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THE
SOLILOQUY
OF THE
SOUL







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THE SOLILOQUY OF THE SOUL

BY

THOMAS A KEMPIS



LONDON:
SUTTABY AND CO.,
Amen Corner, St. Paul's.

141. n. 350.

The Soliloquy of the Soul.





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Preface

BY

Thomas A' Kempis.

FOR my own comfort I have gathered together into one little book certain devout sentences, which I had a mind to store up in my heart, and which I have arranged as it were like a delightful garden planted with various trees, and decked with beautiful flowers, in which I may sometimes enter to cull and gather matter suitable in time of need for the refreshment of my heart when overcome by weariness, or cast down by sorrow.

And that I might at all times readily find out under what tree it would suit me to rest, or what flower it would be most pleasant to choose, I have marked the several heads of the discourse under as many titles. And as to the form of the discourse employed—now speaking, now disputing, sometimes as praying, sometimes as conversing; now in my





Introduction.

ALTHOUGH the world wide popularity of the "Imitation of Christ" has somewhat thrown into the shade the other works of Thomas à Kempis, no apology is needed for the publication of a revised edition of the "Soliloquy of the Soul."

Its authorship has never been disputed, and internal evidence—perhaps the best amid the interminable disputes on the subject—unhesitatingly decides that the "Soliloquy" and the "Imitation" are by one and the same hand. They are, as Dean Milman observed, more than kindred in thought and language. The same spirit of exalted piety and of fervent devotion, making use of the sublime imagery of the inspired writers of the Old Testament, is conspicuous in both works.

If there are not in the "Soliloquy" so many of those "brief quivering sentences" which take such hold of the mind as to be fastened without effort on the memory, there

is in it that utter abandonment of the soul to God which places the book in the first rank of religious meditations. Whatever may be the modern estimation of the value of monastic life, there can be no question of the necessity for frequent communings of the soul with itself at all times and in all seasons. Little fear, indeed, is there in these days of too much abstraction from the busy and restless world around us. The danger which threatens us with every fresh invention for the mitigation of human suffering, and for the increase of national comfort, is that the inner and spiritual life of man will be more and more starved and neglected.

There is an unity of design in the "Soliloquy," which among all the works of à Kempis makes it especially attractive to the reader. The author's design that such of the chapters may be chosen (to use his simile like we cull plants in a garden) as are suitable in time of need for the refreshment of the heart when overcome by weariness, may no doubt be followed with great advantage. But to thoroughly appreciate the grandeur and beauty of the work, it is necessary to read the chapters in their consecutive order—to be with the author through the valley of lamentation and of the shadow of death, and in his

earnest pleadings for the divine spirit, until he intones the grand anthem of thanksgiving at the end. The absence of all attempts to interpose any mediation of man between the soul and God is most noticeable throughout. It breathes forth no intolerance, nor is there any trace of the scholastic theology which had led to such interminable disputes in the then Christian world. Although written by a monk, there is wonderful little trace of the influence of monastic life. Indeed the struggles, and as it were wrestlings, with the divine presence for a revelation of the inner spiritual mysteries, might have been penned by a devout Christian of any age, who being in the world, yet not of the world, sought to fill up the void of personal religion. "It is the soul of man working out its own salvation, with hardly any aid but the confessed necessity of divine grace."

One of the earliest translations of the "Soliloquy" into English was by Thomas Rogers, published in London in 1640, under the title of "A Spiritual and Heavenly Dialogue betwixt the Soul of Man and God." It appears, doubtless owing to some confusion of the compilers and translators, as the fourth book of the "Imitation ;" but by all the innumerable commentators of à Kempis,

the “Soliloquium Animæ” is spoken of as a separate work. Great pains have been taken with the present edition to reproduce the author’s meaning with fidelity; and while two chapters have been omitted as not in consonance with the culture of the English Church, it is believed that this new issue of the “Soliloquy of the Soul” will enable many earnest and devout Christians to satisfy some spiritual cravings, and realize what community of heart and mind there has been among the saints in all ages.





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And that I might at all times readily find out under what tree it would suit me to rest, or what flower it would be most pleasant to choose, I have marked the several heads of the discourse under as many titles. And as to the form of the discourse employed—now speaking, now disputing, sometimes as praying, sometimes as conversing ; now in my

own person, now in another's ; I have so turned the text that it may run in an easy style.

2. I ask then my readers not to be angry with the author, because he has chosen so to frame this discourse with himself. I would have them pardon also want of elegance in composition, and the simplicity of diction, thinking to myself that it is not those things which are full of art, but the simple and the pure, that have the sweetest odour before GOD. But if anywhere my meaning appears somewhat incomplete or not very clear, I beg the pious reader to correct the same, assuring him, that if anything irrelevant be found here, it is the result of inadvertency, and not of design.

Moreover, since all human judgments, however fair they may seem, may yet be liable to be deceived, I, a suppliant disciple, have recourse to Thee, O Omnipotent GOD, and FATHER of lights, and offer Thee this soliloquy, to the end that Thou mayest approve what is worthy, and reject what is faulty, and show me or some other faithful servant how Thou wouldst have that which is displeasing more correctly and clearly set forth.

3. I entreat Thee also, Holy FATHER, grant

me, the least of Thy servants, an enlargement of time and opportunity for tarrying in the most plentiful pastures of the Holy Scriptures, which are and ever shall be my dearest delights, until the day of Eternity dawns, and the shadow of mortal life declines.

Remove then far from me all unprofitable cares, temporal loves, hurtful passions, and all other causes that keep me from my coveted rest : for free and tranquil should that mind be which longs to meditate on things inner and Divine. And to the end that I may be enabled to attain such a frame of mind, deign to pour out upon, and fill me with the blessing of Thy heavenly sweetness, that what I speak may tend to Thy greater glory, and to the increase of the grace of spiritual consolation for myself.







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Soliloquy of the Soul.





THE

Soliloquy of the Soul.

I.

*OF THE LONGINGS OF A SOUL SEEKING
GOD.*

“**B**UT it is good for me to cleave
steadfastly unto GOD.”

O ! brief and pleasant words
embracing GOD, and excluding all the world.

What more can be said, what more de-
sired ? Is it not enough if that be done
which has now been spoken ?

And if others, yea, many other words are
uttered, can they not be all included in these ?
Say again, therefore, my soul, with the Pro-
phet, It is good for me to cleave steadfastly
unto GOD.

Oh ! my GOD, Thou art my only good,
Thou alone art good and precious. To

A

Speak of Thee is sweet to him that loveth Thee ; to think of Thee pleasant to the devout, whose heart is not in this world, but hidden with Thee in Heaven ; so that Thou mayest be his only true repose, and inner sweetness, and he be not daily tormented here, where false desires allure. My GOD, how is it with him at heart, who burns with love of Thee.

What joy is his, whom no vanity of creatures delights ! Does not his voice speak in the Psalm, the words of which were but now on my lips, when it says ? “ Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, and whom have I desired on earth beside Thee ? ”

Oh ! holy, devout soul, hanging upon GOD, what is this I hear from thee ? What is it that thou sayest ? Do all things in Heaven and on earth appear little in thy sight ?

2. “ Yea, small indeed are they. ”

What then seekest thou ? and whom desirest thou without these ? and where wilt thou find Him without them ? Hath He a name, or place, or habitation where He may be sought ?

Where is the place of the habitation of His Glory, of which thou hast sung, saying : “ O LORD, I have loved the beauty of Thy House, and the place of the habitation of Thy Glory ” ?

Answer me, I pray thee. For if thou canst point Him out to me, I will go with thee, and we will seek Him together, and thy GOD shall be my GOD, and it shall be well with us, when He shall have been found and holden fast by us.

3. "What is this," the soul saith, "thou askest of me, or why dost thou pry into aught such with me? Thinkest thou that I am able to speak such things?"

"Nay, if charity inclines me to speak, do not the rareness of the subject, and the depth of the secret prevent my revealing them? Why askest thou me? Ask those who have seen and heard Him; for behold they know Who He is Whom thou seekest. But rather ask Him, Who knoweth all things.

"For He it is of Whom we converse, Who will better manifest Himself unto thee, and show far more clearly, where He dwelleth. He it is, Who teacheth man knowledge, and giveth His grace unto the humble.

"Draw near then to Him, Who revealeth Himself, whensoever and to whomsoever He pleaseth; for without Him none can reveal Him unto thee.

"He alone can disclose to thee the joy of those that love Him, and that far beyond aught thou canst learn from me."

4. And now why speakest thou thus, holy and humble soul?

Think not I would draw out of thee what, perchance, ought not to be known, or is not permitted thee to tell.

Let thy secret remain with thee ; be thy door closed upon thee : let the seal of fidelity be unbroken, and the veil not removed from the sanctuary.

Eat holy bread in the holy place, within the tabernacle of thy house ; ascend to the upper room ; enter the wine-cellar of the eternal King—or what is better, and sweeter far—the chamber of thy heavenly Bridegroom.

I know it is written : “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and cast it to dogs.” I know and have read this.

But see what follows, and pity me according to her word, who said, “The dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the Master’s table.” Hide not then from me the words which I crave for ; but out of the fulness of thy inner sweetness send forth at least one spark of burning love.

Give but one little drop of precious wine : shed forth even the slightest odour from that most costly ointment, that I also may taste that, of which the best part is known to thee, and is so oft thy best consolation.

5. Why delayest thou? Satisfy my eager longing, and open thou the door to a friend knocking now for the third time.

Speak, beloved of the Beloved, yet despise me not. If thou canst not speak of Him, as He is, tell as best thou canst.

For to speak of Him, as He is, who is sufficient, and who could understand one so speaking? Therefore if not as He is in Himself, tell at least what He appears in thee.

Break forth and proclaim what good He hath done to thee?

For who shall discover what He is in Himself? Thou canst not, as thou hast confessed and admitted, saying: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?"

If then thou canst not penetrate thy own spirit, which the Creator and Quickener of all spirits created, how shalt thou fathom the Uncreated?

Didst thou not then awe-stricken say: "O LORD, who is like unto Thee"? Yet admit me, I pray, to some similitude of Him, Whose essence thou hast not yet attained unto. For it is hard thou shouldst deny a part, to whom thou thinkest not meet to reveal the whole.

6. "I profess (says she) that thou art too inquisitive and importunate with me.

"Thou searchest all that is mine, and puttest thy hands on the secrets of my couch. I sent thee to Him, and again thou comest to me. Seekest thou me, or Him?

"But I ask of what spirit thou art. Be still, I pray, and trouble me not—for He Whom thou seekest is far above me."

7. And I said, shall he that seeketh GOD so easily be still?

Thou that canst give me so speedily consolation, protract not this suspense. How long keepest thou my mind in doubt?

"As thy soul liveth, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." For a blessing it will be, if thou wilt show Him unto me. Now then, if thou hast seen Him, tell me plainly, and I will take fast hold on Him.

8. Again she replied. "I see thou art earnest in thy desire, and full of love for the Creator. Yet thou demandest a hard thing of me, and I know not whether thy wishes can be granted. He Whom thou seekest knows full well that it is not mine to tell thee this. Thy search is like that of the Bride in the Canticles, 'Show me Him Whom my soul loveth.' Thou wouldst learn from me who He is, and what good

He hath done unto me. Both, however, are my secrets.

“And still thou art not content, nor kept back by His greatness, Who excelleth the heavens; nor cast down by my littleness, who am as nothing in His sight. Why hast thou laid this burthen upon me?

“For it is a task beyond me to declare until I enter the sanctuary of GOD, and understand. Why pressest thou to know what I cannot speak?”

9. And I said: And still thou wilt not, and I so earnest. “Yea beyond all things, for I joy in gaining a deeper knowledge of things which are with difficulty unfolded.”

Do not, I beseech thee, be so hard as to be silent altogether. Fear not that I shall betray these things to enemies. I will keep them for friends, yea, for thy chosen friends.

Thou mayest without fear speak to me in the solitude of thy silence. Lo! we two are here alone.

I do not seek in vain curiosity, nor in arrogance, but in Him alone, Who hath caused us to put our trust in Him, of Whom also we now speak.

But if He Himself come in upon us, we will give Him place, and He shall be in the midst of us.

And if He vouchsafe to speak, willingly will we hear and keep silence. And thou wilt not then be bound to answer my requests, for when He speaketh all flesh must be silent before Him.

10. And she answered, "It is a good compact. Only let Him be with us, and we be borne unto His secret chamber. Let Him be the guide of our lips, and conduct us whither He pleaseth.

"Hear then thy Beloved, Whom thou seekest so diligently, is such and so great that He cannot be expressed in words, in that He is ineffable.

"So high and far exalted above all creatures, that He is for ever incomprehensible. His power and greatness are infinite. Whatever is spoken or written of Him, is altogether unworthy of Him, since He is above all.

"The Heavens said : He passed through us, and ascended up on high, and prevailed over us. Earth answered : If the Heaven of Heavens can not contain Him, ask Him not of me. The stars sang—We are darkness and not light, if He shine not.

