ; now devout, now undevout ; now diligent, now listless ; now grave, and now light.

But he that is wise and well instructed in the Spirit standeth fast upon these changing things ; not heeding what he feeleth in himself ; but that the whole intent of his mind may be to the right and the best end.

For thus he will be able to continue one and the same and unshaken, in the midst of so many various events directing the single eye of his intent unto Me.

2. And the purer the eye of the intent is, with so much the more constancy doth a man pass through the several kinds of storms which assail him.

But in many the eye of a pure intent waxes dim, for it is quickly drawn aside to any pleasurable object.

For it is rare to find one who is wholly free from all self-seeking.

So of old the Jews came to Bethany to Martha and Mary, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see also Lazarus.

The eye of our intent therefore is to be purified, that it may be single and right, and is to be directed unto Me, beyond all various earthly objects which come between.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THAT GOD IS PRECIOUS, ABOVE ALL THINGS, TO HIM THAT LOVETH HIM.



BEHOLD! My God, and my All. What would I more, and what greater happiness do I desire?

O sweet and delightful word! but to him only that loveth the word, not the world nor the things that are in the world.

"My God, and my all!" To him that understandeth, enough is said; and to repeat it again and again, is pleasant to him that loveth.

For when Thou art present, all things are delightful; but when Thou art absent, every thing becometh irksome.

Thou givest quietness of heart and peace, and pleasant joy.

Thou makest us to take delight in all things, and in all to praise Thee; neither can any thing please long without Thee; but if it be pleasant, Thy grace must needs be present, and it must be seasoned with the sweetness of Thy wisdom.

2. What will not be pleasant to the taste unto him who hath a true relish for Thee?

And to him that hath no relish for Thee, what can be pleasant?

But the wise men of the world, and they also who relish the things of the flesh, have not Thy wisdom; for in the former is found much vanity, and in the latter death.

But they that follow Thee in contempt of worldly things, and mortification of the flesh, are known to be truly wise:

for they are brought over from vanity to truth, from the flesh to the spirit.

These relish God ; and what good soever is found in creatures, they wholly refer unto the praise of their Maker.

Great, however, yea, very great is the difference between the sweetness of the Creator and of the creature, of eternity and of time, of light uncreated and of light that receiveth its light therefrom.

3. O everlasting Light, surpassing all created lights, dart the beams of Thy brightness from above, to pierce the most inward parts of my heart.

Purify, rejoice, enlighten and enliven my spirit with the powers thereof, that I may cleave unto Thee with abundance of joy.

O when will that blessed and desired hour come, that Thou mayest satisfy me with Thy presence, and be unto me all in all.

So long as this is not granted me, I shall not have perfect joy.

Still alas ! the old man doth live in me : he is not wholly crucified, he is not perfectly dead.

Still doth he strive against the Spirit, and stirreth up inward wars, and suffereth not the kingdom of my soul to be in peace.

4. But Thou that rulest the power of the sea, and stillest the rising of the waves, arise and help me.

Scatter the nations that delight in war, crush Thou them in Thy might.

Display Thy greatness, I beseech Thee, and let Thy right hand be glorified, for there is no other hope or refuge for me, save in Thee, O Lord my God.

CHAPTER XXXV.

*THAT THERE IS NO SECURITY FROM TEMPTATION
IN THIS LIFE.*

THOU art never secure in this life, but as long as thou livest, thou shalt always need spiritual armour.

Thou dwellest among enemies, and are assaulted on the right hand and on the left.

If therefore thou defend not thyself on every side with the shield of patience, thou wilt not be long without a wound.

Moreover, if thou fix not thy heart sincerely on Me, willing to suffer all things for Me, thou wilt not be able to bear the heat of this combat, nor to attain to the palm of the blessed.

Thou oughtest therefore manfully to go through all, and to be strong handed against whatsoever withstandeth thee.

For to him that overcometh is manna given, and for the indolent there remaineth much misery.

2. If thou seek rest in this life, how wilt thou then attain to the everlasting rest?

Dispose not thyself for much rest, but for great patience.

Seek true peace, not in earth, but in heaven; not in men, nor in any other creature, but in God alone.

For the love of God thou oughtest cheerfully to undergo all labour, grief, temptation, vexation, anxiety, necessity, infirmity, injury, detraction, reproof, humiliation, shame, correction, and scorn.

These help to virtue; these are the trial of a babe in Christ; of these consist the heavenly crown.

I will give an everlasting reward for a short labour, and infinite glory for transitory shame.

3. Thinkest thou that thou shalt always have spiritual consolations at thy will ?

My saints had not such always, but they had many afflictions, and sundry temptations, and great discomforts.

But in all these they bore themselves patiently, and trusted rather in God than in themselves, knowing that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared to the future glory.

Wilt thou have that at once, which many after many tears and great labours have hardly obtained ?

Wait for the Lord, behave thyself manfully, and be of good courage ; do not leave thy place, but steadily expose both body and soul for the glory of God.

I will reward thee most plentifully ; I will be with thee in every tribulation.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AGAINST THE VAIN JUDGMENTS OF MAN.



EST thy heart firmly on the Lord, and fear not the judgment of men, when conscience testifieth of thy dutifulness and innocency.

It is a good and happy thing to suffer in such a way ; nor will this be grievous to a heart which is humble, and which trusteth rather in God than in itself.

The most part of men are given to talk much, and therefore little trust is to be placed in them.

Moreover also, to satisfy all is not possible.

Although Saint Paul endeavoured to please all in the Lord, and made himself all things unto all men, yet with him it

was a very small thing that he should be judged of man's judgment.

2. He did for the edification and salvation of others what lay in him ; yet could he not hinder but that he was sometimes judged and despised by others.

Therefore he committed all to God, Who knew all ; and against such as thought vanities and lies, and spake boastfully whatever they listed, he with patience and humility defended himself against unjust tongues.

Yet sometimes he made answer, lest the weak should be offended by his silence.

3. Who art thou that fearest a mortal man ? to-day he is, and to-morrow he is not seen.

Fear God, and thou need not shrink from the terrors of men.

What harm can the words or injuries of any man do thee ? He hurteth himself rather than thee, nor shall he be able to avoid the judgment of God, whosoever he be.

Do thou have God before thine eyes, and contend not with peevish words.

And if for the present thou seem to be worsted and to suffer shame undeservedly, do not therefore repine, neither do thou by impatience lessen thy crown.

But rather lift thou up thine eyes to Me in heaven, who am able to deliver thee from all shame and wrong, and to render to every man according to his works.



CHAPTER XXXVII.

*OF PURE AND ENTIRE RESIGNATION OF SELF
FOR THE OBTAINING FREEDOM OF HEART.*



FORSAKE thyself, and thou shalt find Me.

Neither choose any thing, nor appropriate anything whatever to thyself, and thou shalt always be a gainer.

For greater grace shall be added to thee, the moment thou dost resign thyself.

LORD, how often shall I resign myself, and wherein shall I forsake myself?

Always and at every hour ; as well in small things as in great. I accept nothing, but do desire that thou be found naked of all things.

Otherwise, how canst thou be Mine, and I thine, unless thou be stripped of all self-will, both within and without ?

The sooner thou doest this, the better it will be with thee ; and the more fully and sincerely thou doest it, so much the more shalt thou please Me, and so much the greater shall be thy gain.

2. Some there are who resign themselves, but with exceptions : for they put not their whole trust in God, therefore they study how to provide for themselves.

Some also at first do offer all, but afterwards, being assailed with temptation, they return again to their own ways, and therefore make no progress in virtue.

These shall not attain to the true liberty of a pure heart,

nor to the favour of My friendship, unless they first make an entire resignation and a daily oblation of themselves.

3. I have very often said unto thee, and now again I say the same, Forsake thyself, resign thyself and thou shalt enjoy much inward peace.

Give all for all ; seek nothing, ask back nothing ; abide purely and with a firm confidence in Me, and thou shalt possess Me ; thou shalt be free in heart, and darkness shall not tread thee down.

Let this be thy whole endeavour, this be thy prayer, this thy desire ; that, being stripped of all selfishness, thou mayest with entire simplicity follow JESUS only, and, dying to thyself, live eternally to Me.

Then all vain imaginations, evil perturbations, and superfluous cares shall fly from thee.

Then also immoderate fear shall leave thee, and inordinate love shall die.



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

*OF GOOD GOVERNMENT OF OURSELVES IN THINGS
EXTERNAL, AND OF RECOURSE TO GOD IN
DANGER.*



Y son, thou oughtest to endeavour with all diligence, that, in every place, and in all outward business, thou be inwardly free, and thoroughly master of thyself; and that all things be under thee, and not thou under them.

Thou must be lord and master of thine own actions, not a servant or a hireling.

Rather shouldst thou be as a freed man and a true Hebrew, passing over into the lot and freedom of the sons of God.

For they stand above present things, and contemplate the eternal things.

They look on transitory things with the left eye, and do behold the things of heaven with the right.

Temporal things cannot draw them; rather do they draw temporal things to serve them, and this in such way as God hath ordained, and are appointed by the great Work-master, who hath left nothing in His creation without due order.

2. If too thou in all things stand steadfast, and do not estimate what thou seest and hearest by the outward appearance, nor with a carnal eye; but at once in every affair dost enter with Moses into the tabernacle to ask counsel of the Lord; thou shalt return instructed concerning many things, both present and to come.

For Moses always had recourse to the tabernacle for the deciding of doubts and questions, and fled to the help of prayer for support under dangers and the iniquity of men.

So oughtest thou in like manner to fly to the closet of thine heart, very earnestly craving the divine favour.

For we read, that for this cause Joshua and the children of Israel were deceived by the Gibeonites, because they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord, but, giving credit to fair words, were deluded by their counterfeit piety.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THAT A MAN SHOULD NOT BE OVER-ANXIOUS IN MATTERS OF BUSINESS.



ALWAYS commit thy cause to Me. I will dispose well of it in due time.

Wait for My ordering of it, and thou shalt find it will be for thy good.

O Lord, I do most cheerfully commit all unto Thee, for my care can little avail.

Would that I did not so much dwell on future things, but gave myself up cheerfully to Thy good pleasure.

2. My son, oftentimes a man vehemently struggleth for something he desireth, and when he hath arrived at it, he beginneth to be of another mind ; for man's affections do not long continue fixed on one object, but rather do urge him from one thing to another.

It is therefore no small benefit for a man to forsake himself even in the smallest things.

3. The true profiting of a man consisteth in the denying of himself ; and he that thus denieth himself, liveth in great freedom and security.

But the old enemy, who always setteth himself against all

that are good, ceaseth at no time from tempting, but day and night lieth grievously in wait, to cast the unwary, if he can, headlong into the snare of deceit.

Therefore, saith our Lord, "Watch ye, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

CHAPTER XL.

*THAT MAN HATH NO GOOD OF HIMSELF, NOR ANY
THING OF WHICH HE CAN GLORY.*



LORD, who is man, that Thou art so mindful of him, or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?

What hath man deserved that Thou shouldest grant him thy favour?

O Lord, what cause have I to complain, if Thou forsake me? or if Thou do not that which I desire, what can I justly say against it?

Surely this I may truly say; Lord, I am nothing, I can do nothing, I have nothing that is good of myself, but I do ever tend to nothing.

And unless Thou help me, and inwardly instruct me, I become altogether lukewarm.

2. But Thou, O Lord, art always the same, and endurest for ever, always good, just, and holy, doing all things well, justly, and holily, and ordering all things with wisdom.

But I, that am more ready to go backward than forward, do not ever continue in one estate, for "seven times are passed over me."

Yet is it soon better with me, when it so pleaseth Thee,

and when Thou vouchsafest to stretch forth Thy hand ; for Thou canst help me, and canst so strengthen me, that my countenance shall be no more changed, but my heart shall be turned to Thee alone, and be at rest.

3. Wherefore, if I could once perfectly cast off all human comfort, either for the attainment of devotion, or because of mine own necessities enforcing me to seek after Thee, then might I hope in Thy grace, and rejoice for the gift of fresh consolation.

4. Thanks be unto Thee, from Whom all things proceed, whensoever it is well with me.

But I am in Thy sight mere vanity and nothing, weak, and never continuing in one stay.

Whereof then can I glory ? or for what do I desire to be respected ? is it that I am nothing ? this is most vain.

Mere empty glory is in truth an evil pest, a great vanity ; because it draweth a man from true glory, and robbeth him of heavenly grace.

For whilst he pleaseth himself, he displeaseth Thee ; whilst he gapeth after the praise of men, he is deprived of true virtues.

5. But the true glory and holy exultation is for a man to glory in Thee, and not in himself ; to rejoice in Thy name, not in his own strength, and not to delight in any creature but for Thy sake.

Praised be Thy Name, not mine ; magnified be Thy work, not mine. Let Thy holy Name be blessed, but to me let no part of men's praises be given.

Thou art my glory, Thou art the joy of my heart.

In Thee will I glory and rejoice all the day, but as for myself I will not glory, but in my infirmities.

6. Let the Jews seek honour one of another, I will seek that which cometh alone from God.

For all human glory, all temporal honour, all worldly elevation, compared to Thy eternal glory, is vanity and folly.

O my God, my Truth, and my Mercy, O Blessed Trinity, to Thee alone be praise, honour, power, and glory for ever and ever.

CHAPTER XLI.

OF THE CONTEMPT OF TEMPORAL HONOUR.



Y son, trouble not thyself, if thou see others honoured and advanced, whilst thou art contemned and debased.

Lift up thy heart into heaven to Me, and the contempt of men on earth shall not grieve thee.

LORD, we are not blind, and are quickly misled by vanity.

If I look rightly into myself, I cannot say that any creature hath ever done me wrong : and therefore I cannot justly complain before Thee.

2. But because I have often and grievously sinned against Thee, all creatures do justly take arms against me.

Therefore, unto me shame and contempt is justly due, but unto Thee praise, honour, and glory.

And unless I prepare myself with cheerful willingness to be despised and forsaken of all creatures, and to be esteemed as nothing, I cannot obtain inward peace and stability, nor be spiritually enlightened, nor be fully united unto Thee.

CHAPTER XLII.

THAT OUR PEACE IS NOT TO BE SET ON MEN.

If thou rest thy peace on any because of the opinion thou hast of him, or because of thine intimate acquaintance with him, thou shalt ever be inconstant.

But if thou have recourse unto the ever-living and abiding Truth, the departure or death of a friend will not grieve thee.

Thy regard for thy friend ought to be grounded in Me ; and for My sake is he to be beloved, whosoever he be that thou thinkest well of, and who is very dear unto thee in this life.

Without Me friendship hath no strength, and no continuance ; neither is that love true and pure, which is not knit by Me.