"The sea trembled and said, He is not in me, and the deep knew Him not.

"Hearest thou what these say ? I hear and

am troubled ; my lips trembled at their voice. What then shall be done, if we ask Himself? Let us enquire of Him. O LORD, art thou He, of Whom the men of old have spoken, and Whom all things in their seasons serve?"

11. "I am that I am, and besides Me is none other."

I am the first and the last, creating and governing all.

"I live, saith the LORD, because I will live for ever and ever."

12. What sayest thou now, little worm, that art girt about with so great a light?

Behold thy Beloved, Whom thou thoughtest with me, speaketh to thee.

He was with me, when I said to Him, "It is good for me to cleave steadfastly unto GOD." He will be with thee if thou also sayest: "My soul refused comfort, and I coveted not the day of man: but in Thee, O LORD, will I trust, for Thou art my King and my GOD."

Thou must not be like inconstant lovers, but as one clinging to one alone, seeking one alone, who admits no rival from without.

Let then thy converse be with Him alone ; and if He depart, sit as a widow patiently bearing all things. For this is His manner

to go, and return, to prove His beloved, and make her perfect in love.

Let not His absence trouble thee, when thou longest for His approach. Wait, wait still ; for a while He will go, in a while return.

For all this love effects, which now raises the soul to the highest, now sinks her to the lowest depth.

13. His love is most gracious ; sweeter is it than all flowers, whiter than lilies, more bright than dazzling gems.

His love is above that of all created things, and therefore for love of Him are all these to be despised.

Touched by His love, my heart so burned within me, that turning away from all creatures, I prayed only for His most chaste embraces ; and like as it were burning coals from a fiery furnace, I poured forth words, alas ! unwont to many. What is there, I said, in Heaven, and what wished I on earth beside Thee, GOD of my heart, GOD my portion for ever ?

Understand now what and how great thy Beloved is, and how incomprehensibly He transcendeth all things whatever.

And although He is ineffable, and beyond all thought, because infinite ; yet is He very

lovely, engaging, affectionate, easily entreated, so that, though He cannot be understood, He can in a wonderful manner be loved.

For by love He is reached, by love retained; by longing He is sought for, by prayer constrained, and by patient waiting won.

If I have not yet satisfied thee, may He Whom thou soughtest satisfy thee, and teach thee better than all others how to find Himself.





II.

ON THE STRICT JUDGMENT OF GOD.

“**L**ET my heart rejoice that it may fear Thy Name.” My GOD, Thou art very lovely, but very terrible also. Let him that loveth rejoice ; and him that loveth not, fear. Whoso neither feareth nor loveth, is foolish and mad.

For it is a fearful thing to fall into Thy hands. And who for fear can tell the power of Thy anger ? or who shall stand in Thy sight in the coming Judgment Day ?

Because as the roaring of a lion is Thy voice, and Thy sword as a shining fire.

At the sound of Thy voice all the inhabitants of the world shall be moved, and the foundations of the earth shaken when thou comest. Who then shall not tremble, or how shall any escape Thy hands ? If a man hide himself beneath the strongest rock ; Thou shalt thunder, and its strength shall be rent asunder. And if he hide in caves or mountains, he shall be drawn forth, to abide the anger of Him Whom he strove not to appease.

2. Verily there is no place where man can be concealed from Thy face.

For all things are naked and open to thine eyes : Thou piercest also the inner parts of man, and knowest his most subtle thoughts. Nothing secret then is hidden from Thee.

Oh ! how terrible wilt Thou be to sinners and to the hard of heart, who now boast when they have done evil, and glory in basest deeds, and say—"The LORD doth not see, neither shall the GOD of Jacob understand."

They are so puffed up with vain words, as if Thou wast not about to come ; and they turn away their eyes that they should not see the end. But Thou wilt come in an hour when they think not, and they will be taken in the snares of their own iniquities.

And as thieves and robbers are put to confusion, when taken, so will they be confounded when their day shall come.

Thou wilt put them to shame who now mock Thee, and wilt recompense their wickedness unto them who have hated Thy Righteousness.

Now they are deaf to Thy voice, but the day will come when they will cry, and none shall hear. They now turn Thy word into a fable, but then they shall be turned into fire. For Thy word shall go forth with a

terrible blast, and strike without pity the ungodly and unbelieving.

3. What then will the proud, and they that are puffed up with knowledge and swollen with power, say? What answer make, when the last trump shall sound, when Thou, O LORD our GOD, shall appear in majesty with Thy angels and archangels? Then will all the unjust scoffers of Thy word be dumb, and they shall be troubled on every side who feared not to persecute Thy devout servants.

Then will they be confounded with great confusion who made shipwreck of conscience and goodness of life, and gave themselves up to vanity and pleasure. Then shall they be punished who have given the reins to the flesh. Then shall they cry aloud to Heaven, who now joy in music and the dance. Then whatever hath been won through immoderate joy, shall all be changed to grief.

Then shall they be bound together to be burnt who have been companions in drunkenness. And those whom love knit together in sin, the avenging flame shall then punish.

4. Oh ! foolish and hapless ones. O mad and blind lovers of the world, what do ye, and mean?

How will ye escape the anger of GOD?

Why for a little pleasure which ye love,
haste ye to eternal torments?

Have ye no horror of hell, ye who shrink
from a little penance?

And ye who quiver at the death of the
flesh, why be ye not in instant prayer against
the eternal death of the soul? For unless ye
be converted and repent, ye will not (when
GOD judges) escape these fearful evils, and
fiery torments. I tremble as I think of the
last day and hour; when GOD may no longer
be entreated in prayer, but be the just Judge
of all.

Holy GOD, Holy and Mighty, Holy and
Merciful SAVIOUR, deliver me not over unto
bitter death, but grant me a season for repent-
ance, that I may worthily lament my sins ere
the life of this world faileth me.



III.

ON GRIEF AND WEEPING FOR SINS.

MY sin is ever before me." My GOD, I have stained my life with many sins, but see my tears which I pour out before Thee on account of them. For Thou knowest that in me dwelleth no good thing; and as long as I bear this mortal body, I am not free from sin.

Therefore do I evil and sin daily, and what is far worse, I allow many to pass away without sorrow and worthy contrition. For so intent am I, and engrossed with outward things and vain curiosity, I cannot return quickly enough to salutary tears.

Hence the darkness of my sins is so deepened, and the fountains of grace obstructed, nay, the channels of divine consolation closed.

And is this a light evil?

It is in truth a great one, my GOD; and the more grievous since it passes so quickly from my heart, and pierces me with no sorrow.

2. O LORD, wilt Thou not look on me?
How long shall I delude Thee, and deceive
myself?

How long wilt Thou keep silence, O
LORD?

Where is Thy rod? Where Thy goad
and staff? Why withdrawest Thou the judg-
ment and hell from my eyes?

If these were ever before me, thinkest
Thou I should act carelessly? Is it for the
sake of my amendment that Thou thus
showest long-suffering?

But if I neglect it, wilt Thou not after-
wards severely punish, if not here, assuredly
in the life to come? For no sin, small or
great, shall go unpunished.

Oh, far better is punishment here, where
weeping is fruitful, labour short, satisfaction
more acceptable, reconciliation easier. Spare
not then the rod, but anoint my eyes with
salve, however smarting; nor defer my
punishment to the last, lest I be delivered
over to the tormentors to pay the uttermost
farthing.

It is better now to be galled a little here
but savingly, than hereafter to endure such
bitter pangs. Therefore would I now mourn,
and grieve bitterly for my sins. Ay, many
have I to weep for, and none to make me

smile. Darkness of heart, a slippery conscience, lapses into vice, neglect of grace, urge, nay often compel me from my needs to weep and mourn. And when I think of the diverse temptations and assaults of sin, what cause is there for mirth? Spare me, O LORD, spare me. No wonder is it, if touched by grief within, I weep, for it is the time for weeping.

Happy hour! when sorrow for sin springs up within me. Blessed the tear which floweth from the vehemence of contrition, and falleth on every stain of the heart.

3. And who can fully explore this abyss, and lay bare without fear the hidden pollution of the heart.

My GOD, True Light, Thou canst illumine all the darkness of my heart, and burn out all its stains in the spirit of ardour and judgment. It is Thine to give a new heart, to create a clean one, and therein to prepare a secret dwelling, that it may be Thy resting place, and a Tabernacle of Thy Name, Who art a lover of purity, and the guest of a good conscience.

But because Thou dost not willingly visit a neglected house, and often turnest away from one defiled by wicked habits, therefore I fear lest this should be my lot.

But do Thou mercifully and pitifully come to my aid to repair my ruins. Woe to him from whom in anger Thou hast departed, but peace to him on whom Thou hast descended, and with whom Thou remainest.

But as for me, a miserable creature placed in the midst of snares, and weighed down by the chains of sin, what other counsel and remedy of salvation have I but to uplift my contrite eyes to Thee, that haply my cry may be heard in the heavens?

For a polluted conscience can find no more saving remedy, than to offer up the sacrifice of a broken heart in prayer?

And how can pressing temptation be resisted, except unceasing prayer be poured out to Thee, and a man humble himself profoundly in Thy sight?

But who will give me this blessing to weep and pray as I ought? Whence can I gain humility, and so great abundance of tears? Doubtless from Thee, LORD, with Whom there is mercy and plenteous redemption. Oh, LORD GOD, Giver of all grace, grant that I may worthily bewail my sins whether large or small, and at the same time unsparingly chastise all without excuse, be they manifest or hidden.

Let these things dwelt upon between me
and Thee, so restore to me lost grace, that I
may be prepared for better still, and brought
nearer to salvation.





IV.

ON LAMENTATION FOR NEGLIGENCE.

“**T**HINE Eyes have seen my imperfections.”

Ah! LORD GOD, what ever will become of me since I sin daily? How shall I thoroughly amend my life?

When will it be better with me? When shall I recover my strength? And when shall I conquer all things?

I am cast down in the deep. Thinkest Thou there is yet any hope of my rising again, of my amendment, further progress, and attainment of the end?

Alas! I have no hope in myself; would it were more firmly rooted in Thee. Great despair is come upon me, because my infirmity increaseth from long trouble, and I see no end to my grief and iniquity.

And If I say, now I will begin, behold, it is time, I will strive to the uttermost; sin forthwith stands at the door, the enemy rises against me, and evil habits hold me firmly, against my will.

See, O LORD, my despair and abasement, and all the distress that I suffer. Let Thy Right Hand be lifted up, and deliver me from those that have girt me round, for the fear of them is fallen upon me.

My strength is undone, and my courage hath failed. My arm is broken, and my sword cannot save me.

I see not to whom I can turn ; and there is none to receive me—none to cure me. Thou alone remainest as my refuge ; but my offences make me fear, and therefore am I held back.

2. I have sinned : Oh ! pardon me. I am altogether, and very deeply penitent.

Do to me what seemeth right, but be gracious unto me.

Justly hast Thou deserted me. Justly hast Thou handed me over to the adversary.

Yet remember, O LORD, the work of Thy hands, and raise up that which is fallen ; for of itself it cannot stand.

Give ear unto my groaning, and my deep need. Let not the distress and anguish of my heart be overlooked by Thee.

Look, O Merciful FATHER, on my captivity and imprisonment, my oppression and distress, and deliver me from the house of bondage, and of wretched slavery.

If man live for many years, what shall it profit towards his amendment? Who knoweth whether he will become better or worse?

For the progress and end of man are uncertain, and his final perseverance doubtful, because of the manifold attacks of sins, and the perils of temptation.

Many on their first conversion are pious and humble, but afterwards froward and rebellious. First fearful and devout, contrite and silent; but afterwards unbridled and dissolute, talkative, and watchful.

They who formerly checked their very thoughts, afterwards pay little heed to their words and actions; and thus every sin, not guarded against at first, becomes gradually worse. Who then should not walk in fear and be circumspect, since sometimes unhappy ends befall even the good and the modest? Who knoweth whether he be elected, and can endure all things?

3. All must be proved, and seeing then temptation is a fire, who is assured he will not be burnt? All must fear, and alike hope for the better, but none must rashly presume, or slumber in a shadowy hope.

Gold that is tried in the fire shall be saved, while the stubble is consumed.

Consider therefore, O man, of what sort

thou art. The Heavenly Refiner shall "refine and cleanse the silver," and purify the sons of Levi, *i.e.*, all that serve Him.


He is not always gold, who seems so before men; nor he always stubble, that is thrashed with the flail, or counterfeit silver that is beaten with the hammer. Because GOD looketh to the intentions, and the heart, oftentimes working His wonders therein, where all is regarded by men as lost. Oh! LORD GOD, what joy can I have on earth, when I think of the uncertainty and weakness of everything under heaven. I know that Thou art good, and that Thy mercy endureth for ever towards them that fear Thee.

For Thy mercy and goodness are infinitely greater than all my iniquity. And this shall be my comfort, so long as Thou givest me time for amendment.



V.

*ON THE SHORTNESS AND MISERY OF
THE PRESENT LIFE.*

“ EACH me the number of my days.” As long as I am in this world, I am not pure ; and as long as I remain here, I am a poor stranger and pilgrim upon earth.

I brought nothing into this world, and I shall certainly take nothing out. Naked I came into it, and naked I shall depart. As a fleeting shadow, and as rain dried up by the wind, and as the remembrance of a guest of one night, I shall presently pass away.

All this present life is as one most brief night. Few and evil are my days, and in a little while they will be ended, and be as though they never had been.

When a man is dead, what but corruption remains? Who will ask after the absent dead, when living he was counted but as nought?

Short is the remembrance of man whether he be famous or obscure. But the just shall be had in everlasting remembrance, because

when he dies, he will be for ever united to GOD, who dieth not.

Happy then is he who places not his trust in man, nor joys too much in the things or beauty of the world, but has his heart wholly fixed on heaven, since here below all is fleeting and vain.

Go, reckon up all from the beginning of the world even unto this day, and tell me, where are they.

And how long, thinkest thou, will those survive, whom thou seest or hearest? Say, then, of all, that "every man living is vanity."

2. Oh life, poor and miserable ! Life, frail and mournful ! which good men rather endure than love. And though the wicked love it greatly, yet it lasts to them so short a while. Oh ! all thou vanity of the world, when wilt thou be ended ? Verily the time will come when all the elect, who now oftentimes mourn that they are so far from the kingdom of CHRIST, will be delivered from the bondage of corruption.

Would that all this world might wither away from my heart, and the LORD my GOD, the immortal Bridegroom, might be my only sweetness.

Truly a deceitful and most bitter cup is the fleeting joy of this life. Let them drink

who will, but grievous shall the future bitterness be. And the more thou hast been inebriated with it, the keener shall be thy pangs, for all the joys of this world will pass away swifter than the wind, and leave but pains and suffering behind for their votaries.

Away, then, far from me, thou deceitful glory of the world, and all foolish carnal delights.

Thou allurest and deceivest many, but leavest them at last sunk in destruction. Woe to those that trust thee, and are sunken by thee.

But come and be with me, holy self-denial and perfect contempt of all the pomps of the world; leave me not wholesome remembrance of my pilgrimage. What am I but dust and ashes? Whither go I but to the earth?

Oh! how wretched am I become, how justly sorrowful, when I look back on my pilgrimage, or look forward, knowing not how I shall end it.

If I live well, and so persevere, I need not fear an evil death. But who can boast of a good life, and a conscience void of offence? Whoso knoweth that he is such let him glory in the LORD, and pity me a poor sinner.

30 The Misery of the Present Life.

I joy not to live, because wretchedness presses on every side. An evil conscience makes me fear to die, because it cannot answer to GOD for one act of a thousand. Alas ! How unlike to this fear is the word of the Prophet when he says, "My heart is ready, O GOD, my heart is ready."

3. O LORD GOD of my salvation, grant me a happy end to my life, and lengthen not the days of my mourning. In sorrow I came into this prison, and I shall not go hence without fear.

Long appears my life, it is constant misery and sadness that prolong it. For in truth it is not long ; my days pass away swifter than the wind.

But to him that is in sorrow and sadness all time is long, and a day is as a year. Wherefore is life wearisome to me, and so much the more it afflicts me as I survey its distresses ; and although there are moments of consolation and joy, yet I must consider whether they are from God or not.

If from GOD, I gladly accept them ; but I know not how long they will last : still, however brief they are, they are most pleasing and truly delightful.

Would, my GOD, they were more abundant, and that such moments might not pass so

swiftly away. But those which are not from GOD are worthless and will perish, pleasant and sweet though they may seem. And so this life passes away, with a mixture of good and evil. As long as I am here, it is as a poor stranger ; I cannot say it is enough for me, for there is no fulness of good in this world ; but Thou, in Whom I believe, art the Good for which I wait. When, then, Thy glory hath appeared and filled me, I will then confess that I am wholly satisfied.

Meanwhile, because this is hidden from me, manifold sorrow encompasseth my soul.

Mindful of Thy Holy Word, I often repeat within myself, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." Well were it for me if this hour had passed away, and no pain or grief were to light on me more.

But let Thy mercy, O LORD, I beseech Thee, preserve me.





VI.

ON LONGING FOR ETERNAL LIFE

“**B**RING my soul out of prison.”
The violence of my grief suffereth me not to keep silence. For why tarry I so long here? I know not, for my progress is so slow.

Too slowly I advance; would to God I may not fall back. What a boon wouldst Thou give me, O LORD, if Thou wouldst speedily take me hence, lest it should be worse with me.

My life sighs for pain, and yet amends not itself in labours. If Thou waitest, I am not thereby amended, but rather abuse Thy long-suffering. If Thou correctest, I can hardly bear it, because Thou punishest dry stubble. Why then dost Thou not take away Thy servant? “Why cumbereth it the ground,” that is, why doth he dwell with the good, and amendeth not his life and conversation?

Why doth he take up the room of another better minded than him to his own loss, and demean himself so carelessly and lukewarmly?

And in the bitterness of my heart, I thus confess myself in the Ears of my GOD.

2. But oh, good LORD, cry not in Thine anger against me. Cut down the tree, and cast it into the fire.

I lay bare my weakness before Thee, that Thou mayest pardon me when I confess. It is for me to accuse, for Thee to forgive. It is for me to weep and mourn bitterly, for Thee mercifully to comfort me in my tears. Either, then, LORD GOD, grant me greater grace in this life, or take me soon from the world, that the rent be not made worse. For to live long, and not to amend, is but to heap up punishment.

Nor can such a life, in which I make no progress, nor bewail my failings, please me; for whoso liveth holily and righteously, laments his failings, and is ever longing to grow more and more in virtue and grace.

But what shall he do who perceives that he is falling back daily, and that the flesh rises against the spirit, yea, who sometimes, overcome by weariness, or becoming lukewarm through neglect of improving opportunities, gives over the combat, or casting aside his spiritual arms, follows the lusts of the flesh, and goes whithersoever his own will draws him.

Such, alas ! O LORD GOD, draweth nigh to the gates of death, and, living in the flesh, risks the death of the soul. Oh, how greatly should every one dread the snares and seductions of the enemy ! None is safe, none pure, but frailty is in all.

But do Thou, O LORD, Who canst do all things and knowest all things, raise up the broken heart, cleanse the unclean from every stain, and renew Thy SPIRIT within him, that all lukewarmness and coldness may depart, his spiritual fervour return, and Thy Love remain unchangeable to the end.

Whoso is weighed down by his own heaviness, needeth Thy help only. He cannot of himself cast aside the burthen of his sins, until Thou give grace from Heaven strong enough to burst the heavy chains of his passions.

Such grace, I pray, bestow upon me, for without Thy grace there can be no good life, nor life eternal attained.

While I live in the flesh, life gives me no consolation, nay, death is better than life.

Why ? Because, by this life, I am kept far from the eternal, which cannot come till death destroys the present life, and death itself be by the same stroke destroyed.

Therefore my desire looketh upwards, and

my heart, seeking eternal rest, deeply sighs, and says, "It is enough for me, O LORD, take away my soul," which Thou hast redeemed with Thy Blood.

3. Open the gate of Thy kingdom, and let in a poor pilgrim returning from exile unto Thee.

Hear me, O LORD, and loose me from the bonds of the body. What more shall I do here, who am profitable neither to myself or others?

Why then do I live, who am burthensome to myself, and wearisome to others? What will become of me, I know not. O LORD, if Thou hast provided something better for me, why are my longings hindered? I bow to Thy will, for it is good. But in myself I see evil only; wherefore to live in the world is a burthen and weariness. For I daily sin, and add sin to sin, and repent not as I ought.

If then I were set free from this body of sin, and united with Thee in Thy Kingdom, I should sin no more, nor offend Thee any way, but should praise Thee for ever and ever.

Hitherto Thou hast borne with me, and shown all long-suffering. I acknowledge my fault, and that on account of my sins I may not enter into thy Kingdom, for nothing unclean shall enter into it.

But when shall I be without sin ? when shall I be so fully cleansed as to fear no repulse, but rather hope to be welcomed gladly. Oh ! if I advance not more fervently,—if I am not more watchful than I have heretofore been, I fear that my hope will be poor indeed.

But do Thou, LORD, Who willest not that any should perish, but that all should be saved, grant me increase of grace whereby I may amend my life ; and give me the hope of heavenly things, with the spirit of inward sweetness.

Let not my heart be joyful after the flesh, but wait for death in holy fear.


Let no creature or earthly care keep me back, but let Thy wished-for Presence draw me on and comfort me. Blessed is he who waiteth for Thee, O LORD ; but more blessed he who hath already departed from this wicked world, for he shall neither sorrow nor fear any more.





VII.

ON THE WISH FOR A HAPPY DEATH.

“HOU art my trust, O LORD, from my youth.” In this hope I flee to Thee for refuge, when my last hour and the time of my dissolution shall come. Oh that I were so well prepared, that I might die in this hope!

Oh that I had passed my last day with a happy departure, and laid aside this burthen of this flesh, how many dangers and fears should I then have escaped!

Happy is he whom Thou hast chosen and taken to Thyself, who having put off the body, has passed from this world to the FATHER—from exile to the Kingdom—from a prison to a palace—from darkness to light—from death to life—from dangers to security—from labour to rest—and from all misery to eternal bliss.

Happy is the soul which now enjoys its reward, rejoicing in Thee, the LORD its GOD.

But alas me! that my sojourn here is prolonged even until now.

How graciously and mercifully wouldst

Thou have dealt with me, hadst Thou sooner called me hence, and suffered me to come unto Thee, that where Thou art I might be also.

Ah ! if Thou hadst taken me sooner out of this world, ere I knew its defilements, and when I was afraid to sin even in small matters, what a boon wouldst Thou have conferred upon me. But now, by living longer, I have wandered further from Thee, and offended in many things.

2. Woe is me ! what have I done ? I have followed the passions of the flesh, given myself to vanities, deserted virtue, not kept innocency, have added evil unto evil, and oh ! bitterness of grief, have experienced what I have read, "Woe to the wicked in his wickedness."

Sluggish at length did I return ; slowly I began ; I hasted not in my progress ; I was not fervent in advancement ; I increased not in zeal ; and what is far worse, became cold after former fervour.

Hence also I often feared to die, because my conscience accused me that I had lived not as I ought to have done. But often on account of the dangers of temptations, that the last error might not be worse than the first, have I longed for death, and said, Oh,

that I had already died in grace, that I might not be afflicted with so many evils upon earth !

Oh, if GOD had deigned to have taken me away ere now, and had put an end to my labours, what a happy lot mine had then been ! But all things are according to Thy will, O LORD. If Thou wilt that it should be as I ask, it will be done forthwith : but if otherwise, Thy will be done.

Thus do I pour forth my longings unto Thee, and the sorrow which I endure,—not as if Thou knew it not, but that thus I may receive some refreshment for my soul.

I know that I am not yet well prepared, for my conscience hath much to be afraid of.

And what wonder that I, a sinner, fear, since many even of the holy Fathers have been afraid, and Thy judgments are not as our judgments.

But how shall I prepare myself? It were well, indeed, if I were better prepared against that day, seeing I know not whether it will be to-day or to-morrow.

I will then more firmly strengthen my resolution, bewail my past neglects, offer myself wholly as a sacrifice unto Thee, and commit myself for ever to Thy mercy. O LORD my GOD ! all my deeds stand before

Thy mercy, and have no merit of their own, but through Thy boundless goodness and wondrous mercy. And this is all my hope and my stay.

3. But how is it with a pure and unspotted conscience? What saith the chaste and devout soul?

Come, it saith, LORD JESUS ; come, and tarry not ; lose the bands of my wickedness, break the chains, bring me out from the prison house, from the pit of misery, and from the mire.

Waiting I have looked for Thee ; incline Thine ear unto me, and hear me. Leave me no longer in this world.

Be it enough that I have contended up to this present ; that I have been an exile so long ; that I have not been worthy to enjoy Thy presence, nor to behold Thee face to face.

Now at length grant me that joy so long desired, which knows no end, and is clouded by no weariness.

Show me Thy face, that face which the Angels ever see ; let Thy voice, which they hear without intermission, sound in my ears.

Come, LORD JESUS, and take me out of a strange land ; recall the outcast to his native

country, and restore the fallen to his former state.

Come, gracious Redeemer, make me partaker of Thy eternal glory. Time is it for me to return to Thee ; time for Thee to commit my body to the dust from which it was taken.

I care not where it be placed, or how treated : only let the spirit be safe, and come unto Thee. Be it well with my soul, which I commend unto Thy hands : but may my body rest in hope, to be raised again at the last day.

For wherever it be laid, it cannot be removed or hidden from Thee. Take me away from among men, and unite me to the fellowship of Thy Saints ; I am wearied of this temporal life, and have no pleasure but in the day of eternal brightness.