Thou oughtest to be so dead to affections towards thy friends, that thou shouldst be willing to be without all human friendship.

Man approacheth so much the nearer unto God, the farther he departeth from all earthly comfort.

And the lower he descendeth in himself, and the meaner he becometh in his own sight, the higher he ascendeth to God.

But he that attributeth any good unto himself, hindereth the entry of God's grace ; for the grace of the Holy Spirit ever seeketh an humble heart.

If thou couldst perfectly annihilate thyself, and empty thyself of all created love, then should I be constrained to flow into thee with great abundance of grace.

When thou lookest unto the creature, the sight of the Creator is withdrawn from thee.

Learn in all things to overcome thyself, for the love of thy Creator, and then shalt thou be able to attain to divine knowledge.

How small soever anything be, if it be inordinately loved and regarded, it keepeth thee back from the highest good.

CHAPTER XLIII.

AGAINST VAIN AND SECULAR LEARNING.



LET not the sayings of men move thee, however fair and ingenious they may be. "For the kingdom of God consisteth not in word, but in power."

Consider well My words, for they inflame the heart, and enlighten the mind ; they cause compunction, and carry with them much consolation.

Never read the word of God in order to appear more learned or more wise.

Be studious for the mortification of thy sins ; for this will profit thee more than the knowledge of many difficult questions.

2. When thou shalt have read and known many things, thou must ever return to the one beginning and principle.

I am He that teacheth man knowledge ; and I give to little children a clearer understanding than can be taught by man.

Therefore he, to whom I speak, shall quickly be wise, and shall profit much in the Spirit.

Woe be to them that enquire many curious things of men, and care little about the way of serving Me.

The time will come, when the Master of masters, Christ the Lord, shall appear, to hear the lessons of all, that is, to examine the consciences of every one.

And then will he search Jerusalem with candles ; and the hidden things of darkness shall be laid open, and the arguings of men's tongues shall be silent.

3. I am He who in one instant do raise up the humble mind, so that a man shall understand more of the eternal truth, than if he had studied ten years in the schools.

I teach without noise of words, without confusion of opinions, without the desire of honour, without arguments.

I am He who instructs men to despise earthly things, to loathe things present, to seek things heavenly, to flee honours, to endure offences, to place all hope in Me, out of Me to desire nothing, and above all things ardently to love Me.

4. A certain one by entirely loving Me, became instructed in divine things, and was wont to speak admirable truths.

He profited more by forsaking all things, than by studying niceties.

But to some men I speak common things, to others things uncommon ; to some I appear sweetly by signs and figures, and to some I reveal mysteries with much light.

The voice of books is indeed one, but it instructs not all alike ; I am the teacher of the truth, I am the searcher of the heart, the discernor of the thoughts, the mover of actions, distributing to every man as I judge meet.

CHAPTER XLIV.

*OF NOT DRAWING TROUBLE TO OURSELVES
FROM OUTWARD THINGS.*

Y son, in many things it is thy duty to be ignorant, and to esteem thyself as dead upon earth, and to whom the whole world is crucified.

Many things thou must also pass by with a deaf ear, and think rather of those which belong to thy peace.

It is more profitable to turn away one's eyes from unpleasing things, and to leave every one to his own opinion, than to be a slave to contentious discourses.

If all stand well betwixt thee and God, and if thou hast His judgment in thy mind, thou shalt easily endure to be overcome.

2. O LORD, to what a pass are we come ! Behold, we bewail a temporal loss : for a pitiful gain we toil and run ; and the spiritual losses are forgotten, and hardly at last return to the memory of it.

That which little or nothing profiteth we heed ; and that which is especially necessary, we pass over ; because the whole man doth slide off into outward things ; and unless he speedily repent, he willingly setteth down in them.

CHAPTER XLV.

*THAT CREDIT IS NOT TO BE GIVEN TO ALL: AND
THAT MAN IS PRONE TO OFFEND IN WORDS.*



DURANT me help, O Lord, in tribulation, for
vain is the help of man !

How often have I been deceived where I
thought myself sure of faithfulness.

I found it often where beforehand I
least expected it.

It is in vain therefore to trust in men, but the salvation
of the righteous is in Thee, O God !

Blessed be Thou, O Lord my God, in all things that
befall us.

We are weak and unstable ; we are quickly deceived
and changed.

2. Who is he, that is able in all things so warily and
circumspectly to keep himself, as never to fall into any
deception or perplexity ?

But he that trusteth in Thee, O Lord, and seeketh Thee,
with a single heart, doth not easily fall.

And if he do fall into any tribulation, be he never so much
entangled, yet he shall quickly either through Thee be de-
livered, or by Thee be comforted ; for Thou wilt not forsake
him that trusteth in Thee.

A friend is rarely to be found that continueth faithful in all
his friend's distresses.

Thou, O Lord, even Thou alone art most faithful at all
times, and there is none like unto Thee.

3. O how wise was that holy soul that said, " My mind is
firmly settled and grounded in Christ."

If it were so with me, human fear would not vex me, nor darts of words move me.

Who can foretell all things? who is able to beware beforehand of evils to come? If things foreseen do oftentimes hurt us, how can things unlooked for do otherwise than wound us?

But wretch that I am, why did I not provide better for myself? why also have I so trusted others?

But we are men, nothing else but frail men, although by many we may be reputed angels.

To whom shall I give credit, O Lord, but to Thee? Thou art the truth, which neither doth deceive, nor can be deceived.

And on the other side, "every man is a liar," weak, inconstant, and subject to fall, especially in words; and therefore we must not at first give credit to that which in the outward show seemeth to sound aright.

4. O with what wisdom hast Thou warned us to beware of men; and a man's foes are they of his own household, not forthwith to believe if one should say, Lo here, or Lo there.

My hurt has been my instructor, and O that thereby I might increase my caution.

"Be wary," saith one, "be wary, keep to thyself what I tell thee;" and whilst I hold my peace, and think it is secret, he cannot himself keep that which he desired me to keep, but presently betrayeth both me and himself.

From such indiscreet persons protect me, O Lord, that I neither fall into their hands, nor ever commit such things myself.

Grant me to observe truth and constancy in my words, and remove far from me a crafty tongue.

What I am unwilling to suffer in others, I ought by all means to avoid myself.

5. O how good is it, and how it tendeth to peace, to be silent about other men, and not to believe readily all that is said, nor eagerly to repeat reports.

How good it is to lay one's self open to few, and always to be seeking after Thee Who art the searcher of the heart.

Nor to be carried about with every wind of words, but to desire that all things, both within and without, be accomplished according to the pleasure of Thy will.

How safe is it, for the keeping of heavenly grace, to avoid appearances, and not to seek those things that seem to cause admiration abroad, but to follow with all diligence the things which bring amendment of life and godliness.

6. To how many hath virtue itself been hurtful when over hastily commended !

How profitable hath grace been when preserved in silence in this frail life, which truly is temptation and warfare !



CHAPTER XLVI.

*OF PUTTING OUR TRUST IN GOD WHEN EVIL
WORDS ARISE.*



Y son, stand steadily, and put thy trust in Me :
for what are words, but words ?

They fly through the air, but hurt not.

If thou be guilty, see that thou art willing
to amend thyself ; if conscience reproach thee
not, suffer willingly for God's sake.

It is a small matter to suffer sometimes from words, if
thou hast not the courage to endure hard stripes.

And why do such small matters go to thy heart, but because
thou art yet carnal, and regardest men more than thou
oughtest ?

For it is because thou art afraid to be despised, that thou
art not willing to be reprov'd for thy faults, but seekest the
shelter of excuses.

2. But look better into thyself, and thou shalt acknowledge
that the world is yet alive in thee, and a vain desire to please
men.

For when thou shrinkest from abasement, and from re-
proving for thy faults, it is evident that thou art neither truly
humble, nor truly dead to the world, nor the world crucified
to thee.

But to My words give diligent ear, and thou shalt not
regard ten thousand words spoken by men.

Behold, if all should be spoken against thee that could be
most maliciously invented, what would it hurt thee, if thou
sufferedst it to pass entirely away, could it pluck so much as
one hair from thy head ?

3. But he that hath no heart within him, and hath not God before his eyes, is easily moved with a word of dispraise.

Whereas he that trusteth in Me, and hath no wish to trust in his own judgment, shall be free from the fear of men.

For I am the judge and the discerner of all secrets : I know him that offered the injury, and him that suffered it.

From Me hath this proceeded ; by My permission this hath happened, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed.

I shall judge the guilty, and the innocent ; but by a secret judgment I beforehand have proved them both.

4. The testimony of men oftentimes deceiveth ; but My judgment is true ; it shall stand and not be overthrown.

It is commonly hidden, and not known in all respects, but to few ; notwithstanding it never erreth, neither can it err, although to the eyes of the foolish it seemeth not right.

Men ought therefore to have recourse to Me in every judgment, and not to lean on their own judgment.

For the just man will not be moved, whatsoever befalleth him from God ; and if an unjust charge be brought against him, he will not be troubled.

Neither will he rejoice foolishly, if by means of others he be vindicated.

For he considereth that I am He that searcheth the heart and reins, and judge not according to human appearance.

For oftentimes in My sight that is found worthy of blame, which in the judgment of men is thought to be commendable.

5. O LORD GOD, the just judge, strong and patient, Thou Who knowest the frailty and wickedness of men, be Thou my strength, for mine own conscience sufficeth me not.

Although against myself I know nothing, yet I cannot

justify myself hereby ; for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified without Thy mercy.

Of Thy mercy then forgive me whenever I have done amiss, and when trials come grant me Thy grace to endure them.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THAT ALL GRIEVOUS THINGS ARE TO BE ENDURED FOR THE SAKE OF ETERNAL LIFE.



BE not dismayed by the labours which thou hast undertaken for Me, neither because of any tribulations be thou utterly cast down ; but let My promise strengthen and comfort thee always.

I am able to reward thee above all measure and degree.

Thou shalt not long toil here, and always be oppressed with grief.

Wait a little while, and thou shalt see a speedy end of thine evils.

There will come an hour when all labour and trouble shall cease.

Poor and brief is all that which passeth away with time.

2. Do with thy might what thou doest ; labour faithfully in My vineyard ; I will be thy reward.

Write, read, mourn, keep silence, pray, suffer crosses ; life everlasting is worthy of all these, and of yet greater combats.

Peace shall come in the day which is known unto the Lord, and it shall be neither day nor night, but everlasting light, brightness, steadfast peace, and secure rest.

Then thou shalt not say, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" nor cry, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech!"

For death shall be cast down: there shall be no more anxious thoughts, but blessed joy, sweet and lovely company.

3. O if thou hadst seen the everlasting crowns of the saints in heaven, and with how great glory they now rejoice, who in times past suffered contempt in this world; truly thou wouldst humble thyself even unto the dust, and wouldst rather seek to be under the feet of all, than to have command even over one.

Neither wouldst thou desire the pleasant days of this life, but rather wouldst rejoice to suffer affliction for God, and esteem nothing to be reputed as great amongst men.

4. O if thou hadst a relishing of these things, and didst suffer them to sink into the bottom of thy heart, how couldst thou dare once complain?

Are not all painful labours to be endured for the sake of life eternal?

It is no small matter, to lose or to gain the kingdom of God.

Lift up thy face therefore unto heaven; behold, I and all My saints with me, who in this world had great conflicts, do now rejoice, are now comforted, now secure, now at rest, and shall remain with Me everlastingly in the kingdom of My Father.



CHAPTER XLVIII.

*OF THE DAY OF ETERNITY, AND THIS LIFE'S
STRAITNESSES.*

MOST blessed mansion of the city which is above ! O most clear day of eternity, which night obscureth not, but the highest truth ever enlighteneth ! O day ever joyful, ever secure and never changing into a contrary state !

O that that day would once appear, and that all things temporal were at an end !

To the saints it shineth, glowing with unceasing brightness, but to those that are pilgrims on the earth, it appeareth only afar off, and as through a glass.

2. The citizens of heaven do know how joyful that day is ; but the banished children of Eve bewail its bitterness and tediousness.

The days of this life are short and evil, full of sorrow and straitnesses.

Here a man is defiled with many sins, ensnared with many passions, held fast by many fears, racked with many cares, distracted with many curiosities, entangled with many vanities, compassed about with many errors, worn with many labours, burdened with temptations, enervated by pleasures, tormented with want.

3. O when shall these evils be at an end ? when shall I be delivered from the miserable bondage of my sins ? when shall I be mindful, O Lord, of Thee alone ? when shall I fully rejoice in Thee ?

When shall I enjoy true liberty without impediment, without trouble of mind and body

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When shall I have solid peace, peace secure and undisturbed, peace within and peace without, peace every way assured?

O merciful JESU, when shall I stand to behold Thee? when shall I contemplate the glory of Thy kingdom? when wilt Thou be unto me all in all?

O when shall I be with Thee in Thy kingdom, which Thou hast prepared for Thy beloved from all eternity?

I am left, a poor and banished man, in the land of mine enemies, where there are daily wars and great calamities.

4. Comfort my banishment, assuage my sorrow : for my whole desire sigheth after Thee.

For all is burdensome to me, whatsoever this world offereth for consolation.

I long to enjoy Thee inwardly, but I cannot attain unto it.

My desire is, that I may be wholly given up to heavenly things, but temporal things and unmortified passions weigh me down.

With the mind I wish to be above all things, but with the flesh I am enforced against my will to be beneath all.

Thus, unhappy man that I am, I fight against myself, and am become grievous to myself, whilst my spirit seeketh to be above, and my flesh to be below.

5. O what do I inwardly suffer, whilst in my mind I dwell on things heavenly, in my prayers a multitude of carnal fancies rise up! O my God, be not Thou far from me, nor turn away in wrath from Thy servant.

Cast forth Thy lightning and disperse them; shoot out Thine arrows, and let all the imaginations of the enemy be confounded.

Gather in and call home my senses unto Thee; make me to forget all worldly things; enable me to cast away speedily, and to despise all the wicked imaginations.

Succour me, O Thou the everlasting truth, that no vanity may move me.

Come to me, Thou heavenly sweetness, and let all impurity flee from before Thy face.

Pardon me also, and in mercy deal gently with me, as often as in prayer I think on aught beside Thee.

Truly I must confess, that I am wont to yield to many distractions.

Oftentimes I am not where I stand or sit, but rather I am there, whither my thoughts do carry me.

Where my thoughts are, there am I ; and commonly there are my thoughts, where my affection is.

That too readily occurs to me, which is by nature delightful, or by custom is pleasing.

6. And for this cause, Thou that art truth itself hast plainly said, Where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also.

If I love heaven, I willingly muse on heavenly things.

If I love the world, I rejoice at the felicity of the world, and grieve for the adversity thereof.

If I love the flesh, I shall often fancy those things that are pleasing to the flesh.


If I love the Spirit, I shall delight to think on things spiritual.

For whatsoever I love, thereof do I willingly speak and hear, and carry home with me the forms thereof.

But blessed is the man, who for Thy sake, O Lord, is willing to part with all creatures, who does violence to his nature, and through fervour of Spirit crucifieth the lusts of the flesh ; that so with a serene conscience he may offer pure prayers unto Thee, and, all earthly things both outwardly and inwardly being excluded, he may be meet to be admitted into the angelic choir.

CHAPTER XLIX.

*OF THE DESIRE OF EVERLASTING LIFE, AND HOW
GREAT REWARDS ARE PROMISED TO THOSE
THAT STRIVE RESOLUTELY.*

Y SON, when thou feelest the desire of eternal bliss to be given thee from above, and longest to depart out of the tabernacle of this body, that thou mayest contemplate My brightness without shadow of turning ; open thy heart wide, and receive with thy whole desire this holy inspiration.

Give greatest thanks to the heavenly goodness, which treateth thee with such condescension, visiting thee mercifully, stirring thee up fervently, powerfully sustaining thee, lest through thine own weight thou sink to earthly things.

For thou dost not obtain this by thine own thought or endeavour, but by the mere condescension of heavenly grace and divine favour ; to the end that thou mayest make progress in all virtue, and obtain greater humility, preparing thyself for future conflicts, and endeavour to cleave unto Me with the whole affection of thy heart, and to serve Me with fervent willingness.

2. My son, oftentimes the fire burneth, but the flame ascendeth not up without smoke.

So likewise the desires of some men burn towards heavenly things, and yet they are not free from the temptation of carnal affection.

And therefore it is not altogether purely for the honour of God, that they make such earnest requests to Him.

Such also oftentimes are thy desires, which thou hast pretended to be so serious and earnest.

For those desires are not pure and perfect, which are tainted with love of thyself.

3. Ask not for that which is delightful and profitable to thee, but for that which is acceptable to Me, and which tendeth to My honour; for if thou judgest aright, thou oughtest to prefer and follow My appointment, rather than thine own desire, or any thing whatever that is to be desired.

I know thy desire, and have heard thy groanings.

Thou longest now to enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God; now thou dost delight in the everlasting habitation, thy heavenly home full of joy; but that hour is not yet come; there still remaineth another time, and that a time of war, a time of labour and of trial.

Thou desiredst to be filled with the chiefest good, but thou canst not yet attain it.

I am He; wait thou for me, saith the Lord, until the kingdom of God shall come.

4. Thou art still to be tried upon earth, and to be exercised in many things.

Comfort shall be sometimes given thee, but the abundant fulness thereof shall not be granted.

Take courage, therefore, and be valiant, as well in doing as in suffering things contrary to nature.

It is thy duty to put on the new man, and to be changed into another.

It is thy duty oftentimes to do what thou wouldst not; thy duty to leave undone what thou wouldst do.

That which pleaseth others shall go well forward; that which pleaseth thee shall not speed.

That which others say shall be heard; what thou sayest shall be accounted nothing; others shall ask and shall receive; thou shalt ask but shalt not obtain.

5. Others shall be great in the praise of men, but about thee there shall no word be.

To others this or that shall be committed, but thou shalt be accounted of no use.

At this nature will sometimes be troubled, and it is a great thing if thou bear it with silence.

In these and many such like things, the faithful servant of the Lord is wont to be tried, how far he can deny and break his will in all things.

There is scarcely any thing wherein thou hast such need to die to thyself, as in seeing and suffering those things that are contrary to thy will ; especially when that is commanded to be done, which seemeth unto thee inconvenient, or useless.

And because thou being under authority darest not resist the higher power, therefore it seems hard to thee to walk at another's beck, and to give up all thine own will.

6. But consider, My son, the fruit of these labours, the end near at hand, and the reward exceeding great ; and thou wilt not grudge to bear them : rather thou wilt have the strongest comfort of thy patience.

For instead of that little of thy will, which now thou so readily forsakest, thou shalt always have thy will in heaven.

There thou shalt find all that thou canst wish, all that thou shalt be able to desire.

There thou shalt have within thy reach all good, without fear of losing it.

There shall thy will be ever one with Me ; it shall not covet any outward or selfish thing.

There none shall withstand thee, no man shall complain of thee, no man hinder thee, nothing come in thy way ; but all things thou canst desire shall be there together present,

and shall refresh thy whole affection, and fill it up to the brim.

- There I will give thee glory for the reproach which thou sufferedst here, the garment of praise for heaviness, for the lowest place a kingly throne for ever.

There shall the fruit of obedience appear, the labour of repentance shall rejoice, and humble subjection shall be gloriously crowned.

7. At present then bend thyself humbly under all, and care not who said this or commanded it.

But take especial care, that whether thy superior, or thine inferior, or thine equal, require any thing of thee, or do but insinuate their desire, thou take it all in good part, and with a sincere will endeavour to fulfil it.

Let one seek this, another that ; let this man glory in this, the other in that, and be praised a thousand, thousand times; but do thou rejoice neither in this, nor in that, but in the contempt of thyself, and in the good pleasure and honour of Me alone.

This is what thou art to wish, that, whether it be by life or by death, God may be always glorified in thee.



CHAPTER L.

*HOW A DESOLATE PERSON OUGHT TO PLACE
HIMSELF IN THE HANDS OF GOD.*

LORD God, holy Father, be Thou blessed both now and for evermore, because as Thou wilt, so is it done, and what Thou doest is good.

Let Thy servant rejoice in Thee, not in himself nor in any thing else ; for Thou alone art the true gladness, Thou art my hope and my crown, Thou art my joy and my honour, O Lord.

What hath Thy servant, but what he hath received from Thee, even without any merit of his ?

Thine are all things, both what Thou hast given, and what Thou hast made.

I am poor, and in trouble, from my youth ; and sometimes my soul is sorrowful even unto tears ; sometimes also it is disturbed by reason of sufferings which hang over me.

2. I long after the joy of peace, the peace of Thy children I earnestly crave, who are fed by Thee in the light of Thy comfort.

If Thou give peace, if Thou pour into my heart holy joy, the soul of Thy servant shall be full of melody, and shall become devout in Thy praise.

But if Thou withdraw Thyself, he will not be able to run the way of Thy commandments ; but rather he will bow his knees, and smite his breast, because it is not now with him as it was in times past, when Thy candle shined upon his

head, and under the shadow of Thy wings he was protected from the temptations which assaulted him.

3. O righteous Father, and ever to be praised, the hour is come that Thy servant is to be proved.

O beloved Father, meet and right it is that in this hour Thy servant should suffer somewhat for Thy sake.

O Father, evermore to be honoured, the hour is come, which from all eternity Thou didst foreknow should come; that for a short time Thy servant should outwardly be oppressed, but inwardly should ever live with Thee.

Thou shalt be for a little while despised and humbled, and in the sight of men should fail, and be wasted with sufferings and languors; that he might rise again with Thee in the morning dawn of the new light, and be glorified in heaven.

Holy Father, thou hast so appointed it, and so wilt have it; and that is fulfilled which Thyself hast commanded.

4. For this is a favour to thy friend, that for love of Thee he may suffer and be afflicted in the world, how often soever and by whom soever Thou permittest such trials to befall him.

Without Thy counsel and providence, and without cause, nothing cometh to pass in the earth.

It is good for me, Lord, that Thou hast humbled me, that I may learn Thy righteous judgments, and may cast away all haughtiness of heart and presumption.

It is profitable for me, that shame hath covered my face, that I may seek to Thee for consolation rather than to men.

I have learned also hereby to dread Thine unsearchable judgments, who afflictest the just with the wicked, though not without equity.

5. I give Thee thanks, for that Thou hast not spared my sins, but hast worn me down with bitter stripes, inflicting sorrows and sending anxieties upon me within and without.

There is none else under heaven who can comfort me, but Thou only, O Lord my God, the heavenly physician of souls, Who woundest and healest, Who bringest down to hell and bringest back again.

Thy discipline over me, and Thy rod itself shall instruct me.

6. Behold, O beloved Father, I am in Thy hands, I bow myself under the rod of Thy correction.

Strike my back and my neck, that my crookedness may be conformed to Thy will.

Make me a dutiful and humble disciple of Thine, that I may be ready at every beck of Thy pleasure.

Unto Thee I commend myself and all mine to be corrected: better it is to be punished here than hereafter.

Thou knowest everything, and there is nothing in the conscience of man which can be hidden from Thee.

Before any thing is done, Thou knowest that it will come to pass, and hast no need that any should teach Thee, or inform Thee of those things which are being done on the earth.

Thou knowest what is expedient for my spiritual progress, and how greatly tribulation serves to scour off the rust of sins.

Do with me according to Thy good pleasure, and disdain me not for my sinful life, known to none so thoroughly and clearly as to Thee alone.

7. Grant me, O Lord, to know that which is worth knowing, to love that which is worth loving, to praise that which pleaseth Thee most, to esteem that highly which to Thee is precious, to abhor that which in Thy sight is filthy and unclean.

Suffer me not to judge according to the sight of the eyes, nor to give sentence according to the hearing of the ears; but

with a true judgment to discern between things visible and spiritual, and above all to be ever searching after the good pleasure of thy will.

8. The minds of men are often deceived in their judgments ; the lovers of the world too are deceived in loving only things visible.

What is a man ever the better, for being by man esteemed great.


The deceitful in flattering the deceitful, the vain man in extolling the vain, the blind in commending the blind, the weak in magnifying the weak, deceiveth him ; and in truth doth rather put him to shame, while he so vainly praiseth him.

For, said S. Francis, what every one is in Thy sight that he is, and no more.



CHAPTER LI.

*THAT A MAN OUGHT TO EMPLOY HIMSELF IN
WORKS OF HUMILITY, WHEN STRENGTH IS
WANTING FOR HIGHER EMPLOYMENT.*

Y son, thou art not able always to continue in the more fervent desire of virtue, nor to persist in the higher pitch of contemplation ; but thou must needs sometimes, by reason of original corruption, descend to inferior things, and bear the burden of this corruptible life, though against thy will, and with wearisomeness.

As long as thou carriest a mortal body, thou shalt feel weariness and heaviness of heart.

Thou oughtest therefore in the flesh oftentimes to bewail the burden of the flesh ; for that thou canst not employ thyself unceasingly in spiritual studies and divine contemplation.

2. Then it is expedient for thee to flee to humble and outward works, and to refresh thyself with good actions, to await with a firm confidence My coming and heavenly visitation, to bear patiently thy banishment and the dryness of thy mind, till I shall again visit thee, and set thee free from all anxieties.

For I will cause thee to forget thy painful toils, and to enjoy thorough inward quietness.

I will spread open before thee the pleasant fields of holy scripture, that with an enlarged heart thou mayest begin to run the way of My commandments.

And thou shalt say, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

CHAPTER LII.

*THAT A MAN OUGHT NOT TO ACCOUNT HIMSELF
AS WORTHY OF COMFORT, BUT RATHER AS
DERIVING OF CHASTISEMENT.*



LORD, I am not worthy of Thy consolation, nor of any spiritual visitation ; and therefore Thou dealest justly with me, when Thou leavest me poor and desolate.

For though I could shed a sea of tears, still I should not be worthy of Thy consolation.

I am not then worthy of any thing but to be scourged and punished, because grievously and often I have offended Thee, and have in many things greatly sinned.

Wherefore, all things duly considered, I am not worthy even of the least comfort.

But Thou, O gracious and merciful God, Who willest not that Thy works should perish, to shew the riches of Thy goodness upon the vessels of mercy, vouchsafest even beyond all his desert to comfort Thy servant above the manner of men.

For Thy consolations are not like to the discourses of men.

2. What have I done, O Lord, that Thou shouldst bestow any heavenly comfort upon me ?

I remember not that I have done any good, but that I have been always prone to sin, and slow to amendment.

This is true, and I cannot deny it. If I should say otherwise, Thou wouldst stand against me, and there would be none to defend me.

What have I deserved for my sins, but hell and everlasting fire ?

I confess in very truth that I am worthy of all scorn and contempt, nor is it fit that I should be remembered amongst Thy devout servants.

And although I be unwilling to hear this, yet notwithstanding, for the truth's sake, I will lay open my sins against myself, that so the more readily I may be counted worthy to obtain Thy mercy.

3. What shall I say, in that I am guilty and full of all confusion?

My mouth can utter nothing but this word only, I have sinned, O Lord ! I have sinned ; have mercy on me, pardon me.

Spare me a little, that I may bewail my griefs, before I go into the land of darkness, a land covered with the shadow of death.

What dost Thou so much require of a guilty and miserable sinner, as that he be contrite, and that he humble himself for his offences ?

Of true contrition and humbling of the heart ariseth hope of forgiveness ; the troubled conscience is reconciled ; that which was lost, is recovered ; man is preserved from the wrath to come ; and God and the penitent soul meet together with a holy kiss.

4. Humble contrition for sins is an acceptable sacrifice unto Thee, O Lord, savouring much sweeter in Thy sight than the perfume of frankincense.

This is also the pleasant ointment, which Thou wouldst to be poured upon Thy sacred feet ; for a contrite and humbled heart Thou never hast despised.

Here is the place of refuge from the angry face of the enemy ; here is amended and washed away whatever defilement and pollution hath been any where contracted.

CHAPTER LIII.

*THAT THE GRACE OF GOD DOES NOT UNITE WITH
THOSE WHO RELISH EARTHLY THINGS.*



Y son, My grace is precious, it suffereth not itself to be mingled with outward things, nor with earthly consolations.

Thou oughtest therefore to cast away all hindrances to grace, if thou desire to receive the inpouring thereof.

Choose a secret place to thyself, love to live alone with thyself, desire the conversation of none ; but pour out devout prayer unto God, that thou mayest keep thy soul contrite, and thy conscience pure.

Esteem thou the whole world as nothing ; prefer attendance upon God before all outward things.

For thou wilt not be able to attend upon Me, and at the same time to take delight in things transitory.

Thou oughtest to remove thyself away from thine acquaintance and friends, and to depend not on temporal comfort.

So the blessed apostle S. Peter beseecheth, that the faithful of Christ would keep themselves in this world as strangers and pilgrims.

2. O how great a confidence shall he have at the hour of death, whom no affection to any thing earthly detaineth in the world.

But having a heart so retired, the unspiritual mind doth not as yet comprehend ; nor doth the carnal man know the liberty of the spiritual man.

Notwithstanding, if he desire to be truly spiritual, he ought

to renounce those who are far off, as well as those who are near unto him, and to beware of no man more than of himself.

If thou perfectly overcome thyself, thou shalt very easily bring all else under the yoke.