As I pass out of Egypt, let not the old serpent oppose me, nor the enemy bark at me in the gate ; let not his image affright me, nor the fear of death disturb me.

But let Thy Holy Angels assist me by their faith, protect me by their strength, and gently, tenderly receive me, and lead my soul in triumph to the Heavenly Paradise.

May the glorious Mother of God, the

Virgin Mary, and all the Heavenly host be there to help me.

And do Thou, holy, sweet, best JESUS, give me the joy of Thy countenance, and cast me not away from among Thy beloved Elect ; but remember, O Son of GOD, that Thou hast redeemed me from the enemy by Thy precious blood.

Of Thy mercy and goodness receive me into glory ; for with longings have I desired to eat this Passover with Thee. Oh ! blissful day of my coveted reward ! Oh ! blessed hour of blest departure, how have I longed for Thee, and had Thee ever before my eyes ! What harm now have tribulations and straits in the world done me ?


How light the contempt, and labour, and humiliation endured for Thy Name's sake ? Thou hast been my life, and now to die is gain ; that I may dwell with Thee in Thy Kingdom which is far better.

To Thee be praise and glory, Who art the life of the living, the hope of the dying, the salvation and rest of all that attain unto Thee.



VIII.

*OF THE DEAD TO THE WORLD, WHOSE
LIFE IS IN CHRIST.*

“URN away mine eyes lest they
behold vanity.”

Oh ! JESUS, true life—life
that knows not death, grant me to be
consumed with love, to be wounded with
love, and out of love to die for Thee, so
that the flesh may have no more dominion
over me.

I am not yet wholly dead to the world,
but the old man still lives in me, stirring up
within me many dissensions, and evil desires :
making my nights bitter, and my days
wearisome.

Oh ! when shall it be that I can with
boldness say, “ But I account myself as one
that is dead upon earth ” ?

For he that is dead cares neither for the
praises of men, nor the reproaches of the
slanderer, in that he is dead. The dead in
the flesh speaks not, smells not, tastes not,
works not.

The vanities of the world fall not on his

ear, nor do his eyes see what is rare and beautiful, nor aught that could tempt him to the love of anything worthless upon earth. And he who is dead to the world is not in the world, but in GOD, to Whom he lives ; as Paul saith to his beloved disciples : " Ye are dead, and your life is hid with CHRIST in GOD. "

He that is thus dead so speaks and thinks, and sees what is without, as if it were not ; because that which is seen is temporal and vain, that which is not seen eternal, and true. Thither then he looks ; with it he burns ; it is his joy ; for this he labours, and all his desire is to attain to it.

He wishes, loves, seeks, tastes what is inner, and concealed : even that great good, that chief eternal good, of which thought never says It is enough, in that it is passing lovely and sweet, delightful and ineffable. Such a one is far removed from the present, and yearns with all his affections after the eternal, keeping in subjection sensual appetites.

For sensuality seeks the outward, covets the delightful, looks to present things, neglects such as are to come. It shuns, whenever possible, the bitter and severe, albeit such are oftentimes salutary to the spirit.

Hence it allows not the soul to dwell in silence, and rest, but brings before it various vain imaginings, which can hardly be named, and yet should in truth be regarded as nothing. But whoso hath the grace of spiritual courage can at once subdue the immoderate desires of the flesh, singing in words of Divine efficacy: "O LORD, my stay, I will not fear what flesh can do unto me."

2. Although, then, sensuality may war with the soul, and the voice of the flesh murmur, he doth not readily consent unto it, because, greater is the power of the love of GOD, which giveth him inner comfort.

He is sometimes so sweetly, powerfully, and glowingly drawn, forced away, and carried to GOD, that he sees not, or scarcely observes what is without, and makes so great a noise in the world ; because he is not there, but elsewhere ; not below, but above with GOD, and in GOD.

Who moveth him within, uplifts, and transports him as in a chariot of fire, that he may at length enjoy Him, in the long cherished holy longing of his heart. He is not found abroad, because his Lover hath taken him away.

There alone he hears His words, the words of the Beloved ; and rejoices with joy be-

cause of the voice of the Bridegroom, in whom there is no alloy of doubt. Nor dose he forthwith pour out his vial to the sun, to drink in vanity ; but hideth treasure he hath found, and closes it with a seal, that the foot of pride may not enter, and all its virtue be lost.

For so He says to him : "Set me as a seal upon thy heart, for love is strong as death." Useful is it to seal, and keep the heart, lest haply the Beloved withdraw, and fly away—He who specially seeks and visits a pure and humble heart. These things the soul communes with itself, and marvels at so great good, which surpasses all understanding, and every good.

Again and again she marvels and anxiously asks what is this, and rejoices to learn that this is the manna that from Heaven comes down.

Now He Who giveth the true bread from Heaven, bestows also a good understanding, to know, that every good and every perfect gift is from above, from the FATHER of Light. Of a truth, now, says the soul, this word is from GOD. Without Him I have nothing, but from Him all that I have.

3. Again she wonders, and complains that she cares so little for so great a good, with

which she fares so well ; that she doth not more frequently incline her heart to see, and hear that object than which nothing can be sweeter, or more blissful in the enjoyment.

Would, says she, that henceforth this may be so. For this is my chief delight, which evermore increaseth, if I labour to wait upon Him. "Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat of the fruit of His apples." Let Him come unto me, and show Himself unto me, and I show myself to Him. He is my good, and my joy.

Then the soul begins to pant, and yearn for this good, in which is all good ; this joy, in which is all joy ; this one thing in which are all, small and great, the highest and the lowest : and this not anything created, but beyond the manner of human conceptions, the beginning and end of all good things by it created.

Hence sometimes it wishes to be wholly filled with all this good, and flooded with this most sweet of joys, and altogether absorbed and consumed by Him, so that nothing may of itself remain, but that she may be only His Whose are the fire and heat of love ; by Whose wonderful work it is, that

she is so wondrously borne to Him, and made one spirit with Him.

Yet does she not exalt herself, nor despise others, nor judge them as inferior, forasmuch as this is not her own, but the free gift of GOD ; so that she has no reason to boast, when she feels herself thus comforted by Him. She seeks no praise, nor cares for external favours, but seeks the Beloved, for Whose praise and favour alone it thirsts ; in Whom she findeth all things, and more than all. And this because she prefers His love, and sweetness, and the joyous fruition of Him to all things transitory, and longs for, and loves Him beyond all. Therefore she cannot pride herself, nor vainly boast of any good thing. For He is her true and sincere joy, her chief and only good, her whole desire and plenitude.

Much also does she wish that others may rejoice with her, and share such sovereign good without end, both here and in Heaven. For this is her desire and prayer, that He would make Himself known to all men, and convert and draw all unto Himself, so that He alone may be praised and glorified ; for her Beloved is charity, and a well of love that cannot be exhausted.

He loveth all more than He can be loved

by all. Well pleased is He, if any desire to love Him altogether, albeit he may not attain to the full depth of love, seeing that He swalloweth up, overcometh, and surpasseth all in love.





IX.

*ON SEPARATION FROM THE
CREATURES.*

“**W**O, then would I get me away far off, and remain in the wilderness.” Oh, how salutary, pleasant, and sweet it is to be in solitude and silence, and to speak with God, and enjoy the only chief Good, in Which all good is contained. Would that I were so united to that most simple and only good, as to be moved by no affections and distraction from passing things; would that I did not through curiosity fix my eyes to see or drink in pleasure from any creatures or visible object.

O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Alas! how oft doth my soul die because of the creatures it loves,—how oft, on account of them, doth it forget its Creator, and is led astray.

My fickle mind wishes now this, now that,—is now here, now there, seeking rest in the creatures, and finding none; for though

every creature hath some delight in its use, yet its fruition satisfies not. Unsearchable is the heart of man, and who shall know it? GOD, Thou knowest that the thoughts of the heart are vain !

2. O GOD eternal, supreme and infinite Creator and Governor of all ! I am Thy creature, whom Thou hast made in Thy might. I was made to love Thee, and now I would, but cannot as much as I desire.

I am bound down by vain love and sinful affections for transitory things, and when I attempt to shake them off, I can scarcely, or at all, tear myself from them without great pain. Oh, if Thou wouldst grant me a taste and relish for Thy sweetness, how quickly would they flee away and perish !

Sometimes, however, by my mind's eye, I see Thy invisible things by those that are visible, and Thee the Supreme Good, the true Eternal GOD. And I joy to linger in these thoughts. But somehow I am soon recalled from this pursuit, and miserably unstable, am caught anew by the love and bondage of the visible.

Lo, I make a fixed resolve in my heart, as a sign of a covenant between me and Thee, to see and love no creature, because of Thy

great and precious love, but to despise all things, yea, and myself, and all that belongs to me.

3. But forthwith arise thoughts of this world, kinsfolk and familiars of the flesh so sweet to my heart as if there were indeed essential happiness in them, and I should lose some great good if I despised them. They assume a pleasant appearance, but conceal their end of sorrows, showing but the present on the plea that Thou must be sought everywhere and in all Thy creatures, and we are to reject or despise nothing, because evidently made by Thee, my GOD. And thus they often allure, and at length draw me altogether away from my resolve.

4. Oh, how vain, deceitful, yea, as nothing, do they prove even in their best and most flourishing state. How oft do they flee away after momentary delights, and leave me among the thorns and briars of an evil conscience ! Alas me ! O LORD, and again alas me ! in that I have so easily given trust and assent to vanity, and so readily forsaken Thee, Who art everlasting Truth.

Oh, how I have gone astray, in that I have not despised all, and cleaved to Thee ! For I was made to love and enjoy Thee, but by my inordinate love of creatures I have lost

Thee, and found no rest of heart in them.
Turn me, O LORD, unto Thee, and let me
not follow after earthly things, as Thou hast
promised the heavenly to them that follow
Thee.



X.

*ON CONTEMPT OF EARTHLY
CONSOLATION.*

“**M**Y soul refuseth comfort.” Wander not, my soul, after vanity and false delights, but turn to the LORD thy GOD, for He is the fountain of all consolation. Whatever thou seekest in man or in the created, thou wilt lose, and mourn the loss, for though some semblance of good they may have, it cannot long remain.

Why art thou deceived in vain? It is folly to beg of poor mortals, when there is One with riches Who would give in abundance. Every creature is poor in comfort, but GOD is rich in grace, and giveth liberally to every man, and upbraideth none, provided thou seek diligently and wait with patience.

2. Return, my soul,—return, as the dove to Noah in the ark, to CHRIST, in the solitude of thy heart, for it is not safe to tarry long abroad. Seek not outward comfort, but inward refreshment. Remain not with the raven without the ark, but instantly shun

the carcase. Return ahungred ; CHRIST shall feed thee with the bread of heaven.

If necessity require, or infirmity now and then force thee abroad, tarry not ; return speedily within, lest thou perish beneath a deluge of words, or be ensnared in the meshes of the enemy. Many are the snares that are spread for the soul that willingly wanders abroad,—many the means of security for the dove that quickly returns within. This, when it found no rest for its feet, quickly returned to Noah in the ark. Betake thyself, then, to thy closet, and dwell there, and count it grievous to be elsewhere.

3. Happy is the soul whose conscience is pure before GOD, which is not allured by any vain thing, which is neither polluted by love of any vain thing, nor wasted away by hatred.

Happy is the soul which seeketh no consolation from any creature, but places all its hope in GOD alone.

Happy is the soul which refuses all outward and temporal rest, and all that conduces to the joy of the flesh, but willingly embraces labour, and want for CHRIST's sake.

Happy is the soul which entrusts itself to GOD, to do with her as seemeth good to Him.

Happy is the soul which never seeks its

own glory, never desires her own will to be done, but whose design, and will, and love, are directed to the glory and will of GOD in all things.

Happy, in fine, is the soul which weans itself from all things temporal, and keeps itself pure in all its actions as in the sight of GOD.

4. Oh ! soul that art such, rejoice and be exceeding glad, insomuch as thou art made capable of conversing with the inner and heavenly, and praising GOD night and day.

Happy and blessed of GOD is that soul whose longings are upward ; whose hands and arms are stretched as the two wings of the cherubim ; whose eyes are pure to contemplate GOD ; whose every labour und struggle is from within, mounts up, and returns not until she hath found Him Whom she loves alone and beyond all.

And when she hath found Him, then, forgetting all, she follows Him whithersoever the Beloved wishes and leads. And when He has spoken, she will rejoice at His words, saying, "I am thy Beloved, thy only one, thy chosen one. I am thy exceeding great reward. Be thou humble in prosperity, and firm in adversity. See how they who love Me are comforted of Me. How sweetly,

thinkest thou, shall they be treated when they have put off all the burdens of the flesh and of the spirit, and shall be received into eternal rest."

5. O that I might enjoy such sweetness, as a holy soul that is beloved of and devoted to GOD ; when, the senses lulled, she is borne upwards in spirit, raised beyond herself to the embraces of the Beloved, and is united to GOD by the bond of closest love.