The perfect victory is, to triumph over ourselves.

For he that keepeth himself subject, in such sort that his affections be obedient to reason, and his reason in all things obedient to Me ; he truly is conqueror of himself, and lord of the world.

3. If thou desire to mount unto this height, thou must set out courageously, and lay the axe to the root, that thou mayest pluck up and destroy both the hidden inclination to self, and all love of private and earthly good.

On this sin dependeth almost all, whatsoever is thoroughly to be overcome ; which evil being once vanquished and subdued, there will presently ensue great peace and tranquillity.

But because few labour to die perfectly unto themselves, or altogether to go out of themselves, therefore in themselves they remain entangled, nor can be lifted up in spirit above themselves.

But him that desireth to walk freely with me, it is necessary that he mortify all his corrupt and inordinate affections, and that he do not earnestly cleave to any creature with particular love.



CHAPTER LIV.

*OF THE DIFFERENT MOVINGS OF NATURE AND
GRACE.*



Y son, mark diligently the movings of nature and grace ; for in a very contrary yet subtle manner do they move ; they can hardly be distinguished but by him that is spiritually and inwardly enlightened.

All men indeed desire that which is good, and pretend some good in their words and their deeds ; and therefore under the show of good, many are deceived.

Nature is crafty, and seduceth many, ensnareth and deceiveth them, and always hath herself for her end and object.

But grace walketh in simplicity, abstaineth from all show of evil, sheltereth not herself under deceit, doeth all things purely for God's sake, in Whom also she finally resteth.

2. Nature is reluctant to die, or to be kept down, or to be overcome, or to be in subjection, or readily to be subdued.

Grace studieth self-mortification, resisteth sensuality, seeketh to be in subjection, is desirous to be kept under, and wisheth not to use her own liberty. She loveth to be kept under discipline, and desireth not to rule over any, but always to live and remain and be under God, and for God's sake is ready humbly to bow down to man's ordinances.

Nature striveth for her own advantage, and considereth what profit she may reap by another.

Grace considereth not what is profitable and convenient unto herself, but rather what may be for the good of many.

Nature willingly receiveth honour and reverence.

Grace faithfully attributeth all honour and glory unto God.

3. Nature feareth shame and contempt.

Grace rejoiceth to suffer reproach for the Name of JESUS.

Nature loveth leisure and bodily ease.

Grace cannot be unemployed, but cheerfully embraceth labour.

Nature seeketh to have things that are curious and beautiful, and abhorreth those which are cheap and coarse.

Grace delighteth in what is plain and humble, despiseth not rough things, and refuseth not to be clothed in that which is old and worn.

Nature respecteth temporal things, rejoiceth at earthly gain, sorroweth for loss, is irritated by every little injurious word.

Grace looketh to things eternal, cleaveth not to things temporal, is not disturbed at losses, nor soured with hard words; because she hath placed her treasure and joy in heaven, where nothing perisheth.

4. Nature is covetous, doth more willingly receive than give, and loveth to have things private and her own.

Grace is kind of heart, and ready to share with others, shunneth private interest, is content with a little, judgeth that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Nature inclines a man to the creature, to his own flesh, to vanities, and to wandering hither and thither.

Grace draweth him unto God and to every virtue, renounceth the creature, avoideth the world, hateth the desires of the flesh, restraineth wanderings, blushes to be seen in public.

Nature is willing to have some outward solace, whereby she may be delighted.

Grace seeketh consolation in God alone, and to have delight in the highest good above all visible things.

5. Nature useth everything to her own gain and profit, she

cannot bear to do anything without reward, but for every kindness she hopeth to obtain either what is equal, or what is better, or at least praise or favour ; and is very earnest to have her works and gifts much valued.

Grace seeketh no temporal things, nor desireth any other reward save God alone, and asketh not more of temporal necessities, than what may serve her for the obtaining of things eternal.

6. Nature rejoiceth to have many friends and kinsfolk, she glorieth of noble place and noble birth, smiles on the powerful, fawns upon the rich.

Grace loveth even her enemies, and is not puffed up with multitude of friends ; and thinketh not greatly of high birth, unless it be joined with more exalted virtue.

Grace favoureth the poor rather than the rich, sympathiseth more with the innocent than with the powerful, rejoiceth with the true man, not with the deceitful.

She is ever exhorting men to strive for the best gifts, and by all virtue to become like to the Son of God.

Nature quickly complaineth of want and of trouble.

Grace endureth need with firmness and constancy.

7. Nature referreth all things to herself, striveth and argueth for herself.

Grace bringeth back all to God, from whence originally they proceed ; she ascribeth no good to herself, nor doth she arrogantly presume ; she contendeth not, nor preferreth her own opinion before others ; but in every matter of sense and understanding she submitteth herself unto the eternal wisdom and the divine judgment.

Nature is eager to know secrets, and to hear news ; she loveth to appear abroad, and to make proof of many things by her own senses ; she desireth to be acknowledged, and to do things for which she may be admired.

Grace careth not to hear news, nor to understand curious matters, seeing that upon earth there is nothing new, nothing durable.

Grace teacheth therefore to restrain the senses, to shun vain complacency and ostentation, humbly to hide those things that are worthy of admiration and praise, and from everything to seek profitable fruit, and the praise and honour of God.

She will not have herself publicly praised, but desireth that God should be blessed in His gifts, because that of mere love He bestoweth all things.

8. This grace is a supernatural light, and a certain special gift of God, and the proper mark of the elect, and a pledge of everlasting salvation.

It raiseth up a man from earthly things to love the things of heaven, and from being carnal maketh him a spiritual man.

The more therefore nature is depressed and subdued, so much the more is grace infused, and every day by new visitations the inward man is reformed anew according to the likeness of God.



CHAPTER LV.

*OF THE CORRUPTION OF NATURE, AND THE
EFFICACY OF DIVINE GRACE.*

LORD my God, Who hast created me after Thine own likeness, grant me this grace, which Thou hast shewed to be so great and so necessary to salvation ; that I may overcome my most evil nature, which draweth me to sin and to perdition.

For I feel in my flesh the law of sin contradicting the law of my mind, and leading me captive to the obeying of sensuality in many things ; neither can I resist the passions thereof, unless Thy most holy grace infused into my heart assists me.

2. There is need of large supplies of Thy grace, O Lord, that nature may be overcome, which is ever prone to evil from her youth.

For through Adam nature being fallen and corrupted by sin, the penalty of this stain hath descended upon all mankind, in such sort that nature itself, which by Thee was created good and upright, is now taken for the sin and infirmity of corrupted nature ; because the inclination thereof left unto itself draweth to evil and to lower things.

For the small power which remaineth is, as it were, a spark lying hid in the ashes.

This is natural reason itself, encompassed about with great darkness, yet still retaining power to discern the difference between good and evil ; although it be unable to fulfil all that it approveth, and enjoyeth no longer the full light of the truth, nor soundness in its own affections.

3. Hence it is, O my God, that I delight in Thy law after the inward man, knowing Thy commandment to be good, just, and holy, reproving also all evil and sin.

But with the flesh I serve the law of sin, in that I obey my senses rather than my reason.

Hence it is, that to will what is good is present with me, but how to perform it I know not.

Hence it is that I often purpose many good things, but because grace is wanting to help my infirmity, upon a light resistance I start back and faint.

Hence it cometh to pass that I know the way of perfection, and see clearly enough what I ought to do ; but being pressed down by the weight of mine own corruption, I rise not to that which is more perfect.

4. O Lord, how entirely needful is Thy grace for me, to begin any good work, to go on with it, and to accomplish it.

For without that grace I can do nothing, but in Thee I can do all things, when Thy grace doth strengthen me.

O heavenly grace ! without which our most worthy actions are nothing, nor are any gifts of nature to be esteemed.

Neither arts nor riches, beauty nor strength, wit nor eloquence, are of any value before Thee, O Lord, without Thy grace.

For gifts of nature are common to good and bad, but the peculiar gift of the elect is grace and love ; they that bear this honourable mark, are accounted worthy of everlasting life.

So eminent is this grace that neither the gift of prophecy, nor the working of miracles, nor any speculation, how high soever, is of any esteem without it.

No, not even faith, nor hope, nor any other virtues, are unto Thee acceptable without charity and grace.

5. O most blessed grace, that makest the poor in spirit

rich in virtue, and renderest him who is rich in goods humble in heart !

Come Thou. down unto me, come and replenish me early with Thy comfort, lest my soul faint for weariness and dryness of mind.

I beseech Thee, O Lord, that I may find grace in Thy sight ; for Thy grace is sufficient for me, though other things that nature desireth be not obtained.

Although I be tempted and vexed with many tribulations, yet I will fear no evil, so long as Thy grace is with me.

This alone and by itself is my strength ; this alone giveth advice and help.

This is stronger than all enemies, and wiser than all the wise.

6. Thy grace is the mistress of truth, the teacher of discipline, the light of the heart, the solace in affliction, the driver away of sorrow, the expeller of fear, the nurse of devotion, the source of tears.

Without this, what am I but an unprofitable stock and a withered branch, only meet to be cast away !

Let Thy grace therefore, O Lord, always prevent and follow me, and make me to be continually given to good works, through Thy Son JESUS Christ, our Lord. Amen.



CHAPTER LVI.

*THAT WE OUGHT TO DENY OURSELVES AND
IMITATE CHRIST BY THE CROSS.*

Y son, the more thou canst go out of thyself, so much the more wilt thou be able to enter into Me.

As to desire no outward thing produceth inward peace, so the forsaking of ourselves inwardly, joineth us unto God.

I would have thee learn perfect resignation of thyself to My will, without contradiction or complaint.

Follow thou Me : I am the way, the truth, and the life. Without the way, there is no going ; without the truth, there is no knowing ; without the life, there is no living. I am the way, which thou oughtest to follow ; the truth, which thou oughtest to trust ; the life, which thou oughtest to hope for.

I am the way inviolable, the truth infallible, the life without end.

I am the straitest way, the highest truth, the true life, the blessed life, the uncreated life.

If thou remain in My way, thou shalt know the truth, and the truth shall make thee free, and thou shalt lay hold on eternal life.

2. If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

If thou wilt know the truth, believe Me.

If thou wilt be perfect, sell all.

If thou wilt be My disciple, deny thyself utterly.

If thou wilt possess a blessed life, despise this present life.

If thou wilt be exalted in heaven, humble thyself in this world.

If thou wilt reign with Me, bear the cross with Me.

For only the servants of the cross can find the way of blessedness and of true light.

3. O LORD JESUS, forasmuch as Thy life was narrow and despised by the world, grant me to imitate Thee, though the world despise me.

For the servant is not greater than his Lord, nor the disciple above his Master.

Let Thy servant be exercised in Thy life, for therein my salvation and my true holiness consisteth.

Whatsoever I read or hear besides it, doth not give me full refreshment or delight.

4. My son, inasmuch as thou knowest and hast read all these things, happy shalt thou be, if thou do them.

He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him, and will make him sit together with Me in My Father's kingdom.

O LORD JESU, as Thou hast said and promised, so let it come to pass, and grant that I may not be wholly undeserving of this favour.

I have received the cross from Thy hand; I have borne it, and will bear it even unto death, even as Thou hast laid it upon me.

Verily the life of a Christian is a cross, yet is it also a guide to paradise.

I have begun, I may not go back, neither is it fitting to leave that which I have undertaken.

5. Let us take courage, brethren, let us go forward together ! JESUS will be with us.

For the sake of JESUS we have undertaken this cross, for the sake of JESUS let us persevere in the cross.

He will be our helper, Who is also our guide and fore-runner.

Behold, our King entereth in before us, and He will fight for us.

Let us follow manfully, let no man fear any terrors ; let us be prepared to die valiantly in battle, nor bring any shame on our glory by flying from the cross.

CHAPTER LVII.

*THAT A MAN SHOULD NOT BE TOO MUCH DE-
JECTED, EVEN WHEN HE FALLETH INTO
SOME DEFECTS.*



Y son, patience and humility in adversity are more pleasing to Me, than much comfort and devotion in prosperity.

Why art thou so grieved for every little matter spoken against thee?

Although it had been much more, thou oughtest not to have been moved.

But now let it pass : it is not the first that hath happened, nor is it anything new ; neither shall it be the last, if thou live long.

Thou art courageous enough so long as nothing adverse befalls thee.

Thou canst give good counsel, and canst strengthen others

with thy words ; but when any tribulation suddenly cometh to thy door, thou failest in counsel and in strength.

Observe then thy great frailty, of which thou too often hast experience in small things.

It is notwithstanding intended for thy good, when these and such like trials happen to thee.

2. Put it out of thy heart as well as thou canst ; and if it touch thee, yet let it not cast thee down, nor long perplex thee.

At least bear it patiently, if thou canst not do so joyfully.

Although thou be unwilling to hear it, and conceive indignation thereat, yet restrain thyself, and suffer no ill words to pass out of thy mouth, whereby Christ's little ones may be offended.

The storm which is now raised shall quickly be appeased, and inward grief shall be sweetened by the return of grace.

I yet live, saith the Lord, and am ready to help thee, and to give thee great comfort if thou put thy trust in Me, and call devoutly upon Me.

3. Be more patient of soul, and gird thyself to greater endurance.

All is not lost, although thou feel thyself very often afflicted or grievously tempted.

Thou art a man, and not God ; thou art flesh, not an angel.

How canst thou look to continue always in the same state of virtue, when an angel in heaven hath fallen, as also the first man in paradise ?

I am He Who lifteth up the mourners in safety and soundness, and those that know their own weakness I advance to Mine own divine nature.

4. O LORD, blessed be Thy word, more sweet unto my mouth than honey and the honey-comb.

What should I do in these so great tribulations and straits, unless Thou didst comfort me with holy words ?

What matter is it, how much or what I suffer, so I may at length attain to salvation ?

Grant me a good end, grant me a happy passage out of this world.

Be mindful of me, O my God, and direct me in the right way to Thy kingdom. Amen.

CHAPTER LVIII.

OF NOT INQUIRING INTO HIGH MATTERS, AND INTO GOD'S SECRET JUDGMENTS.



BEWARE thou dispute not of high matters, nor of the secret judgments of God, why this man is so left, and that man taken into such great favour ; why also one man is so much afflicted, and another so greatly exalted.

These things are beyond the reach of man, neither is it in the power of any reason or disputation to search out the judgments of God.

When therefore the enemy suggesteth these things unto thee, or some curious people raise the question, let thy answer be that of the prophet, "Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment is right."

And again, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

My judgments are to be feared, not to be discussed ; for they are such as cannot be comprehended by the understanding of man.

2. In like manner I advise thee not to inquire, nor dispute

of the merits of holy men, as to which is holier than the other, or which shall be the greater in the kingdom of heaven.