O ! my GOD, true treasure of my heart, Thou knowest that this would be the only balm to cool the hidden sorrow of my heart. Thou alone art the bestower and infuser of this balm. Thou alone teachest, cherishest, comfortest, advancest, and sustainest. Thou alone canst lead me out and bring me back, and doest as Thou wilt with the soul that thou hast chosen, for all that Thou doest and willest is good.

But I, who am as a sour vessel, and unworthy the infusion of Thy Spirit, yet implore that its sacred emanation may be increased unto me, that so my soul may taste the sweetness of Thy love, and experience those holy delights which willing souls given up to meditate on Thee, so oft acquire. Nay, I have scented at a distance the heavenly spices, when I have inwardly

meditated what a holy soul doth enjoy in Thee.

6. But Thou, O LORD, knowest how seldom and slight is my meditation on things eternal ! how oft my words are dry ! how dark my understanding, my conscience how unappeased ! how confused my inward thoughts ! how unenlightened and undevout ! not through another's fault, but all mine own.

And yet at times I seek the path that leads to inward things, taking as my guide deep inward thoughts. I dwelt with serious meditation on the goodly joys of a chosen soul ; on what heavenly delights are hers, what peace, what tranquillity, what hope and rejoicing in GOD its SAVIOUR, whose speech is sweet, and appearance full of comeliness. And brief though be the time of the stay, yet full of rapture is it withal.

7. But even now when I think on this, and Thou enlightenest my darkness, I find increase of cause of Thy just complaint ; still through the hidden chinks of grace I have glimpses that such and such is the soul closely united to Thee, and thus and thus Thou speakest unto it.

She is silent on all things sensible, and Thou speakest to it in the spirit of the invisible. She seems as if forsaken by all

creatures, and Thou consolest her in an ineffable manner.

Then again I spake in my heart : Alas ! for the sinful soul, the burthened conscience, the lukewarm spirit that lacks the light of grace, and knoweth not the sweets of spiritual joy, seeking tears and finding none.

But peace to the soul which loveth CHRIST in sincerity, and never turneth away her eyes from Him, but ever seeketh what is pleasing to Him, for she alone shall walk in peace and righteousness, and no stranger shall intermeddle with her joy.

Her eye shall see how good it is to wait on Him, and shall taste how sweet is the LORD her GOD, in Whom she puts her trust. She will remove herself far from external tumults, and shall wait for Him—with much longing, she shall wait His coming in her heart. Lo ! thus doth God work in His chosen vessels. If any go unto Him he shall not return empty, for He freely giveth water to him that thirsteth, and bread to him that is hungry.

8. My GOD, when Thou enterest into the soul that loves Thee, wilt Thou not feed her with Thy milk, and of Thy great sweetness lead her out of herself, to embrace Thee without any bodily image ?

O Truth and Verity, how great the power, the might, and action of Thy love? When Thou speakest Thy word in the very secret of the heart, and showest it things both new and old in most blessed charity, and fruition whereat all human words are feeble. Henceforth Thou givest her to repose trustfully in Thee, as to eternal rest, in the fellowship of the saints; since by giving beforehand an earnest of spiritual grace, Thou makest it stronger in hoping for the unseen, and despising such things as are perceived by the senses.


Remember Thy poor suppliant, O gracious FATHER, by the bowels of Thy mercy, and send down the true bread from heaven, even Thy holy Word, full of consolation and grace.





XI.

*OF GREAT SWEETNESS AND CONSOLA-
TION IN GOD.*

“LL my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto Thee?” He is One, and there is none like Him; He is my GOD, and there is none to be compared with Him. My best beloved and most faithful Friend, Who never leaves, but willingly hath fellowship with them that love Him; and if for a while He hides Himself, and afflicts, it is not for reproof, but for trial. He does not then altogether forsake, but more wisely teaches, so that we may advance in wisdom, and each one have a more perfect knowledge of himself, and to what he hath attained.

Behold Thou art fair, my Beloved, and very comely, not to the flesh, but to the mind, —not to the eye, nor any outward sense, but to the believing soul, that hath a pure heart, and that turneth herself to the invisible and spiritual.

Whoso would be united to Thee by devotion, must needs mortify every carnal affec-

tion, and above all preserve purity of heart. For Thou art displeased if any goeth to frail creatures in quest of consolation.

To this end Thou callest me within that I may love Thee, and orderest me to wait for Thee, seeing that I shall find Thee when I have laid aside myself; and as Thou willest, so will I. And this will be my whole good, to love and serve Thee freely, fearing no loss, making no terms with love, because Thou delightest in the soul that loveth Thee wholly and simply.

Oh, blessed soul that is thus one and united to Thee alone in life and death! But woe is me! who am cast out far from Thee; oft I go in other ways, lured by the love of passing things, and seek some other end than is becoming.

2. But that I may not perish with them, may I quickly return to the consideration of Thy praises, fixing my affections upon Thee. Grant me, O LORD my GOD, Who hast made all things out of nothing, out of all to praise Thy holy Name; for Thine is the power, Thine the wisdom, Thine the goodness and mercy, Thine the Eternal Majesty and glory. "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion from generation to generation."

Thou disposest all things whether in Heaven or on earth ; Thou knowest all things, and holdest them in Thy hand ; nothing resisteth, nothing disturbeth Thee ; but in tranquillity Thou judgest all, yea, and even the rebellious puttest under Thee and makest to serve Thee.

Thou knowest all things that are done in the world, and fixest their bounds before they take place. Thou art the GOD of Heaven and earth, the Creator and Governor of visible and invisible, and the Disposer of all times.

O preserve, I beseech Thee, Thy servants scattered far and wide throughout the world, and those that are specially dedicated to Thy service. Make them tell forth Thy praise, and with one voice everywhere declare Thy glory. Stir up their hearts mightily with love of Thee, and grant them grace to bring all their works to perfection and a holy end.

3. Oh, how good and sweet art Thou to them that love Thee ! how pleasing to them that taste Thee ! They who have experienced Thy sweetness know how from that time to think and speak of it, for Thy sweetness passes all sweetness, and sweetens every bitterness.

O LORD my GOD ! holy men have spoken

of Thee, and prophets have not kept silence. All the saints from the beginning of the world have believed in Thee, served Thee, worshipped Thee with sacrifices and oblations, praised and blessed Thy holy Name, for they acknowledged Thee as their Creator, and the Founder of all things, and in Thee above all have they placed their hope. They saw Thee in their visions, for Thou didst reveal Thy Name unto them, and they knew none beside Thee.

They preserved the law of Thy commands which Thou gavest unto them. They followed not most foolish images of false gods, but adored Thee, That livest for ever and ever, and hast created all things. They lifted their eyes up to Thee in confession of Thy praise, because from on high Thou hast poured into their ears a mighty voice, saying, "I am, that I am ;" "Before Me there was no GOD formed, neither shall there be after Me." I have made those things that shall be, and the past shall not perish from My remembrance.

Hearing and understanding these words, they lifted up the eyes of faith from afar, believing that the LORD He should save us, and He that was to come should come, and would not lie. Knowing these things before-

hand, they were comforted not a little, and mightily admiring the presence of His majesty to come, they fainted for very wonder. But coming to themselves in a little while, and looking with joy on the coming power of GOD, they exclaimed,

“It is Himself, it is He, the LORD our GOD, and there is none beside Him.” He has begun, and will save us. He cannot deny Himself, because He is true. As we have heard, so also have we seen ; as we believe, so also we speak, and bear witness to the truth. Once GOD hath spoken. He spake, and it was done. He has said, “My counsel shall stand, but yours shall perish, O ye sons of men.”

4. Woe to you that think vain things, and scoff at the Word of GOD ! Woe to you that devise wisdom from your heart, and exalt yourselves in your own power. Hear the Word of the LORD, ye that seek the LORD ; know that He hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the earth. It is not well to be opposed to Him ; stand ye and consider His ways. Return and come ; He will freely receive you, for the LORD is merciful and gracious. He keepeth not His anger like man, but pardoneth all sins, yea, and will restore the former with the latter grace. Only

turn unto Him with your whole heart, and give yourselves up to His service with a faithful mind. These are the words of the saints sounding in my ears.

As sweet music at a feast, or sweet incense from the censer, so is the Word of GOD in a pure heart. So have Thy saints, O LORD, filled with Thy Spirit, declared the greatness of Thy sweetness, and bequeathed to us their glowing words to be again poured out by us.

But my words, alas ! are oft confined within narrow compass, and cannot spring up unto Thee. Yet if fire come down from above, then shall my words glow brightly. If they burn bright they will presently consume me. I cannot stand before Thy presence, for as chaff is swept away by the wind, so will sorrow be removed from my heart ; and as rust in the fire, so will my sins be consumed. The Divine fire that consumeth all things will cleanse the floor of my heart.

Come down, O holy fire, and inflame my heart ; touch me but a little, and I shall mount upwards.

The past shall no more be thought of, nor the future laid to my charge, for all will be forgotten. Old things shall pass away, new ones abundantly come, and holy longings

shall flow in apace, and rise on every side, wherever Thy cherishing Spirit shall list to breathe.

5. There shall be no fear, but love shall fill all, and trembling shall pass away; for this is the change of the right hand of GOD. What I speak then is not mine but His praises.

He is a comfort to him that mourns, He is bread to the hungry, and to the thirsty drink. His hand has been given, and there is a staff to the weak. The faint hath recovered strength, and the weary found rest. To him that sitteth in the shadow of despair new light is come, and an answer sent to him that cries.

A sweet light hath shone on the darkened, a way been made for the ignorant, and a door forthwith opened to him that knocked. His truth supporteth the doubtful, His authority succoureth the feeble, His charity maketh the call, as a mother her little one.

Now when I was longing to meet my Beloved, He most joyfully stood by, and thus spake.

“Behold, I am here, tell Me what new thing hath happened. Hast thou forgotten that thou must both do and suffer for Me?”

Then I was willing to go with Him, and He


forbade me not : and forthwith I ascended, and forgot all my troubles. Then did I long to dwell with Him, and though unwilling to sadden, He taught with gentle words, that for the present it could not be.

“Thy longing,” He saith, “is good, and well pleasing is the prayer thou hast offered Me, but it must be deferred for a season.” Go and return home, and tell thy friends what great things the Lord hath done for thee. And say unto them : Prepare, each one, your hearts, and lay aside the heavy burthen of sin, and be watchful and strong against the snares of the devil. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The time is at hand, see therefore that I find you ready. Lo ! I have told you beforehand.



XII.

*OF SEEKING THE SUPREME AND ONLY
GOOD.*

“AY to my soul, I am thy salvation.” Oh! my soul, how noble art thou, how marvellous the power that lies hidden within thee, since thou canst not rest until thou reachest the highest good, and findest the final end. And when thou hast once known and found it, thy movement ceases.

O good beyond all good, O end without end, when shall I enjoy Thee without stint, and without end? Though here I find many good things, yet at best they refresh but satisfy not. One thing is needful: this one I seek and long for. All things for this one, and in this one are all things. Having this, I shall be content; and unless I win it, I shall be ever restless; for many things cannot satisfy me.

“What is this one?” I cannot tell; yet I feel I long for that, than which nothing is so good or so great, and to which no thought can rise. For it is not one among all, but one above all. Yea, it is my GOD to Whom

it is good for me to cleave steadfastly and closely. To Him I say, and cry : "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation."

2. What more, my soul, full of longings, dost thou desire? Is it not better to cleave unto one, than unto many? For thou mayest have many things from one, not one out of many.

Cease then to seek after many things, unite thyself to the one, cleave to the one, for in the one all consists. Let others seek various and manifold things without, seek thou the one inward good, and it sufficeth.

Lo! one wants a country seat, another goes to his merchandise; one hoards up silver and much gold, another follows pleasures and honours; one seeks his highest pleasures in friends and relations, another in his familiars and kindred; one delights in visiting cities and grand houses, and, led by the lusts of the eye, travels over various parts of the world; some aim at wisdom, some at power; some thirst after rule and dominion, and some after royal and princely favour. And thus one follows one thing, and another another, both in the secular and clerical life.

But few singly and simply seek after the One for the sake of the One, and hence they find not lasting peace, nor taste internal

grace. For whoever are CHRIST's seek not the temporal and earthly, nor look upon themselves as great and glorious, if in all these they should abound.

3. Hast thou then sought as these seek, O devout soul? "In no wise. I loathe them all: because one is my good, one thing I love, one I require, and that is better for me than all other goods below or above."

If thou hast found so great a good, I exhort, and beseech thee, guard and keep that for which thou hast despised all things. For having that it will not be grievous to be without the rest; nay, to gain it, thou wilt most rightly judge it worth while to forsake all and endure all.

4. Seek, then, my soul, so singular and supereminent a good. As long as thou art in the flesh, cease not to seek it, since that can never be sought enough which never can be grasped fully. There will be an end of seeking when the hour of fruition comes. Then He will be all in all, even He alone sufficing for each and all. Albeit if there He is still to be sought, where He is always found, yet not as here with much labour, but with greatest joy and love supreme.