These things oftentimes breed strife and contentions, they also nourish pride and vain-glory ; from whence spring envy and dissensions.

To desire to search out such things answereth no good end, and is painful to the righteous ; for I am not the God of dissension, but of peace ; which peace consisteth rather in true humillity, than in self-exaltation.

3. Some are carried with zeal of affection towards these or those ; but this is rather human love than divine.

I am He Who made all the saints ; I gave them grace ; I obtain for them glory.

I know what every one hath deserved ; I have prevented them with the blessing of My goodness.

I foreknew My beloved ones before the beginning of the world.

I chose them out of the world : they chose not Me first.

I called them by grace, I drew them by mercy, I led them safely through many temptations.

I have poured into them glorious consolations, I gave them perseverance, I crowned their patience.

4. I acknowledge both the first and the last ; I embrace all with inestimable love.

I am to be praised in all My saints ; I am to be blessed above all things, and to be honoured in everyone whom I have thus gloriously exalted and predestinated, without any merits of their own.

He therefore that despiseth one of the least of Mine, honoureth not the greatest ; for that I made both the small and the great.

And he that disparageth any of My saints, disparageth Me also, and all the rest in the kingdom of heaven.

These all are one through the bond of love ; their thought is the same, their will is the same, and they are in charity one with another.

5. But still, which is far higher, they love Me more than themselves or any merits of their own.

For being ravished above self and self-love, they are wholly carried out to love Me, in Whom also they rest in full fruition.

Nothing can turn them back, nothing can press them down ; for being full of the eternal truth, they burn with the fire of unquenchable charity.

Let therefore carnal and natural men who can love nothing but their own selfish joys, forbear to dispute of the state of God's saints. Such men add and take away according to their own fancies, not as it pleaseth the eternal truth.

6. Many are ignorant, especially those who are but little enlightened ; and these can seldom love any with a perfect spiritual love.

They are as yet much drawn by a natural affection and human friendship to this man or to that. And according to the experience they have of themselves in their earthly affections, so do they frame imaginations of things heavenly.

But there is an incomparable distance between the things which the imperfect imagine and the things which they that are enlightened are enabled to behold through revelation from above.

7. Therefore, my son, handle not with vain curiosity things which exceed thy knowledge ; but rather let this be thy great business and endeavour to attain if it be but the meanest place in the kingdom of God.

Even if any man should know who exceeds another in sanctity, or who is accounted the greatest in the kingdom of heaven ; what would this wisdom profit him, unless he should humble himself the more in My sight, and then should rise

up to give the greater praise to My name, in proportion to his knowledge.

Far more acceptable to God is he that thinketh of the greatness of his own sins, and the smallness of his virtues, and how far he is from the perfection of saints, than he who disputeth of their worth.

8. They are well, yea right well, contented, if men would but content themselves, and refrain from vain discourses.

They glory not of their own merits, inasmuch as they ascribe no goodness to themselves, but attribute all to Me, who of Mine infinite love have given them all things.

They are filled with so great love of God, and with such an overflowing joy, that there is no glory nor happiness that is or that can be wanting unto them.

All the saints, the higher they are in glory, the more humble are they in themselves, and the nearer and dearer unto Me.

And therefore it is written, "That they did cast their crowns before God, and fell down on their faces before the Lamb, and adored Him that liveth for ever and ever."

9. Many inquire, who is the greatest in the kingdom of God, who know not whether they shall ever be numbered among the least.

It is a great thing to be even the least in heaven, where all are great ; for they all shall be called, and shall be, the sons of God.

"The least shall become a thousand," and "the sinner of an hundred years shall die."

For when the disciples asked who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, they received such an answer as this : "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven : whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

10. Woe be unto them who disdain to humble themselves willingly with little children ; because the low gate of the kingdom of heaven will not give them entrance.

Woe also to the rich, who have here their consolation ; for whilst the poor enter into the kingdom of God, they shall stand lamenting without.

Rejoice ye that be humble, and ye poor be ye filled with joy, for yours is the kingdom of God, if at least ye walk according to the truth.

CHAPTER LIX.

*THAT ALL OUR HOPE AND TRUST MUST BE FIXED
IN GOD ALONE.*



ORD, what is any confidence which I have in this life? or what is the greatest comfort I can derive from any thing under heaven?

Is it not Thou, O Lord my God, Whose mercies are without number?

Where hath it ever been well with me without Thee? or when could it be ill with me, when Thou wert present?

I had rather be poor for Thy sake, than rich without Thee.

I rather choose to be a pilgrim on earth with Thee, than without Thee to possess heaven. Where Thou art, there is heaven : and where Thou art not, there is misery and death.

Thou art all my desire, and therefore I must needs sigh and call and earnestly pray unto Thee.

None have I fully to trust to, none that can seasonably help me in my necessities, but only Thou my God.

Thou art my hope, Thou my confidence ; Thou art my comforter, and in all things most faithful.

2. All men seek their own gain. Thou settest forward my salvation and my profit only, and turnest all things to my good.

Although Thou exposest me to divers temptations and adversities, yet Thou orderest all this to mine advantage, Who art wont to try Thy beloved ones in a thousand ways.

In which trial of me Thou oughtest no less to be loved and praised, than if Thou didst fill me full of heavenly consolation.

3. In Thee, therefore, O Lord God, I place my whole hope and refuge : on Thee I rest my tribulation ; for I find all to be weak and inconstant, whatsoever I behold but in Thee.

For many friends cannot profit, nor strong helpers assist, nor prudent counsellors give a profitable answer, nor the books of the learned afford comfort, nor any precious substance deliver, nor any place, however retired and lovely, give shelter, unless Thou Thyself dost assist, help, strengthen, console, instruct, and guard us.

4. For all things, that seem to belong to the attainment of peace and felicity, without Thee are nothing, and do bring in truth no felicity at all.

Thou therefore art all that is good, the height of life, the depth of all that can be spoken ; and to hope in Thee above all things, is the strongest comfort of Thy servant.

To Thee therefore do I lift up mine eyes ; in Thee my God, the Father of mercies, do I put my trust.

Bless and sanctify my soul with Thy heavenly blessings, that it may become Thy holy habitation, and the seat of Thine eternal glory ; and let nothing be found in this temple which shall offend the eyes of Thy majesty.

According to the greatness of Thy goodness and the

multitude of Thy mercies look upon me, and hear the prayer of Thy poor servant, who is exiled far from Thee in the land of the shadow of death.

Protect and keep the soul of me, the meanest of Thy servants, amidst the dangers of this corruptible life, and by Thy grace accompanying direct me along the way of peace to the land of everlasting light. *Amen.*





Fourth Book.
Concerning the Holy Communion.





A DEVOUT EXHORTATION TO HOLY COMMUNION.



COME unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you, saith the Lord.

“The bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

“Take, eat ; this is My body which is given for you : do this in remembrance of Me.”

“He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him.”

“The words which I speak unto you are spirit and life.”



CHAPTER I.

*WITH HOW GREAT REVERENCE CHRIST OUGHT
TO BE RECEIVED.*

THESE are Thy words, O Christ, the everlasting truth, though not spoken all at one time, nor written in the same place.

Because therefore they are Thine and true, they are all thankfully and faithfully to be received by me.

They are Thine, and Thou hast pronounced them ; and they are mine also, because Thou hast spoken them for my salvation.

I cheerfully receive them from Thy mouth, that they may be the more deeply implanted in my heart.

They arouse me, those most gracious words, so full of sweetness and of love ; but mine own offences do dishearten me, and an impure conscience driveth me back from the receiving of so great mysteries.

The sweetness of Thy words doth encourage me, but the multitude of my sins weigheth me down.

2. Thou commandest me to come confidently unto Thee, if I would have part with Thee ; and to receive the food of immortality, if I desire to obtain everlasting life and glory.

“Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.”

O sweet and loving word in the ear of a sinner, that Thou, my Lord God, shouldst invite the poor and needy to the participation of Thy most holy body and blood !

But who am I, Lord, that I should presume to approach unto Thee ?

Behold the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, and Thou sayest, "Come ye all unto Me."

3. What meaneth this gracious condescension and this so loving invitation?

How shall I dare to come, who know not any good in myself, whereupon I may presume?

How shall I bring Thee into my house, I that have so often offended Thy most gracious countenance?

Angels and archangels stand in awe of Thee: holy and righteous men do fear Thee: and sayest Thou, "Come ye all unto Me?"

Unless Thou, O Lord, didst say this, who would believe it to be true?

And unless Thou didst command it, who could attempt to draw near?

Behold, Noah that just man laboured a hundred years in the making of the ark, that he might be saved with a few; and how can I in one hour's space prepare myself to receive with reverence the maker of the world?

4. Moses, Thy great servant, and Thine especial friend, made an ark of incorruptible wood, which also he covered with the finest gold, wherein to lay up the tables of the law: and I a corrupted creature, how shall I dare so unconcernedly to receive the maker of the law and the giver of life?

Solomon the wisest of the kings of Israel bestowed seven years in building a magnificent temple to the praise of Thy name.

He also celebrated the feast of dedication thereof eight days together; he offered a thousand peace-offerings, and he solemnly set the ark of the covenant in the place prepared for it with the sound of trumpets, and great joy.

And I the most miserable and poorest of men, how shall

I bring Thee into my house, I that can scarce spend one half hour in true devotion? And would that I could even once spend something like one half hour in worthy and due manner?

5. O my God, how earnestly did they study and endeavour to please Thee!

Alas, how little is that which I do! how short a time do I spend when I am preparing myself to receive the communion!

Seldom am I wholly collected; very seldom indeed am I cleansed from all distraction.

And yet surely in the life-giving presence of Thy Godhead no unbecoming thought ought to intrude itself, nor should any creature occupy my heart; for it is not an angel, but the Lord of angels, whom I am about to receive.

6. And yet very great is the difference between the ark of the covenant with its relics, and Thy most pure body with its unspeakable virtues; between those legal sacrifices, figures of things to come, and the true sacrifice of Thy body, the fulfilment of all ancient sacrifices.

Why am I not more ardent and zealous in seeking Thine adorable presence?

Why do I not prepare myself with greater solicitude to receive Thy holy things? whereas those ancient holy patriarchs and prophets, yea kings also and princes, with the whole people, showed such an affectionateness of devotion to Thy divine service.

7. The most devout king David danced before the ark of God with all his might, calling to mind the benefits bestowed in time past upon his forefathers. He made instruments of sundry kinds, he set forth psalms, and appointed them to be sung with joy; he also oftentimes himself sung to the harp, being inspired with the grace of the Holy Ghost.

He taught the people of Israel to praise God with their whole hearts, and with voices full of harmony to bless and praise Him every day.

If so great devotion was then used, and such celebrating of divine praise was kept up before the ark of the testament; what reverence and devotion ought now to be preserved by me and all Christian people, during the ministration of this sacrament, in receiving the most precious body and blood of Christ.

8. Many run to divers places to visit the memorials of departed saints, are full of admiration at hearing of their deeds, behold with awe the spacious buildings of their temples, and find their affections moved by whatever is connected with their memory.

But behold, Thou art Thyself here present with me on Thine altar, my God, Saint of saints, Creator of men, and Lord of angels.

Often in looking after such memorials, men are moved by curiosity, and the novelty of fresh sights, whilst little or no fruit of amendment is carried home; particularly when they go from place to place with levity, without true penitence of heart.

But here, in this Holy Sacrament, Thou art wholly present, my God, the Man Christ JESUS; here, to all worthy and devout receivers, is granted an abundant fruit of eternal salvation.

There is here to attract men nothing that savours of levity, or of curiosity, or sense; nothing but firm faith, devout hope, and sincere charity.

9. O God, the invisible creator of the world, how wonderfully dost Thou deal with us; how sweetly and graciously dost Thou dispose of all things with Thine elect, to whom Thou offerest Thyself to be received in this sacrament.

For this verily exceedeth all understanding. This specially draweth the hearts of the devout, and inflameth their affections.

For even Thy true faithful ones, who dispose their whole life to amendment, from this most precious sacrament oftentimes gain much of the grace of devotion, and love of virtue.

10. O the admirable and hidden grace of this sacrament, which only the faithful ones of Christ know. But the unbelieving and such as are slaves unto sin cannot have experience of!

In this sacrament spiritual grace is conferred, and the strength which was lost is restored in the soul, and the beauty which by sin had been disfigured again returneth.

This grace is sometimes so great, that out of the fulness of devotion here given, not the mind only, but the weak body also, feeleth great increase of strength bestowed on it.

11. Nevertheless our coldness is much to be bewailed and pitied, that we are not drawn with greater affection to receive Christ, in Whom doth consist all the hope of those that are to be saved, and all their merit.

For He Himself is our sanctification and redemption; He Himself is the comfort of those who are but pilgrims, and the everlasting fruition of saints.

It is therefore to be lamented that many do so little consider this salutary mystery, which causeth joy in heaven, and preserveth the whole world.

Alas for the blindness and hardness of men's hearts, that doth not more deeply weigh so unspeakable a gift; but rather cometh by the daily use thereof to regard it little or nothing!

12. For if this most holy sacrament were celebrated in one place only, and consecrated by one only priest in the world; with how great desire dost thou think would men

be affected to that place, and toward such a priest of God, that they might be witnesses of the celebration of these divine mysteries ?

But now many are made priests, and in many places Christ is offered ; that the grace and love of God to man may appear so much the greater, the more widely this sacred communion is spread over the world.

Thanks be unto Thee, O merciful JESU, Thou eternal shepherd, that Thou hast vouchsafed to refresh us, who are poor and in a state of banishment, with Thy precious body and blood, and to invite us to the receiving of these mysteries with the words even of Thine own mouth, saying, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."

CHAPTER II.

THAT THE GREAT GOODNESS AND LOVE OF GOD IS EXHIBITED TO MAN IN THIS SACRAMENT.



IN confidence of Thy goodness and great mercy, O Lord, I draw near, as one sick to the healer, as one hungry and thirsty to the fountain of life, as one needy to the king of heaven, a servant unto my Lord, a creature to my creator, a desolate soul to my merciful comforter.

But whence is this to me, that Thou vouchsafest to come unto me? What am I, that Thou shouldst grant Thine own self unto me?

How dare a sinner appear before Thee? and how is it that Thou dost vouchsafe to come unto a sinner?

Thou knowest Thy servant, Thou knowest that he hath in himself no good, for which Thou shouldst grant him this favour.

I confess therefore mine own unworthiness, I acknowledge Thy goodness, I praise Thy tender mercy, and give Thee thanks for this Thy transcendent love.

For thou doest this for Thine own sake, not for any merits of mine; to the end that Thy goodness may be better known unto me, Thy love more abundantly poured down, and Thy gracious humility more eminently set forth.