But yet what He is to the godly in this life

we are taught by His many titles and attributes, and the experience of His servants.

Attend then a little while with experience for our guide to the names of Divine goodness. I will mention a few, and may grace teach thee more and more hidden ones.

Behold, He is a Bridegroom to them that love Him, and a LORD to be feared by those who still serve Him in fear.

He is a FATHER to good children, a fearful Judge to the wicked.

To the weak He is a physician, and solid food to the strong ; a Teacher to the ignorant, and Eternal Salvation to them that obey Him.

He is a Way to the beginners, Truth to the advanced, and Life to the perfect ;

He is the Hope of the penitent, the best Comforter of the afflicted ;

He is the Glory of the humble, but the confusion of the proud ;

He is light in darkness, and a lamp in the night ;

He gives balm to the wounded spirit, and much wine of gladness to the sorrowful.

He stands with him that fighteth, walketh with him that moveth on, runneth with the servant, flieth with such as make not use of the wings of contemplation.

He is near to the prayerful, speaketh with those that read, and resteth with them that meditate.

5. Now in all these things it is one and the same GOD that worketh, appearing to every one as He pleaseth, and there is no censure of His words, nor searching into His great works. For His judgments are great, and passed finding out, and none can say, why doest Thou thus?—and why choosest Thou one rather than another? Foolish is the questioning of man against the Almighty, and every invention of the sons of Adam is vanity and nothingness.

6. “How do these things please thee, and of what kind now seemeth GOD unto Thee?” Sweet indeed is He to me, and none of His works can displease me. He is just, and who can accuse Him of unrighteousness? For whoso doeth this setteth himself up against GOD, and will be condemned by His irreprehensible light.

“But what are these things, which thou hast heard, in His sight? Scarcely a little spark in comparison with that which is concealed within.”

Thou askest what that is? I reply, I know not, but it is above me, and as it were an inaccessible darkness, the beginning

and end of which are unknown. Be thy meditation rather, and thy affections, more frequently turned on the humble footsteps of JESUS, and seek not to climb to high things, lest thou be overpowered with the glory.

Moreover, because burning love sometimes forgetteth reverence and fear, we may pardon if the loving soul is sometimes intensely inflamed with its Beloved, so that it seeks Him, not only now, as a little child, He cries in the stable, or as crucified He hangs on the Cross, but also as He reigns in glory in Heaven, and wonderfully governs all things under Heaven.

7. Willingly do I follow Thee, Beloved JESUS, on earth, but oh ! more gladly would I follow Thee into Heaven. That where my treasure is, there will my heart be also. Thou Who art at the right hand of the FATHER, art my treasure, dearer than every creature. For me Thou wast incarnate, for me exalted. Thou hast left me an example on earth, Thou keepest Thyself as my reward in Heaven.

To Thee, then, my eyes are uplifted, after Thee all my footsteps shall go. My heart speaks to Thee, saying, Thy face, O LORD, will I seek. How long, O LORD, will the vision of Thy glory be delayed? Why

hidest Thou Thy face, and regardest me as an enemy? Thou knowest that my mind is borne hither and thither, and my affections are drawn backwards and forwards, until it is united to Thee as its highest love in Heaven.

For the strength of love knows no rest, but unceasingly seeks for its Beloved, sends out messengers, redoubles prayers, and will not desist, for love must possess that for which it longeth for with such desire.

8. Draw me then, that I may begin to run fervently after Thee. I need drawing, yea, much drawing. For unless Thou attractest, no man can come, no man can follow, because each one turneth to himself. If Thou drawest, behold I come; Lo! I hasten, and run, yea, I am all on fire. But if not, I neither run, nor seek; scarce do I long to follow. But if Thou givest me Thy hand, then I run the more quickly, the more strongly Thou drawest.

Listen to the voice of my Beloved that draws me, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto Me."

Oh! good JESUS, draw me after Thee, and then not I only, but we all shall run in the odour of Thy ointments. First then draw me after Thee, and then shall others follow

when they see the example of my good life. But lest pride assail us, it is good for us to remember and feel that we begin to run not in our own strength but in the odour of Thy ointments.

9. This is the Divine drawing, without which none advances, nay, none even can begin to come, as Thou hast said, "No man cometh unto Me, except it be given him by My FATHER."

Whomsoever, therefore, the FATHER draws, he verily follows Thee, and relinquishes self. Well drawn was He that said, "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." But it is not the lot of all so to be affected towards Thee, nor of a little soul so readily to follow Thee in all things.

10. And now what hinders thee, my soul, from leaving all for JESUS? Why art thou so reluctantly separated from the vain and perishing? What can visible things advantage thee? Behold, as thou goest after mortal and visible things, seeking to find contentment in them, thou lovest what is far better.

When this thou doest, thou turnest thyself away from the chief good, and castest behind thee the true, blessed, and eternal life. Wherefore thou wilt continue wretched and

unhappy, full of sorrow and anxiety. For wheresoever thou turnest thyself, thou wilt always find pain and much disquietude, unless thou again turnest to thy Creator, Who is thy peace and rest assured.

But, if thou tarriest not too long in earthly things, nor fixest thy feet in the mire, but rather considerest and veneratest Him in the glass of His creatures, not the image that passest away, but Him, Whose image and superscription they bear, happy shalt thou be, and thou shalt not die.

For when thou seekest not visible things to enjoy them, but lookest upon them to bless the name of Thy Creator, by making from the greatest and least of His works as it were a ladder on which thou mayest ascend upwards, thou shalt be freed from baneful snares of this world, and shalt be most closely united to thy wished for end, Which is GOD above all, blessed for evermore. Amen.





XIII.

*OF THE UNION OF THE SOUL WITH GOD,
AND THE WITHDRAWAL OF GRACE.*

“**M**Y soul hangeth upon Thee.”

My GOD, True Comforter,
Thou knowest that I am not
wearied of Thee ; but would willingly speak
with Thee daily in secret.

But where shall I find Thee, if perchance
I lose Thee for an hour? Who will lead me
unto Thee? For Thou art above all, and I
man, the poorest and most sorry of these Thy
lower works. Thou art in Heaven, and I
on earth. Thou alone art most High, and I
am poor and needy. Who hath measured
the distance between Heaven and earth?
They are far apart, but Thou art further
from me. Who will then unite me to Thee?
Either Thou wilt do it, or none can. But
yet if Thou willest, it shall be, and that done
right early.

And Thou knowest that of myself I am too
prone to fall, but by Thee I can stand, and
by Thee also advance. Therefore doth my
soul hang on the condescension of Thy SPIRIT,

and the infusion of Thy saving grace. When Thou commandest, it shall be lifted up ; but when Thou turnest away Thy face, it shall be disquieted within. Yet in Thy charity and loving-kindness, Thou shalt take hold of me, and Thy right hand shall lead me wonderfully unto Thee.

2. Children of the earth, and sons of men, hear that it is possible, yea, most easy with GOD, for that to be fulfilled which is written—"The rich and poor meet together." I am poor, and in need of all things. He is rich and wanting nothing, and He is my GOD. Though I have but little experience in this matter, I have yet a faithful witness to prove that the soul may, by grace, be united to GOD.

"My Beloved is mine, and I am His. He feedeth among the lilies." This is the testimony of the two friends, of the Bridegroom and Bride, a suitable and valid testimony of the sacred law. And the second is, "I pray, FATHER that they may be one, as We also are one."

Mark the clear testimonies of the two books ; by which it is clear that the soul may be closely united to GOD, in proportion to the grace imparted unto it from Heaven.

Now albeit this union is rare, yet it is

very dear, and not unknown to the loving soul. Difficult though it be, it is not altogether impossible. The soul that GOD shall so join to Himself let none dare to separate or disturb. If thou art astonished at the greatness of this union, rather wonder and admire the excellence of His goodness, and the marvellous union in the assumption of humanity. He, Who alone doeth wonderful things, can do what He wills. If thou seekest for merit in this, thou wilt only find the good pleasure of His holy will.

3. Oh ! sweet union with CHRIST, and under the wings of CHRIST. Oh ! gracious intimacy, full of the love and sweetness of the HOLY SPIRIT, which is better felt than described. This is the lot of the soul which has weaned itself from all earthly things, which no love of the present life keeps back, but which the secret of her mind hath carried upwards.

But ah ! the clearer this is known to the loving soul, the more it is hidden from me. Joyfully would I be present when it is well with the devout soul, and that is when it is with JESUS at noon day. It fares ill, yea, very ill, when Jesus is absent, and the sweets of His grace cease to flow ; when Holy Scripture delights not ; when it is wearisome

to be instant in prayer and meditation ; when the clouds of the heart thicken, and evil thoughts so prevail that they can scarce be checked, but seem to strive to overthrow all former good.

4. O LORD GOD, why doest Thou thus ? What meanest Thou by this ? Oh ! Good JESUS, what purposest Thou by this ? Were it not displeasing to Thee, I would entreat Thee to grant a further colloquy between Thee and Thy beloved. Since in all her wishes she seeks Thy gracious presence with which to be caressed with chaste delights, I wonder why Thou allowest her sometimes to remain so desolate. Thou passest by, and leavest her, as if she had not sought Thee.

Then she mourneth, and is alone. It sounds as if it were her voice that cries out, "I have longed for Thee in the night season !" It is night to her, when Thou, her True Light, art not present. She prayeth then for Thy presence, that the darkness of sin may not lay hold of her. Many a trouble doth she feel when the grace of Thy visitation is withdrawn. For had she not felt so, she would not so unceasingly have cried after Thee. Another hath cried out also, as I before said, "My soul hangeth

upon Thee." But I believe that no trouble can be or seem so grievous, as for Thy presence to be denied.

5. And it is no wonder that from so great want the loving soul falls into a certain faintness of heart. For sometimes it is hard to find Thee, and when Thou hast at length been found, she joys at Thy return, and hopes to lead a joyful time with Thee. Not fearing Thy withdrawal, she dreads no sorrow. But Thou, as if minding something else, oftentimes fliest away. Thou suddenly withdrawest from her hands when she thinketh not of such a leave taking. I praise Thee, yet how shall I praise Thee in this matter? If Thou hast any praise or sweetness, why dost Thou seem to lose it thus? If it were any but Thou, haply it might be a stumbling-block to her. But she cannot be offended in Thee, in that she knows herself to be so dearly loved by Thee. If then Thou dost in this figure forth Thy justice and reason, unfold it to me, I pray Thee, O GOD! I would fain understand it; and I deem it not profitless to know even a little thereof. No one of himself comprehendeth Thy judgments; but Thy light only illumines the obscure, and dispels the evil.

6. Why then dost Thou sometimes so

secretly withdraw from the soul, when it knows it not? Lovest Thou it, or not? If Thou lovest, why, my Beloved, dost Thou depart? If Thou lovest not, why didst Thou formerly visit it? If thou lovest it no longer, why dost Thou return again, and knock at the door, and enter? Art Thou trifling in thus coming and going away? Far be the thought from me. But such constant changes are no light matter to the soul; nay, no small disturbance springs therefrom. Less, perchance, would be her complaint, wert Thou to say plainly, "I go away, and, behold, I come again, and thy heart shall rejoice, and thy joy no man shall take from thee." But now Thou sayest nothing to her, only she calleth to mind that word of which she experiences the truth, that JESUS hid Himself, and went away from the temple. I have, therefore, somewhat against Thee; but my complaint springs from a good root. I would humbly be instructed, not fretfully contend. Thou wilt haply, in good time, answer my request.

7. Let the devout soul, then, for greater clearness, speak somewhat for herself. And do thou on thy part, freely answer. For thy Beloved will patiently hear thee, and meet thee with words of peace, that thou suffer no

loss therefrom. For who will comfort thee if He be not thy Comforter? And who will bear thy infirmity so mildly as He Who carrieth all things without weariness? To whom canst thou more safely unburden thy sorrows, than to Him Who fully knoweth all things? In whom wilt thou put more trust than in Him Who is Infallible Truth?

Now if any stranger, or one who is not a friend of the Bridegroom, be now listening to these things, let him be put out.

But if there be one who loveth the Bridegroom, is faithful, devout, and disciplined inwardly, let free entrance be given. Welcome him who guards his conscience; that loveth virtue and discipline; that is pure in affection, and clear in understanding; is humble in himself and kind to others; who wrests not the meaning of what he hears, nor speaks vainly, nor disputes rashly, nor defends his opinions too warmly, nor speaks proudly.

But, on the other hand, hath learnt to reverence what he understands, and interpret soundly the hidden and mystical; let such come in, and be freely welcome at this conference. For it is the affections of the heart rather than the words themselves—not the echo, but the sense—that should be

weighed. Tell me, then, O soul, how thou bearest thyself up when the grace of thy Beloved is absent?

I know that I could but hardly endure it, if He were long absent, and cannot but think the like of Thee. If thou pleasest, let us here sit down, and discourse together of this matter for our mutual consolation.



XIV.

*OF THE SOUL'S SORROW WHEN GRACE
IS ABSENT.*

“**M**Y soul slumbereth for very heaviness.”

What mean thy words? Why sayest thou, O Sion, the LORD hath forsaken me? Fear not, daughter of Sion, thou loving, and watchful soul. Behold thy King, thy best Beloved, will come unto thee. Arise, stand up on high, and joy shall come to thee from the Holy One.

“I sought Him, said the soul, but I could not find Him; I called Him, but He gave me no answer.” Therefore my soul slumbered for heaviness.

And I answered, it is the voice of the turtle-dove when she has lost her mate. It is not with thee to-day as yesterday, and in days gone by, when thou sangest songs of joy. The morning hath passed away, and the evening has come; but the Bridegroom slept at noon-day, and thou couldst not approach him.

Thy words give out notes of sadness, and

thine eyes are wet with tears. Thou art in grief, my soul, and needest comfort. But tell me, I entreat, whence is this?

"I seek not gold, nor silver, nor aught of this world. Loss or gain affect me not, injury and poverty disturb me not, for I am now dead to the world, and the world is crucified to me, and I to the world."

If I know thee well, thou hast long ago renounced all worldly things. But hast thou perfectly learnt self-abnegation in all things, and attained to contempt of thine ownself? This is the lot of very few, and yet is specially required of thee.

Whence, then, springs thy grief? What hast thou lost? If it is touching thy Beloved, well mayst thou show grief of heart; nor can any joy be thine till He return, and restore His countenance unto thee. But how, meanwhile, dost thou keep up, O delicate soul, that leanest upon Him? For I know that He is not with thee always as thou desirest. What consolation, then, in His absence hast thou, and where dost thou find rest? Tell me thy secrets even though they be full of grief.

None but He who loveth not, can doubt thy grieving for CHRIST when absent. Now thou art sorrowful, but it is for CHRIST the

Bridegroom, and not for this world. And I know that when He returns, thou wilt be comforted once more, for He will not forget thee for ever. For He has said: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will go, and return to you again."

Thy words then are not an idle breath, though full of grief; they show a loving heart, and strike the cold breast, which burns not with the love of CHRIST. For thy voice is sweet; it is the voice of the turtle-dove, not the clamour of discontent. Therefore I trust that thou wilt find Him, for Whom thou mournest as lost.

2. Yet again I ask thee, what sayest thou of Him, Whom when absent thou so bitterly bewailest? Is He good, or thinkest thou otherwise?

"Yea, good is He, and very good; just and faithful, in Whom there is not, and cannot be, any iniquity."

Why then dost thou so grieve for one so good in whom is no guile?—"I grieve not for Him that is good, but I bewail myself unhappy one, in that I have lost a faithful and true friend. I, I have deserved it; but woe! woe! that I was not more careful to keep His holy grace. Having lost, I now realise what I had possessed. The absence

of the Beloved tells how much His Presence profited me. I was glad and rejoiced in Him, but was too little careful to prevent His sudden departure.

He came skipping on the mountains, cheerful and joyous stood He in the gates of my house. And forthwith I shut the doors of the flesh, and I brought my Beloved in unto me, and sat with Him, and rested under His shadow from storm and rain. And I joyed, when I beheld my Beloved. Why should I not be glad? For He is the joy, and exultation of my heart. Oh! what had I, and what did I possess in that hour? I cannot tell thee, how well it was with me: nor indeed is it fitting how to tell. It is enough that He I love alone was present, and I could desire no more.

3. "Oh! how I loved Him, when I neglected myself, and all things else. I cared little or nothing for all that could charm me, for I was rapt away in His love, and whatever was not of Him, was distasteful and insipid. When He was taken away, my heart was well-nigh cast out of me. For my soul hung upon His grace, and I had no other comfort save in Him, Whom I now lament.

He sufficed me, and was enough for every kind of joy. As I wished, so wished He;

and whatever He enjoined me, that I willingly accepted, and wholly and readily gave myself to Him. And there was between us but one mind, and great tranquillity. And none dared break in upon our silence, as He commanded—‘I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awaken my Beloved, till he pleases.

Now weigh well, if thou canst understand my words, how I must needs mourn the absence of my Beloved, seeing that through His presence I abounded in all good things.”

And I answered ; I know what thou meanest : often have I proved thy words by experience. But in this let us take comfort, that the dispensation of His will is the advancement of our devotion.

And now thankfully do I receive all that thou hast hitherto spoken ; but yet I would hear still further. For a fuller explanation is needful to the dull of understanding.





XV.

OF THE SEARCH FOR THE BELOVED.

“**B**LESSED be GOD, Who hath not turned His mercy from me.”

Behold, I am here again, then, asking with earnest inquiry, how thou wouldst act if at any time thy Beloved leave thee without His inward consolation? What wouldst thou advise to be done? And by what means can He be reconciled and called back again !

I entreat thee, O most beloved and devout spouse of CHRIST, hide not from me any of those things which I have come to ask. Thou canst profit me much by now laying open to me thy holy thoughts. By thy words too I can measure the weight of my own grief and sorrow, and learn whether it be just or unjust.

For I have seen thee at times all joyful, and presently sorrowful, and then again rejoicing ; and from thee I have learnt somewhat to consider my own case. For I judge that this change most chiefly springs from the withdrawal and coming again of thy only

Beloved, and, knowing thou hast suffered many changes, I have come to question thee.

2. And she said—"Yielding to thy wishes, I will at least endeavour to unfold a little what passed within me, whether it be when I am with the Beloved, or when as one weaned from Him I sit alone, expecting Him, Whom my soul loveth.

"Know this then first, that His absence causes much grief and sorrow, in proportion as His grace confers joy and sweetness. But why He thus changes, it were more fitting for Him than me to tell. Him thou shalt hear, when I have finished the words of my song; because at last we will bring Him in, and sitting in the midst of us, He shall teach us His plan, which He is wont to adopt with those that love Him.

"But now hear me patiently, and be not wearied with my imperfect words. For we are come together to pitch our hearts in unison, so that we may either mourn together, or joy one with another in love. 'For woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth he hath none to lift him up, and if two lie together, they shall warm one another;' in that, when one is sad, the other suggesteth consolation, or if he refuse to be comforted, sheweth compassion, and begins to mourn

deeply with his friend ; and thus they either rejoice together, or, if joy be taken away, comfort each other with mutual tears. And if from adversity or other tearful cause, sorrow still remains, yet their souls become more composed ; because they find they are in harmony, and that, though all else change, their hearts cannot be changed or corrupted. Who would not exclaim, at the sight of so sweet a concord of minds—‘ Behold how good and pleasant a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity ? ’

3. “ I can therefore discourse more freely with thee, because I fear no craft nor guile in thee.

“ Behold that most sweet Bridegroom, and my most beloved Friend, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Lover of holy souls, Who cannot cease from love, hath drawn a poor wretched creature to Himself : and even when I was not, He granted me the gift of being, of life, of understanding, and the enjoyment of this common light. From Him comes the gift of being born again by the grace of Baptism, and clothed with the glory of His own merits.

“ After this when I had defiled myself with many sins, and was unfit to render love for love, He looked not to my filthiness, but

into the bosom of His own mercies. For when I still wandered further, He called me by His grace, and would not suffer me to perish in this world. Then He provided me a place to rest in whilst I am in this life, even so long as I shall be in this frail body.

“Yet it is not true or lasting rest, whatever be the habitation, neither is this dwelling under the shadow of the Beloved. That only is true rest, which after the labours of this passing life is enjoyed in one’s native home. Yet is it in a measure a sweet recreation for the soul that sighs after GOD, to see herself freed from the cumbrous wishes of the world, and already to be, where she can more fully serve the Beloved, and in secret silence be given up to herself and Him.

4. “Yet was He not wanting to me in divers necessities, aiding me especially on the first essays of temptation. Often too He hath instructed me by useful discourse, confirming me by His words. And as new plants are watered with rain, so has He watered me with internal comfort, that the virtue begun in me might not dry up, as a potsherd.

“And He said to me : if thou art willing, and wilt listen unto Me, then thou shalt see every good thing. If thou doest what I

command, thou shalt be My friend. If thou choosest Me, and lovest Me above all, whatsoever thou askest of the FATHER shall be done unto thee. But if thou leavest Me, this shall be to thee as a stumbling-block, and I will awaken Mine anger against thee. And when thou seekest another, he shall not long please thee ; but shall be turned unto weariness and bitterness, because I only am the salvation and life of the soul.

“And I turned me unto Him, Who had done so much good unto me ; and shaking off the dust of earthly affection, resolved to live henceforth to Him alone ; since nothing is better than He ; no method more sure than His.

5. “Let whosoever will, go and seek whom to love and serve : I have found the true Husband of the soul, for Whom it would not be hard for me to die, that so I may ever cleave to His love. Therefore I cleaved unto Him, for He pleased me ; and none better. For such a One my soul most ardently longed : than Whom none could be greater, or better, or more worthy, and Who would abound in all good things.

“And because He was passing kind, He further gave me words of comfort : watchfully providing that none of them should

affright, or overwhelm me by too great harshness and asperity : but that they should lay upon me, and teach me 'that His yoke is sweet and His burthen light,' that so my young affections might be the better drawn on at first, and bent the more strongly on the Beloved, never to recoil again.

"Better will she be taught and greater progress make, saith He, if she be stirred up not by force, but by her own accord. More easily will she endure My yoke upon her, if love invite her by rewards, rather than fear affright by punishment. But yet if she should need an impulse, that it should be so done with moderation, as not to overpower her by violence.

"For He Himself knew what was fit for a young plant ; and how good this tenderness should be to me hereafter, especially in the day of trial, when I could readily call to mind what He had done in the beginning for my soul, and so I might not fail in any after contest. Nor did He unfold to me at once what and how much I should suffer in His service ; but considering the weakness and frailty of the new rising plant, He sometimes mingled sad things with my joy, so that I might become hardy and strong.

6. "Afterwards He led me about, and

taught me, and carried me on His shoulders. He led me through the pastures of His holy writings, and armed me with a holy strength against the wickedness of the devil.

“He shewed me, as in a glass, the examples of all virtues,—The Holy Patriarchs, and Prophets, and the glorious luminaries of the New Testament.

“He led me about among the desert places, and the tabernacles of Egypt, where the great name of monks and cœnobites first flourished, who declared and made it credible by their examples, that the yoke of CHRIST is sweet, and the broad way of the world bitter and deceitful. He taught me as a mother her little one, breaking spiritual nuts for me, and placing the kernels in my mouth, because they were a pleasant food.

“Trace out, if thou canst, what these things signify, and where such may be found. Open the apostolic writings, and cast thine eyes thereon and read, that thou mayest, if thou canst, grasp so great mysteries. Meditate on Isaiah, study the Gospel, that light of all lights, and see whether they do not produce most delicious kernels. Whatever thou findest obscure and hard to be understood is a kernel in a shell. But if thou hearest it explained, and understandest what before

thou couldst not, the shell is broken, and the sweetness of the kernel relished in the heart. So thus must thou think with other mysterious and hidden sayings. Hence thou canst find as many nuts as there are hidden and mystical sentences.

7. "And how thinkest thou He carried me on His shoulders? This He did as often as He beheld my weakness, and yet cast not away nor despised me, but bore with me with patience and long-suffering.

"He carried me also on His shoulders when He inspired others, and enabled them to bear with patience with my infirmities, and whatever was blameworthy in me.

"He carried me yet more tenderly on His shoulders when bearing His cross He went forth to a place called Calvary, where also He was crucified. For it was I rather than His Cross, there carried by Him. And my sins were a heavier burthen to His shoulders than the wood of the Cross. For that Cross was borne for me, not for Himself. And yet it deserved to be held sacred and in honour, for His sake Who carried it, and died upon it.

8. "Oh ! how far above all must I love and reverence Him, by Whose merits and grace I am thus sought out and redeemed.

Therefore shall the Beloved be to me as an only son to his mother, yea though I know full truly that I am not worthy of His love. Whatever I have heretofore presumed has sprung from His condescension. What care I else but follow where He calls, and run to His most sweet embraces. I call to mind what David said, 'Who am I, to become the son-in-law of a king?'

"And yet far greater than that is this kinship, in that it is a chaste and pure connection, where flesh and blood have no part, but perfect fidelity, and the answer of a good conscience before GOD. Of which also that disciple whom JESUS most loved, said, 'Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.' For GOD is love, and love begetteth this kinship. Since then David thought himself too mean to become the son-in-law of an earthly king, how humbly ought I to think of myself when the LORD, the King of kings, deigns to notice me, needy as I am, and draw me to His love.

9. "Thus, then, hath He dealt with me, not as I have deserved, but as His most exceeding mercy hath vouchsafed, and as in all things it seemed fit to His love and infinite goodness. Happy and blessed the

soul that is thus bound with the cords of Divine love. How noble and free is he who hath experienced the vows of this holy life.