Since therefore it is Thy pleasure, and Thou hast commanded that it should be so, this Thy condescension also much pleaseth me, and would that mine iniquity might be no hindrance!

2. O most sweet and merciful JESU, how great reverence and thanksgiving, together with perpetual praise, is due unto Thee for the receiving of Thy sacred body and blood, whose preciousness no mortal is able to express!

But on what shall my thoughts dwell at this communion, in thus approaching unto my Lord, Whom I am not able duly to honour, and yet Whom I cannot but desire devoutly to receive?

3. What can I think on better, and more profitable, than utterly to humble myself before Thee, and to exalt Thine infinite goodness above me?

I praise Thee, my God, and will exalt Thee for ever. I do despise myself, and cast myself down before Thee, into the deep of my unworthiness.

Behold, Thou art the Holy of Holies, and I the scum of sinners!

Behold, Thou inclinest Thyself unto me, who am not worthy so much as to look up unto Thee!

Behold, Thou comest unto me ; it is Thy will to be with me ; Thou invitest me to Thy banquet.

Thou art willing to give me heavenly food and bread of angels to eat, which is indeed no other than Thyself the living bread, which camest down from heaven, and gavest life unto the world.

4. Behold, from whence doth this love proceed ! what gracious condescension shineth forth herein ! how great thanks and praises are due unto thee for these benefits !

O how great and profitable was Thy counsel, when Thou didst ordain it ! how sweet and pleasant the banquet when Thou gavest Thyself to be our food !

O how admirable is this Thy working, O Lord, how mighty is Thy power, how unspeakable Thy truth !

For Thou didst speak the word and all things were made ; and this was done which Thou Thyself commandedst.

5. A thing much to be admired, worthy of all faith, and surpassing man's understanding, that Thou, my Lord God, true God and man, shouldst offer Thyself wholly to me in a little bread and wine, and therein become my inexhaustible support.

Thou Who art the Lord of the universe, and standest in need of none, art pleased to dwell in us by means of this Thy sacrament.

Do Thou preserve my heart and body undefiled, that with a cheerful and pure conscience I may be frequently able to receive to my everlasting health, those mysteries which Thou didst specially ordain and institute for Thine own honour, and for a never-ceasing memorial of Thyself.

6. Rejoice, O my soul, and give thanks unto God, for so noble a gift, and so precious a consolation, left unto thee in this vale of tears.

For as often as thou callest to mind this mystery, and

receivest the body of Christ, so often dost thou go over the work of thy redemption, and art made partaker of all the merits of Christ.

For the love of Christ is never diminished, and the greatness of His propitiation is never exhausted.

Therefore Thou oughtest to dispose Thyself hereunto by a constant fresh renewing of Thy mind, and to weigh with attentive consideration the great mystery of salvation.

So great, so new, and so joyful ought it to seem unto Thee, that comest to these holy mysteries, as if on this day Christ first descended into the womb of the virgin and became man, or hanging on the cross did this day suffer and die for the salvation of mankind.

CHAPTER III.

THAT IT IS PROFITABLE TO COMMUNICATE OFTEN.



BEHOLD, O Lord, I come unto Thee, that I may be comforted, and delight in Thy holy banquet, which Thou, O God, hast of Thy goodness prepared for the poor.

Behold in Thee is all whatsoever I can or ought to desire; and Thou art my salvation and my redemption, my hope and my strength, my honour and glory.

Make therefore this day the soul of Thy servant to rejoice; for unto Thee, O Lord JESU, have I lifted up my soul.

I long to receive Thee now with devotion and reverence. I desire to bring Thee into my house, that with Zaccheus I

may be blessed by Thee, and be numbered amongst the children of Abraham.

My soul thirsteth to receive Thy body and blood, my heart longeth to unite to Thee.

2. Give Thyself to me, and it sufficeth ; for beside Thee there is no comfort.

Without Thee I cannot be ; without Thy visitation I cannot live.

And therefore I must needs often draw near unto Thee, and receive Thee for the medicine of my soul ; lest haply I faint by the way, if I be deprived of Thy heavenly food.

For so, most merciful JESUS, Thou once didst say, when preaching to the people, and curing divers diseases, " I will not send them home fasting, lest they faint in the way."

Deal Thou therefore in like manner now with me, who hast vouchsafed to leave Thyself in this sacrament for the comfort of the faithful.

For Thou art the sweet refection of the soul : and he that eateth Thee worthily shall be partaker and heir of everlasting glory.

It is necessary for me, who so often fall into error and sin, and so quickly wax dull and faint, that by frequent prayer and confession, and receiving of Thy holy body and blood, I renew, cleanse, and inflame myself, lest haply, by long abstaining, I fall away from my holy purposes.

3. For the imaginations of man are prone unto evil from his youth, and unless some divine remedy help him, he falleth away to worse things.

This Holy Communion therefore draweth us back from evil, and strengtheneth us in good.

For if I be now so often negligent when I communicate ; what would become of me if I received not this remedy, and sought not after so great a help ?

Although I be not every day fit nor well prepared ; I will endeavour notwithstanding at due times to receive the divine mysteries, and to be partaker of so great a grace.

For this is the one chief consolation of faithful souls, so long as they are absent from Thee in this mortal body, that being mindful of their God, they often receive their beloved with devout mind.

4. O the wonderful condescension of Thy tender mercy towards us, that Thou, O Lord God, the creator and giver of life to all spirits, dost vouchsafe to come unto a poor soul, and with Thy whole deity and humanity to satisfy the hunger thereof !

O happy minds and blessed souls, who have the privilege of receiving Thee, their Lord God, with devout affection, and in so receiving Thee are permitted to be filled with spiritual joy.

O how great a Lord do they entertain ! how beloved a guest do they harbour ! how delightful a companion do they receive ! how faithful a friend do they welcome ! how lovely and noble a spouse do they embrace ! even Him who is to be loved above all things that are loved.

O Thou most sweet, most beloved, let heaven and earth, and all therein, be silent in Thy presence. For what praise and beauty soever they have, it is received from Thy bounteous condescension, and shall never equal the grace and beauty of Thy name.



CHAPTER IV.

*THAT MANY BENEFITS ARE BESTOWED UPON
THOSE THAT COMMUNICATE DEVOUTLY.*



LORD, my God, do Thou present Thy servant with the blessings of Thy goodness, that I may approach worthily and devoutly to Thy glorious sacrament.

Stir up my heart unto Thee, and deliver me from all listlessness. Visit me with Thy salvation, that I may taste in spirit Thy sweetness, which plentifully lieth hid in this sacrament as in a fountain.

Enlighten also mine eyes to behold so great a mystery, and strengthen me with undoubting faith to believe it.

For it is Thy work, and no human power ; Thy sacred institution, not man's invention.

For of himself no man is able to comprehend and understand these things, which surpass even the understanding of angels.

What portion then of so high and sacred a mystery shall I, unworthy sinner, dust and ashes, be able to search out and comprehend ?

2. O Lord, in the simplicity of my heart, with a good and firm faith, and at Thy commandment, I draw near unto Thee with hope and reverence ; and do truly believe that Thou art here present in this sacrament, both God and man.

Thy will is, that I should receive Thee, and that I should unite myself unto Thee in charity.

Wherefore I implore Thy mercy, and do crave Thy special grace, to the end I may wholly be dissolved and overflow

with love to Thee, and never hereafter suffer any other consolation to enter in.

For this most high and precious sacrament is the health both of soul and body, the medicine for all spiritual languor ; hereby my vices are cured, my passions bridled, my temptations overcome or at least weakened ; greater grace is infused, virtue begun is increased, faith is confirmed, hope strengthened, and love inflamed and enlarged.

3. For Thou hast bestowed, and still oftentimes dost bestow many benefits in this sacrament upon Thy beloved ones that communicate devoutly, O my God, the protector of my soul, the strengthener of human frailty, and the giver of all inward comfort.

Thou impartest unto them much comfort against all tribulations ; and liftest them up from the depth of their own dejected state, to hope in Thy protection ; and dost inwardly refresh and enlighten them with new grace, so that they who at first and before communion felt themselves full of anxiety and heartlessness, were afterwards refreshed with heavenly meat and drink.

And in such a way of dispensation Thou dealest with Thine elect, that they may truly acknowledge, and clearly prove, how great their own infirmity is, and what goodness and grace They obtain from Thee.

For they of themselves are cold and undevout ; but by Thee they are made fervent, cheerful, and devout.

For who is there, that approaching humbly unto the fountain of sweetness, doth not carry away from thence at least some little sweetness ?

Or who standing by a large fire, receiveth not some small heat thereby ?

And Thou art a fountain always full and overflowing, a fire ever burning and never decaying.

4. Wherefore if I am not permitted to draw out of the full fountain itself, nor to drink my fill, I will notwithstanding set my lips to the mouth of this heavenly conduit, that I may receive from thence at least some small drop to refresh my thirst.

And though I cannot as yet be altogether heavenly, nor so full of love as the cherubim and seraphim, yet notwithstanding I will endeavour to apply myself earnestly to devotion, and prepare my heart to obtain if it be but some small spark of divine fire, by the humble receiving of this life-giving sacrament.

And whatsoever is hereunto wanting in me, O merciful JESU, most holy Saviour, do Thou bountifully and graciously supply for me, Thou Who hast vouchsafed to call us all unto Thee, saying, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."

5. I indeed labour in the sweat of my brow, I am vexed with grief of heart, I am burdened with sins, I am troubled with temptations, I am entangled and oppressed with many evil passions; and there is none to help me, none to deliver and save me, but Thou O Lord God, my Saviour.

Receive me for the honour and glory of Thy name, Thou Who hast prepared Thy body and blood to be my meat and drink.

Grant O Lord God, my Saviour, that by frequenting the celebration of Thy sacrament, the zeal of my devotion may grow and increase.



CHAPTER V.

*OF THE DIGNITY OF THIS SACRAMENT, AND OF
THE MINISTERIAL FUNCTION.*

If thou hadst the purity of an angel, and the sanctity of S. John Baptist, thou wouldst not be worthy to receive this sacrament, or to administer it.

For it is not within the compass of the deserts of men, that man should consecrate and administer this sacrament of Christ, and receive for food the bread of angels.

Great is this mystery ; and great is the dignity of priests to whom is granted that which is not permitted to angels.

For only priests duly ordained in the church have power to celebrate this sacrament, and to consecrate the body of Christ.

The priest is indeed the minister of God, using the word of God, by God's command and appointment : yet God is there the principal author, and invisible worker ; to Whom all that He shall please is subject.

2. Thou oughtest therefore to believe God Almighty in this most excellent sacrament, rather than thine own sense or any visible sign.

And therefore thou must approach this holy work with fear and reverence.

Consider attentively and see what that is, whereof the ministry is delivered unto thee by the laying on of the bishop's hand.

Behold thou art made a priest, and consecrated to celebrate the Lord's sacrament ; take heed now that thou offer

this sacrifice to God faithfully and devoutly, and at fit opportunities, and conduct thyself so as thou mayest be without reproof.

Thou hast not lightened thy burden, but art now bound with a straiter band of discipline, and art compelled to a more perfect degree of sanctity.

A priest ought to be adorned with all graces, and to give example of good life to others.

His life and conversation should not be in the common ways of man, but with the angels in heaven, or with the perfect on earth.

3. A priest clad in sacred garments is Christ's deputy, that with all supplication and humility he may beseech God for himself and for the whole people.

Neither ought he to cease from prayer and holy oblation, till he prevail to obtain grace and mercy.

When a priest doth celebrate the holy eucharist, he honoureth God, he rejoiceth the angels, he edifieth the church, he helpeth the living, he remembereth the departed, and maketh himself partaker of all good things.



CHAPTER VI.

*AN ENQUIRY CONCERNING SPIRITUAL EXERCISE
BEFORE COMMUNION.*

WHEN I weigh Thy worthiness, O Lord, and mine own vileness, I tremble, and am confounded within myself.

For if I come not unto Thee, I fly from life, and if I unworthily intrude myself, I incur Thy displeasure.

What therefore shall I do, O my God, my helper and my counsellor in all necessity.

2. O teach Thou me the right way, appoint me some brief exercise, suitable to this holy communion.

For it is good for me to know how I ought reverently and religiously to prepare myself for Thee, for the profitable receiving of this sacrament, and for the celebrating so great and divine a sacrifice.



CHAPTER VII.

OF THOROUGHLY SEARCHING OUR OWN CONSCIENCE, AND OF HOLY PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT.

ABOVE all things, with very great humility, and with reverential supplication, with a full faith and a dutiful regard for God's honour, God's priest ought to come to celebrate and to receive this holy sacrament.

Examine diligently thy conscience, and to the utmost of thy power purify it with true contrition and humble confession ; so as there may be nothing in thee, that may be burdensome unto thee, or that may breed in thee remorse of conscience, and hinder thy free access to the throne of grace.

Be grieved at the recollection of all thy sins in general, and in particular bewail and lament thy daily transgressions.

And if thou hast time, confess unto God in the secret of thine heart the wretchedness of thy disordered passions.

2. Lament and grieve, that thou art yet so carnal and worldly, so unmortified in thy passions, so full of the motions of concupiscence :

So unwatchful over thy outward senses, so often entangled with many vain fancies :

So much inclined to outward things, so negligent in things inward and spiritual :

So prone to laughter and unbridled mirth, so indisposed to tears and compunction :

So prompt to ease and pleasures of the flesh, so dull to strictness of life :

So curious to hear what is new, and to see what is beautiful, so slow to embrace what is humble and low :

So covetous of abundance, so niggardly in giving, so close in keeping :

So inconsiderate in speech, so reluctant to keep silence :

So eager about food, so deaf to the word of God :

In such a hurry to rest, so slow to labour :

So wakeful in vain talk, so drowsy at sacred services :

So hasty to arrive at the end thereof, so inclined to be wandering and inattentive :

So negligent in the prayers, so lukewarm in celebrating the holy eucharist, so dry and heartless in receiving it :

So quickly distracted, so seldom entirely collected within thyself.

So suddenly moved to anger, so apt to take displeasure against another :

So ready to judge, so severe to reprove :

So joyful in prosperity, so weak in adversity :

So often making good resolutions, and yet bringing them at last to none effect.

3. These and other thy defects being confessed and bewailed with sorrow and great displeasure at thine own infirmity, make thou a firm resolution always to amend thy life, and to endeavour always after progress in holiness.

Then with full resignation and with thy whole will do thou offer up thyself a perpetual whole burnt offering on the altar of thy heart, faithfully committing unto Me thy body and soul.

And then thou mayest be accounted worthy to draw near to celebrate this eucharistic sacrifice, and to receive profitably the sacrament of My body and blood.

4. For man hath no oblation more worthy, nor any means greater for the destroying of sin, than to offer himself unto God purely and wholly, in the holy communion of the body and blood of Christ.

And when a man shall have done what lieth in him, and shall be truly penitent, how often soever he shall come to Me for pardon and grace, "As I live," saith the Lord, "who will not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live, I will not remember his sins any more, but they shall all be forgiven him."

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE OBLATION OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS, AND OF RESIGNATION OF OURSELVES.



S of My own will I offered up Myself unto God the Father for thy sins, My hands were stretched forth on the cross, and My body laid bare, so that nothing remained in Me that was not wholly turned into a sacrifice for the appeasing of the divine majesty.

In like manner oughtest thou also to offer thyself willingly unto Me frequently in the holy communion, as a pure and sacred oblation, with all thy strength and affections, and to the utmost of thine inward faculties.

What do I require of thee more, than that thou study to resign thyself entirely unto Me?

Whatsoever thou givest besides thyself is of no value in My sight, for I seek not thy gifts, but thee.

2. As it would not suffice thee to have all things whatsoever, without Me; so neither can it please Me, whatsoever thou givest, if thou give not thyself.

Offer up thyself unto Me, and give thyself wholly for God, and thine offering will be acceptable.

Behold I offered up Myself wholly unto My Father for

thee, and gave My whole body and blood for thy food, that I might be wholly thine, and that thou mightest continue Mine to the end.

But if thou abidest in thyself, and dost not offer thyself up freely unto My will, thine oblation is not entire, neither will there be perfect union between us.

Therefore a free offering of thyself into the hands of God ought to go before all thine actions, if thou desire to obtain liberty and grace.

For this cause so few become free and enlightened, because they do not wholly deny themselves.

My sentence standeth sure, "Unless a man forsake all, he cannot be My disciple." If thou therefore desire to be My disciple, offer up thyself unto Me with thy whole heart.

CHAPTER IX.

*THAT WE OUGHT TO OFFER UP OURSELVES AND
ALL THAT IS OURS UNTO GOD, AND TO PRAY
FOR ALL.*



THINE, O Lord, are all things that are in heaven, and that are in earth.

I desire to offer up myself unto Thee, as a free oblation, and to continue Thine for ever.

O Lord, in the simplicity of my heart I offer myself unto Thee this day, to be Thy servant for ever.

Receive Thou me, with this holy oblation of Thy precious body; which offering I make to Thee this day in the presence of angels invisibly attending.

2. O Lord, I offer unto Thee all my sins and offences

which I have committed before Thee, from the day wherein I first could sin, to this hour. I offer them upon Thy merciful altar, that Thou mayest wash out all the stains of my sins.

Cleanse my conscience from all offences, and restore to me Thy grace which I have lost by sin, forgiving me all my offences, and granting me mercifully the kiss of peace.

3. What can I do for my sins, but humbly confess and bewail them, and unceasingly entreat Thy favour and propitiation?

Hear me graciously, I beseech Thee, when I stand before Thee my God.

All my sins are displeasing unto me. I will never commit them more; but I grieve, and will grieve for them as long as I live, and am purposed to repent and according to the utmost of my power to make restitution.

Forgive me, O God, forgive me my sins for the sake of Thy holy name; save Thou my soul which Thou hast redeemed with Thy most precious blood.

Behold I commit myself unto Thy mercy, I resign myself into Thy hands.

Deal with me according to Thy goodness, not according to my wickedness and iniquity.

4. I offer up also unto Thee whatever is good in me, although it be small and imperfect. Make it grateful and acceptable unto Thee, and perfect it more and more; and bring me, who am a slothful and unprofitable creature, to a good and blessed end.

5. I offer up unto Thee also all the pious desires of devout persons, the necessities of parents, friends, brethren, sisters, and of all those that are dear unto me, and that have done good either to myself or to others for Thy love.

Also all that have desired of me to pray for them and all theirs.

That all may receive the help of Thy grace, the aid of Thy consolation, protection from dangers, deliverance from pain ; that they being delivered from all evils, may with joy return abundant thanksgivings unto Thee.

6. I offer up also unto Thee my prayers and intercessions for those especially who have in any thing wronged, grieved, or slandered me, or have done me any damage or displeasure.

I pray for all those also, whom I have at any time vexed, troubled, grieved, and scandalised by words or deeds, knowingly or in ignorance ; that it may please Thee to forgive us all our sins and offences, one against another.

Take away from our hearts, O Lord, all suspiciousness, indignation, wrath, and contention, and whatever may hurt charity, and lessen brotherly love.

Have mercy, O Lord, have mercy on those that crave Thy mercy, give grace unto them that stand in need thereof, and make us such as that we may be counted worthy to enjoy Thy grace, and go forward to life eternal. *Amen.*



CHAPTER X.

*THAT THE HOLY COMMUNION IS NOT LIGHTLY
TO BE FORBORNE.*

THOU oughtest often to have recourse to the Fountain of grace and of divine mercy, to the Fountain of goodness and of all purity ; that thou mayest be healed of thy sins, and be made more strong and vigilant against all the temptations and deceits of the devil.

The enemy, knowing what exceeding great profit and restoring aid cometh by the holy communion, endeavours by all means and on all occasions to hinder the faithful and devout from partaking therein.

2. Thus it is that some persons when they are preparing to fit themselves for holy communion, suffer from the promptings of Satan worse than before.

That wicked spirit himself (as it is written in Job) cometh amongst the sons of God, to trouble them according to his accustomed malice, or to render them over fearful and perplexed ; to the end he may, if possible, prevail on them, either altogether to forbear communicating, or at least to come with lukewarmness.

But there is no heed at all to be taken of his crafty suggestions, be they never so filthy and hideous, but all such vain imaginations are to be turned back upon his own head.

Thou must despise him and laugh him to scorn, nor dare to omit the holy communion on account of his assaults, or for the troubles which he raiseth within thee.

3. Oftentimes also a too great solicitude for the obtaining

a certain height of devotion, and a kind of anxiety about the confession of sins hindereth thee.

Follow herein the counsel of the wise, and lay aside all anxiety and scrupulousness; for it hindereth the grace of God, and overthroweth the devotion of the mind.

Do not omit the holy communion for every small vexation and trouble, but rather proceed at once to confess thy sins, and cheerfully forgive others whatever offences they have done against thee.

And if thou hast offended any, humbly crave pardon, and God will readily forgive thee.

4. What availeth it to delay long the confession of thy sins, or to defer the holy communion?

Make thyself thoroughly clean as soon as possible. Spit out the poison with all speed, make haste to apply this sovereign Remedy, and thou shalt find it to be better with thee than if thou long defer it.

If thou omit it to-day for one cause, perhaps to-morrow another of greater force may occur to thee; and so thou mayest be hindered a long time from communion, and grow more and more unfit.

As quickly as ever thou canst, shake off from thyself all heaviness and sloth. For it is of no use to continue in disquietness, or to be going on with a disturbed conscience, and so for every-day impediments to separate thyself from this divine service.

Yea, it is very hurtful to defer the communion long, for this usually brings on heavy spiritual drowsiness.

Alas, some lukewarm undisciplined persons do willingly delay confessing their sins, and defer the holy communion, lest they should be engaged to keep a stricter watch over themselves.

5. O how poor and mean is their love, how weak their devotion, who so easily put off the holy communion !

How happy is he and how acceptable to God, who so ordereth his life, and in such purity keepeth his conscience, that he is prepared and well-disposed to communicate even every day, if it were in his power, and if it might be done not to be seen of men.

If a person do abstain out of humility, or by reason of some lawful cause preventing him, he is to be commended so far as it ariseth from a feeling of reverence.

But if a spiritual drowsiness have crept over him, he must bestir himself, and do what lieth in him ; and the Lord will assist his desire, for the good will he hath thereto, which is what God doth chiefly respect.

6. But when any lawful hindrance doth happen, he will yet always have a good will and a pious intention to communicate, and so shall he reap the fruit of the sacrament.

For any devout person may every day, yea, every hour, profitably and without let draw near to Christ in spiritual communion.

And yet on certain days, and at times appointed, he ought to receive sacramentally, with affectionate reverence, the body and blood of his Redeemer, and rather seek the honour and glory of God, than his own comfort.

For he communicateth mystically, and is invisibly refreshed, as often as he devoutly calleth to mind the mystery of the incarnation and the passion of Christ.

7. He that prepareth not himself, except only when a festival draweth near, or when custom compelleth him, shall be too often unprepared.

Blessed is he that offereth himself up as a whole burnt offering to the Lord, as often as he doth receive the holy communion.

Be not too slow nor yet hurried in celebrating, but keep the accustomed manner of those with whom thou livest.

Thou oughtest not to be tedious and troublesome to others, but to observe the received custom ; according to the appointment of our fathers ; and rather to yield thyself up to the edification of others, than to thine own devotion or feelings.

CHAPTER XI.

*THAT THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST AND
THE HOLY SCRIPTURES ARE MOST NECESSARY
UNTO A FAITHFUL SOUL.*



BLESSED Lord JESUS, how great is the blessedness of a devout soul that feasteth with Thee in Thy banquet ; where there is set no other food to be eaten but Thyself, the only Beloved, and most to be desired above all the desires of the heart !

And unto me verily it would be a sweet thing in Thy presence to pour out tears from the very bottom of my heart, and with grateful Magdalene to wash Thy feet with tears.

But where now is that devotion ? where that effusion of holy tears ?

Surely in the sight of Thee and Thy holy angels, my whole heart ought to be inflamed, and even to weep for joy.

For in this sacrament I have Thee truly present, though hidden under another representation.

2. For to behold Thee in Thine own divine brightness mine eyes would not be able to endure, nor could even the

whole world stand in the splendour of the glory of Thy majesty.

Herein then dost Thou have regard to my weakness, that Thou dost veil Thyself under this sacramental sign.

Him I do really possess and adore Whom the angels adore in heaven ; but I, for the present and in the meantime, by faith ; they, by sight, and without a veil.

I ought to be content with the light of true faith, and to walk therein, until the day of everlasting brightness dawns, and the shadows of figures pass away.

But when that which is perfect is come, the use of sacraments shall cease ; because the blessed, in their heavenly glory, need not any sacramental remedy.

For they rejoice without end in the presence of God, beholding His glory face to face ; and being transformed from glory to glory into His image, they taste the WORD of God made flesh, as He was from the beginning, and as He abideth for ever.

3. Whilst I think of these wonderful things, it becometh wearisome unto me, even all spiritual comfort, because as long as I behold not my Lord openly in His own glory, I make no account of all I see or hear in this world.

Thou art witness unto me, O God, that nothing can comfort me, no creature can give me rest, but Thou only, my God, Whom I long to contemplate everlastingly.

But this is not possible, so long as I linger in this mortality.

Therefore I must frame myself to much patience ; and submit myself to Thee in all my desires.

For even Thy saints, O Lord, who now rejoice with Thee in the kingdom of heaven, whilst they lived, waited in faith and in great patience for the coming of Thy glory. What they believed, I believe also ; what they hoped for, I hope for ; whither they are arrived, I trust by Thy grace I shall arrive.

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In the meantime I will walk in faith, strengthened by the examples of the saints.

I have also holy books for my comfort and for the glass of my life, and above all these, Thy most holy body and blood for a singular remedy and refuge.

4. For I perceive two things to be very particularly necessary for me in this life, without which it would be insupportable unto me.

Whilst I am detained in the prison of this body, I acknowledge myself to stand in need of two things, namely, food and light.

Unto me then thus weak and helpless Thou hast given Thy sacred body, for the refreshment both of my soul and body ; and Thy word Thou hast set as a light unto my feet.

Without these two I should not be able to live ; for the word of God is the light of my soul, and Thy sacrament the bread of life.

These also may be called the two tables, set on the one side and on the other, in the treasury and jewel-house of the holy church.

One table is that of the sacred altar, having the holy bread, that is the precious body of Christ ; the other is that of the divine law, containing holy doctrine, teaching men the right faith, and steadily conducting them forward even to that within the veil, where is the holy of holies.

Thanks be unto Thee, O Lord JESU, Thou light of everlasting light, for that table of holy doctrine which Thou hast prepared for us by Thy servants the prophets and apostles and other teachers.

5. Thanks be unto Thee, O Thou Creator and Redeemer of mankind, Who to manifest Thy love to the whole world, hast prepared a great supper, wherein Thou hast set before us to be eaten, not the typical lamb, but Thine own most

sacred body and blood, rejoicing all the faithful with this holy banquet, and replenishing them to the full with the cup of salvation.

6. O how great and honourable is the office of God's priests, to whom it is given with sacred words to consecrate this sacrament of the LORD of glory; with their lips to bless, with their hands to hold, with their own mouth to receive, and also to administer to others !

O how clean ought those hands to be, how pure that mouth, how holy that body, how unspotted that heart, where the Author of purity so often entereth !

Nothing but what is holy, no word but what is good and profitable, ought to proceed from the mouth of him who so often receiveth this sacrament of Christ.

7. Simple and chaste ought to be the eyes that are wont to behold the body of Christ ; the hands should be pure and lifted up to heaven, that use to touch these emblems of the Creator of heaven and earth.

Unto the priests especially it is said in the law ; " Be ye holy, for that I the LORD your God, am holy."

8. O Almighty God, do Thou assist us with Thy grace, that we who have undertaken the office of the priesthood, may be able to serve Thee worthily and devoutly, in all purity, and with a good conscience.

And if we live not in so great innocency as we ought to do, grant to us at the least worthily to lament the sins which we have committed ; and in the spirit of humility, and with the full purpose of a good will, to serve Thee more earnestly for the time to come.

CHAPTER XII.

*THAT HE WHO IS ABOUT TO COMMUNICATE
OUGHT TO PREPARE HIMSELF WITH GREAT
DILIGENCE.*



AM the lover of purity and the giver of all sanctity.

I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of My rest.

Make ready for Me a large upper room furnished, and I will keep the passover at thy house with My disciples.

If thou wilt have Me come unto thee, and remain with thee, purge out the old leaven, and make clean the habitation of thy heart.

Shut out the world, and all the throng of sins ; sit thou as it were a sparrow alone upon the house-top, and think over thy transgressions in the bitterness of thy soul.

For every one that loveth will prepare the best and fairest place for his beloved ; for herein is known the affection of him that entertaineth his beloved.

2. Know thou notwithstanding, that the merit of no action of thine is able to make this preparation sufficient, although thou shouldst prepare thyself during a whole year.

But it is out of My mere grace and favour that thou art permitted to come to My table. As if a beggar were invited to a rich man's dinner, and he hath no other return to make to him for his benefits, but to humble himself and give him thanks.

Do what lieth in thee, and do it diligently ; not for custom, not for necessity ; but with fear and reverence and affection

receive the body and blood of thy beloved Lord, when He vouchsafeth to come unto thee.

I am He that have called thee, I have commanded it to be done, I will supply what is wanting in thee; come thou and receive Me.

3. When I bestow on thee the grace of devotion, give thanks to thy God; not because thou art worthy, but because I have had mercy on thee.

If thou have it not, but rather dost feel thyself dry: be instant in prayer, sigh and knock, and give not over until thou have received some crumb or drop of saving grace.

Thou hast need of Me, I have no need of thee.

Neither comest thou to sanctify Me, but I come to sanctify and make thee holy.

Thou comest that thou mayest be sanctified by Me, and united unto Me, that thou mayest receive new grace, and be stirred up anew to amendment of life.

Do not neglect this grace, but prepare thy heart with all diligence, and receive thy beloved into thy soul.

4. Thou oughtest not only to prepare thyself to devotion before communion, but carefully also to preserve thyself therein, after thou hast received this sacrament.

Nor is the careful guard of thyself afterwards less required, than devout preparation before.

For a good guard afterwards is the best preparation again for the obtaining of greater grace.

For if a person gives himself up at once too much to outward consolations, he is rendered thereby greatly indisposed to devotion.

Beware of much talk, remain in some secret place, and enjoy thy God; for thou hast Him, Whom all the world cannot take from thee.

I am He to Whom thou oughtest wholly to give up thyself, that so thou mayest now live the rest of thy time, not in thyself, but in Me, and be free from all anxiety.

CHAPTER XIII.

*THAT THE DEVOUT SOUL OUGHT WITH THE
WHOLE HEART TO SEEK UNION WITH CHRIST
IN THE SACRAMENT.*



LORD, how shall I obtain favour to find Thee alone and by Thyself, to open unto Thee my whole heart, and to enjoy Thee even as my soul desireth? that henceforth none may look upon me, nor any creature move me, nor have regard to me, but that Thou alone mayest speak unto me, and I to Thee, as the beloved is wont to speak to his beloved, and a friend to rejoice with his friend.

This I beg, this I long for, that I may be wholly united unto Thee, and may withdraw my heart from all created things, and may learn more and more by means of this sacred communion to relish things heavenly.

O Lord God, when shall I be wholly united to Thee, and absorbed by Thee, and become altogether forgetful of myself?

Thou in me, and I in Thee ; so also grant that we may both continue together in one.

2. Verily, Thou art my beloved, the choicest amongst thousands, in Whom my soul is well pleased to dwell all the days of her life.

Verily, Thou art my peacemaker, in Whom is highest

peace and true rest, out of Whom is labour and sorrow and infinite misery.

Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, and Thy counsel is not with the wicked, but Thy speech is with the humble and simple of heart.

O how sweet is Thy spirit, O Lord, Who to the end Thou mightest shew forth Thy sweetness toward Thy children, dost vouchsafe to feed them with the bread which is full of all sweetness, even that which cometh down from heaven.

Surely there is no other nation so great, that hath God so nigh unto them, as Thou our God art present to all Thy faithful ones.

3. For what other nation is there of such high renown as the Christian people?

Or what creature under heaven is there so beloved, as the devout soul, into which God Himself entereth, to nourish it with Himself?

O unspeakable grace ! O admirable condescension ! O immeasurable love specially bestowed on man !

But what return shall I make to the Lord for this grace, for charity so unparalleled?

There is nothing else that I am able to present more acceptable, than to offer my heart wholly to my God, and to unite it most inwardly unto Him.

When my soul shall be perfectly united unto God, then shall all my inward parts rejoice.

Then will He say unto me, if thou art willing to be with Me, I am willing to be with thee.

And I will answer Him, vouchsafe, O Lord, to remain with me, for I will gladly be with Thee.

This is my whole desire, that my heart be united unto Thee.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE FERVENT DESIRE OF SOME DEVOUT PERSONS TO RECEIVE THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST.

HOW great is the abundance of Thy goodness, O Lord, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee !

When I call to mind some devout persons, who approach to this Thy sacrament, O Lord, with the greatest devotion and affection, I am oftentimes confounded and blush within myself, that I come with such lukewarmness, yea, coldness, to Thine altar and the table of sacred communion.

I grieve that I remain so dry, and without hearty affection; that I am not wholly inflamed in Thy presence, O my God, and not so earnestly drawn and affected as many devout persons, who out of a vehement desire of the holy communion, and strong affection of heart could not restrain themselves from weeping. And these with desire both of soul and body, earnestly longed after Thee, O God, the fountain of life : not being otherwise able to satisfy their hunger, but by receiving Thy body and blood with all delight and spiritual eagerness.

2. O the truly ardent faith of such a clear evidence of Thy sacred presence !

For they truly know their Lord in the breaking of bread, whose heart within them so vehemently burneth, whilst Thou, O blessed JESU, dost walk and converse with them.

Such affection and devotion as this, love and fervency so vehement, are too often far from me.

Be Thou favourable unto me, O merciful JESU, sweet and

gracious Lord, and grant to me Thy poor needy creature, sometimes at least in this holy communion to feel if it be but a small portion of Thy hearty love, that my faith may become more strong, my hope in Thy goodness be increased, and that charity once perfectly kindled within me, may never decay.

3. Thy mercy is able to grant me the grace which I long for, in the day when it shall please Thee to visit me most mercifully with the spirit of fervour.

For although I burn not with such vehement desire as those who are so specially devoted to Thee ; yet notwithstanding by Thy grace I long for this great and hearty desire, praying from the heart that I may participate with all such Thy fervent lovers, and be numbered with them in their holy company.

CHAPTER XV.

THAT THE GRACE OF DEVOTION IS OBTAINED BY HUMILITY AND DENIAL.



THOU oughtest to seek the grace of devotion, and to ask for it earnestly, to wait for it with patience and confidence, to receive it with thankfulness, to keep it with humility, to work with it diligently.

Thou oughtest especially to humble thyself, when thou feelest inwardly little or no devotion ; and yet not to be too much dejected, nor grieve inordinately.

God often giveth in one short moment that which He for a long time hath denied : He giveth sometimes in the end, that which in the beginning of thy prayer He deferred to grant.

2. If grace were always instantly given, and were ever at hand with a wish, weak man could not well bear it.

Therefore the grace of devotion is to be waited for with good hope and humble patience.

Nevertheless, do thou impute it to thyself, and to thine own sins, when this grace is not given thee, or when it is secretly taken away.

It is sometimes but a small matter that hindereth and hideth grace from us ; at least if anything can be called small, and not rather a weighty matter, which hindereth so great a good.

But if thou remove this, be it great or small, and perfectly overcome it, thou shalt have thy desire.

3. For immediately thou givest thyself to God from thy whole heart, and seeketh not this nor that, according to thine own pleasure, thou shalt find thyself united to Him, and at peace ; for nothing can afford so sweet a relish, nothing can be so delightful, as the good pleasure of the divine will.

Whosoever therefore, with a single heart, lifteth up his intention to God, and keepeth himself clear of all inordinate love or dislike of any created thing, he shall be the most fit to receive grace, and meet for the gift of true devotion.

For the Lord bestoweth His blessings where He findeth the vessels empty.

And the more perfectly a man forsaketh these low things, and the more he dieth to himself by contempt of himself, the more speedily shall grace come, and shall enter in the more plentifully, and shall lift up the free heart higher.

4. Then shall he see, and flow together, and wonder, and his heart shall be enlarged, because the hand of the Lord is with him, and he hath put himself wholly into His hand, even for ever and ever.

Behold, thus shall the man be blessed, who seeketh God with his whole heart.

This man in receiving the Holy Eucharist, obtaineth the grace of divine union ; for that he looketh not to his own devotion and comfort, but to the honour and glory of God.

CHAPTER XVI.

THAT WE OUGHT TO LAY OPEN OUR NEEDS TO CHRIST, AND TO CRAVE HIS GRACE.



THOU most sweet and loving Lord, Whom I now desire to receive with all devotion, Thou knowest my infirmities and necessities ; in how many sins and evils I am involved ; how often I am weighed down, tempted, disturbed, and defiled by them.

Unto Thee I come for remedy, I entreat of Thee consolation and support.

I speak to Thee Who knowest all things, to Whom all my inward thoughts are open, and Who alone canst perfectly comfort and help me.

Thou knowest what good things I stand in most need of, and how poor I am in all virtue.

2. Behold, I stand before Thee poor and naked, calling for grace, and imploring mercy.

Refresh Thy hungry supplicant, inflame my coldness with the fire of Thy love, enlighten my blindness with the brightness of Thy presence.

Do Thou turn all earthly things into bitterness, all things

grievous and contrary into patience, all low and created things into contempt and oblivion.

Lift up my heart to Thee in heaven, and do not send me away to wander over the earth.

Be Thou alone sweet unto me from henceforth for evermore ; for Thou alone art my meat and drink, my love and my joy, my sweetness and all my good.

3. O that with Thy presence Thou wouldst wholly inflame, burn, and conform me unto Thyself ; that I might be made one spirit with Thee, by the grace of inward union, and by the meltings of ardent love !

Suffer me not to go away from Thee hungry, but deal mercifully with me, as oftentimes Thou hast dealt wonderfully with Thy saints.

What marvel is it if I should be wholly inflamed by Thee, since Thou art a fire always burning and never decaying, a love purifying the heart, and enlightening the understanding.



CHAPTER XVII.

*OF FERVENT LOVE AND VEHEMENT DESIRE TO
RECEIVE CHRIST.*

WITH deep devotion and ardent love, with all affection and fervour of heart, I desire to receive Thee, O Lord, as many saints and devout persons have desired Thee, when they were partakers of Thy holy communion.

O my God, everlasting love, my whole good, happiness never ending, I desire to receive Thee with the most earnest affection, and the most worthy awe and reverence, that any of the saints ever had, or could feel toward Thee.

2. And although I be unworthy to entertain all those feelings of devotion, nevertheless I offer unto Thee the whole affection of my heart, as if I alone had all these most ardent longings.

Yea, and all that a dutiful mind can conceive and desire, do I, with the deepest reverence and most inward affection, offer and present unto Thee.

I desire to reserve nothing to myself, but freely and most cheerfully to sacrifice unto Thee myself and all that is mine.

O Lord my God, my Creator, my Redeemer, I desire to receive Thee this day, with such affection, reverence, praise, honour, gratitude, worthiness, and love, with such faith, hope, and purity, as Thy most holy mother, the glorious Virgin Mary, received and desired Thee, when to the angel who declared unto her glad tidings of the mystery of the incarnation she humbly and devoutly answered, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done unto me according to Thy word."

3. And as Thy blessed forerunner, the most excellent among the saints, John Baptist, rejoicing in Thy presence, leaped for joy of the Holy Ghost, whilst he was yet shut up

in his mother's womb ; and afterwards seeing JESUS walking among men, humbled himself very greatly, and said with devout affection, " The friend of the bridegroom that standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the voice of the bridegroom ;" in like manner I also wish to be inflamed with holy desires, and to offer myself up to Thee from my whole heart.

Wherefore also I offer and present unto Thee the triumphant joys, the fervent affections, the ecstasies, the supernatural illuminations and celestial visions of all devout hearts, with all the virtues and praises celebrated by all creatures, for myself, and for all such as are commended to me in prayer ; that by all Thou mayest worthily be praised and for ever glorified.

4. Receive, O Lord my God, my wishes and desires of giving Thee infinite praise, and blessing that hath no bounds, which according to the measure of Thine ineffable greatness, are most justly Thy due.

These praises I render unto Thee, and long to render them every day and every moment. And with all entreaty and affectionateness I do invite and beseech all heavenly spirits, and all Thy faithful servants, to render with me thanks and praises unto Thee.

5. Let all people, nations, and languages praise Thee, and magnify Thy holy and precious name with highest joy and ardent devotion.

And let all who reverently and devoutly celebrate Thy most high sacrament, and receive it with full faith, be accounted worthy to find grace and mercy at Thy hands, and pray with humble supplication in behalf of me a sinner.

And when they shall have attained to their desired devotion, and joyful union with Thee, and shall have departed from Thy holy table, well comforted and marvellously refreshed, O let them vouchsafe to remember my poor soul.

CHAPTER XVIII.

*THAT A MAN SHOULD NOT BE A CURIOUS SEARCHER
INTO THE HOLY SACRAMENT, BUT AN HUMBLE
FOLLOWER OF CHRIST, SUBMITTING HIS SENSE
TO DIVINE FAITH.*



THOU oughtest to beware of curious and unprofitable searching into this most profound sacrament, if thou wilt not be plunged into the depths of doubt.

He that is a searcher of My majesty shall be overpowered by My glory. God is able to work more than man can understand.

A dutiful and humble enquiry after the truth is allowable, provided we be always ready to be taught, and study to walk in the sound doctrine of the church of our fathers.

2. It is a blessed simplicity when a man leaves the difficult ways of questions and disputings, and goes forward in the plain and firm path of God's commandments.

Many have lost devotion, whilst they sought to search into things too high.

Faith is required at thy hands, and a sincere life ; not enquiry into the deep mysteries of God.

If thou dost not understand things that are beneath thee, how shalt thou comprehend those which are above thee ?

Submit thyself unto God, and humble thy sense to faith, and the light of knowledge shall be given thee, in such degree as shall be profitable and necessary for thee.

3. Some are grievously tempted about faith and this holy sacrament ; but this is not to be imputed to themselves, but rather to the enemy.

Be not thou anxious herein ; do not dispute with thine own thoughts, nor give any answer to doubts suggested by the

devil ; but trust the words of God, trust His Saints and Prophets, and the enemy will flee from thee.

It is profitable to the servant of God to endure such things.

For the devil tempteth not unbelievers and sinners ; but faithful and devout persons he tempteth and disquieteth.

4. Go forward therefore with simple and undoubting faith, and with the reverence of a supplicant draw thou near to the holy sacrament ; and whatsoever thou art not able to understand, commit to Almighty God.

God deceiveth thee not : he is deceived that trusteth too much to himself.

God walketh with the simple, revealeth Himself to the humble, giveth understanding to the little ones, openeth the sense to pure minds, and hideth grace from the proud.

Human reason may be deceived, true faith cannot be deceived.

5. All reason and natural search ought to follow Faith, not to go before it, nor to break in upon it.

For Faith and Love do here specially take the lead, and work in hidden ways, in this most holy sacrament.

God, who is eternal, incomprehensible, and of infinite power, doeth things great and unsearchable in Heaven and in earth, and there is no tracing out His marvellous works.

If the works of God were such that they might be easily comprehended by human reason, they could not justly be called marvellous or unspeakable.



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