“And seeing that our discourse concerning the Beloved is already long extended, and yet that thy question is not fully answered, let another follow, which may He deign to render pleasant and fruitful unto us both.”



XVI.

*OF THE PROTECTION AND LONG-
SUFFERING OF THE BELOVED.*

“**B**EHOLD, as the eyes of a maiden
are on the hands of the mistress,
so also my eyes wait always on
my Beloved.”

Since first I began to love Him, I have also wished to continue with Him. And when I had so resolved, it pleased Him ; and He confirmed my purpose, saying, “ He that remaineth in Me, and I in him, bringeth forth much fruit.” But to prove whether this love were true, and strong, and chaste, it was needful for temptation to unfold this. But I could not be tempted, without His permission ; and unless He withdrew Himself for a season.

And because temptation tends to the cleansing of the inner man, and to greater increase of virtues, and the clearer perception of spiritual gifts, it took hold upon and began to exercise me.

How strongly and how often temptation tossed me hither and thither, Thou, O LORD

my GOD, Whom nothing secret escapes, most fully knows. Even He is the Witness of all that passes within my heart ; and even now He looketh upon me, and knoweth that I am but a frail and earthly vessel.

2. Unless then He had helped me when I was so heavily oppressed, so that I thought I could scarcely live, my soul would have dwelt in hell, as if already cast into the pit of despair. But He Who is wont to be with the troubled in heart, took pity on me. For who could have endured so many temptations, had not GOD been his helper and protector ? Of His mercy was it that I could stand then before the face of the storm. It is of the gift of His goodness that I now stand. Wherefore should I put no trust in myself as long as I am in the flesh.

Even if the sky be ever so serene, I may not count on fair weather long. For the air may suddenly be stirred up, and, perhaps, when least expected. Therefore the more needful are the grace and protection of the Beloved ; the more truly I learn from experience that everything is pregnant with danger. No place is safe but heaven, where my Beloved feedeth His elect in joy and exultation.

3. But ah ! when shall I be there ? What

can I say of it ? I may think of it a little but yet not clearly. To enter there I know I cannot.

Would that He would come and place me in that bright, safe, and pleasant pasture of His saints, where Satan is not, and where evil never comes.

I am still tossed about in the sea, and whether I shall reach the haven of salvation, through the mighty swelling waves of temptations, alas ! I know not.

Nothing therefore is safe with me ; but this remaineth as my shield and defence, for me ever to look at the light of faith, and humbly implore the grace of my Beloved ; to place full confidence unweariedly in Him ; to consent in no way to be separated from His love ; in a word, to trust more to His providence and boundless mercy than in my own industry.

Wherefore, though I very often stumble and fall into sin, yet I should in no wise despair, but will instantly cry aloud unto Him,

O LORD my GOD, have mercy upon my soul, and suffer me not to be overwhelmed in my temptations, but faithfully aid me that I may boldly resist and overcome. Thou that triest me by Satan, and placest me often on

Thy left hand, stretch out Thy right hand to do the work of Thy hands.

But if so grievous a temptation come upon me that I cannot even cry aloud to the LORD, I will sigh unto Him from my inmost heart. For He knoweth the secrets of the heart, and the longings of the spirit. And it is His will that none of the little ones who believe on Him should perish.

4. O ! how great hath His mercy been towards me, that even when I knew and perceived it not, He was with me in my tribulation ! For many a time hath He preserved me from being given over to my passions. But sometimes out of His hidden judgment it came to pass, that I fell and was overcome in little things, lest haply I should grow proud, and presume in great things : and that being humbled and abashed I might learn that I was nothing when I seemed to stand firm, and flourished most. I would advise thee then not rashly or too soon to praise me, even though I may make some advance ; but reserve thy praise for a happy end ; nay, even let thy praise be given not unto me but unto the LORD. Let the glorious GOD alone be praised, Who hath so oft stood by me in my temptations.

5. For oft when I was led captive by them,

He mercifully set me free. At times when they rushed on like a whirlwind to destroy me, He sent forth His arrows and scattered them, He multiplied His lightnings and confounded them, and they departed from me for awhile. For He would not that I should be altogether without them, as He hath seldom granted this to any of His saints in this life.

And after this I enjoyed a little rest ; “for so he giveth His beloved sleep.” And when I had gained it, I did not betake to bodily or worldly ease, but to repose of mind, that so I might behold the world afar off, and in a small degree the very sanctuary of Heaven. Therefore I looked well into myself to see what manner of person I was, and how I might better please Him Who had vouchsafed me marks of love, far exceeding my deserts.

For in the whirlwind of temptation I could not see how sweet my Beloved was, but only in serenity of mind, and the quiet of solitude. And as far as in me lay, I wished for this peaceful serenity, free of interruption, that I might the more perfectly cleave to Him, and wait upon Him without anything to abstract my thoughts, or involve me in trouble.

6. But not always according to the longing

of my soul does the effect of His grace follow. Sometimes the coveted sweetness is granted ; yet sometimes it is justly delayed. For who would not desire to rest under the shadow of the Beloved whilst it was allowed, and time and opportunity admit ? But now my Beloved acteth interchangeably with me.

So I do not feel always what disturbs me, nor continually enjoy what delights me, but the evening and the morning are one day, in that the whole of this mortal life is spent in the rising and the setting of joy and sorrow. Well was that Saint conscious of this who said, "Thou visitest him in the morning, and suddenly triest him."

Nevertheless it seemeth some little rest when temptation is not too constant and importunate. And therefore when it is given me to rest sweetly even for a little while in my Beloved, I am forthwith full of gratitude and love. I rejoice, and ever will rejoice in Him for so divinely great a gift.

7. I am moreover emboldened to address Him on any occasion that presents itself, because He has so often freely anticipated my desires by His kind visitation. For, when He draweth nigh and would spend holy day with me, light forthwith shines into my heart, before whose presence the darkness of

all vain thoughts is banished, and the long coveted serenity possessed. For at His entrance nothing disgraceful or impure can remain, in that He is the lover and implanter of purity; and it must needs be that all the illusions of the Devil, and the pomp of the world depart.

When therefore my passions, and the temptations which I had borne, were subdued, I began to see Him more clearly, and love Him more fervently. I strove also to return Him thanks, for that He had at length deigned to restrain the tumult of my sins within me. For they oft break my peace, and close my mouth, so that I cannot speak to my Beloved. But vain is their strife against His power and wisdom, Who in every tumult can glide into the heart, and silently pour out His secrets to me, so that all their whisperings I can count as naught, yea, as scarcely worthy of notice.

8. O my Beloved, dearest and most fair, take me, I pray Thee, so to Thyself, when Thou seest my affections pressed down by a weight of sins, or lured away by any vain occupation, that I may not wander farther after evil thoughts, and end in the loss of Thy grace, without which I cannot dwell in Thy surpassing friendship.

H

For Thou art my LORD and my GOD, Who healest and sanctifiest all things by Thy word, Who hast appointed my soul for life, and hast not suffered my feet to be moved, but hast delivered me from the evil hour, and the snares of death.

O ! how many have been forsaken and have perished who were less guilty than I am. Bless thou then the LORD, O my soul, and let all that is within me praise His Holy Name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. Whatsoever thou sayest, or thinkest, or purposest in His praise is little and worthless. For He is beyond all praise, and sweeter than all melody. Therefore my soul cleaveth unto Thee; O GOD, and loveth Thee beyond all Thy gifts, though beautiful and sweet is all that Thou hast of Thy charity bestowed.

For Thou alone art the Bridegroom, all else but gifts and tokens of Thy love. I will not give my love to them instead of Thee, nor will I believe that all these together can without Thee suffice me, lest I lose at once both them and Thee. Thou permittest me to use many things for Thy sake, but Thou allowest me not to enjoy any in place of Thee ; therefore, my beloved Bridegroom, JESUS CHRIST, have I preferred Thee above

all, and striven to love Thee beyond all. Grant me then happily to enjoy Thee, and in blissful union to be made happy with Thee for ever.

9. But whither have I wandered? I have, perchance, drawn thee on further than thou didst wish? But bear with me, my friend. For it is the love of my chief and only Friend that has somewhat carried me away; and Oh! that He may yet bear me along more and more, and lift thee up on high also. Let Him prepare us for a heavenly ascent; but let us keep to the humble descent.

Thou askest if I am not sometimes left by the Beloved? I answer, yes!

“What doest thou meanwhile?”

I bear up with what calmness I can, and wait for His coming. I am weighed down in nature, but bear up inwardly in my spirit, lest my grief be inconsolable. I remember that we live not in love without sorrow. I live by faith, believe in the Holy Scriptures, and assent to their words of comfort. And although it still may not be well with me, yet I distrust not, nor ought I to doubt that it will be better with me. True and faithful are those things which are told in the sayings of Thy Saints. For they were exercised, and tried in many like things. Nature longs

after ease, and seeks to be comforted ; but the spirit is ready to endure all things, which GOD would have me suffer. If then I am somewhat cold in devotion, and slow in the performance of good works, yet is my wound not without a remedy.

“Though He slay me,” saith the righteous, “yet will I trust in Him.” If thou lovest virtue, patience is a great virtue. Let it now, therefore, keep thee. For the very difficulty of work frequently increases the lustre of the virtue. And that virtue may be proved, and made to shine more brightly, it is generally tried by obstacles. When then such a trial comes upon thee, be not distrustful, neither be dismayed ; but preserve patience, and commend the justice of GOD.

10. GOD is not so severe and unmerciful as to leave thee long uncomfortable. Only beware of immoderate grief, and murmur not against the righteous and holy One because thou art left by Him ; lest the evil spirit assail thee with temptations yet more bitter, even to unbelief and blasphemy, and thou, through over fear, be more tormented than is fitting.

Bear up then a little while, and repress thy sorrow, whatever heaviness of heart or of body assail thee. Continue firm in the good

resolve which thou madest at first ; for in such a critical hour it will be thy only joy to place all hope on the Beloved. Patiently wait for heavenly consolation ; and thou shalt soon feel the richness of His grace, and the loving countenance of GOD. Behold, thou hast a faithful witness saying : "I waited patiently for the LORD, and He inclined unto me."

11. But that thou mayest deserve to win thy desire, pray more constantly, and ask others' prayers for thee ; and thus surrender thyself wholly to His will and ordinance, to deal with thee, as seemeth best to Him. And say to Him with holy confidence, my lots are in Thy hands, Thou knowest how it is with me ; Thou seest what I suffer ; and if now Thou willest, I shall be comforted right early. Be it always done unto me, as seemeth good and right to Thee ; but have mercy upon me, who am poor and needy and desolate, crying humbly unto Thee.

If then thou perseverest in patience and endurance, and swervest not, because of a little affliction, from the faith and love which are in CHRIST JESUS, the splendour of His grace shall assuredly return unto thee, and enlighten thee more fully than before. And thy Beloved on His return shall be far dearer

to thee than if He had never been absent. For His sentence is not irrevocable ; nor is He so angry, that He may not be reconciled again. He will be quickly and most easily appeased, if only thou givest thy hand to the work, and promise to be more watchful, and sooner make amends.

If only thou followest this salutary advice, thy Beloved will be with thee as before, and in His presence thou shalt rejoice, and say : " Oh ! how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee ; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee ; Thou shalt hide them under the shadow of Thy wings." O Sion, thou shalt be renewed, and see the renowned One, Who is to reign in thee. He is the King of virtues, thy Beloved, Whose back is covered with pale gold ; and Whose head is of fine gold.

These few words spoken for thy comfort, tell to very few. But the rest of my promise touching the changes of the Beloved, how He now manifests Himself openly, now draws aside, thou shalt receive from Himself, and hear from His own mouth.

XVII.

*OF THE ANSWER OF THE BELOVED,
AND HIS WITHDRAWAL.*

“**M**ARVELLOUS are Thy works,
and that my soul knoweth right
well.”

Why, my Beloved, hast Thou so dealt with me? Why hast Thou forsaken me? Answer me. Thou didst leave me, and go away. But now at last Thou hast returned to me, and in this Thou hast done well. Hadst Thou not returned, I had well-nigh fainted away. But Thou, knowing my secrets, hadst mercy upon me. For I was sorrowful at Thy departure, but am now comforted with Thy return. Tell me, however, something for my instruction, what was the profit thou intendedst herein? What good is it for thee to fly away and afflict me? Doth it delight Thee to hear me cry: “Abide with us, LORD, for it is towards evening.”

Come and sit in the midst of us, because I and another disciple long much to hear Thee, and pray Thee to teach us. Speak freely, whatsoever Thou pleasest; and if

Thou wilt, address Thy words unto me. For there is none whom I would more gladly hear than Thee. And if any other speak, his discourse is the more pleasant and agreeable unto me, for Thy sake, Who speakest in him. Thy words will be sweeter to me than the honey, or the honeycomb, because they surpass all sweetness of words. Let now Thy voice sound in my ears.

2. Then the voice of my Beloved intoned and said :

I am He that speak in righteousness. Who is like unto Me in counsel and wisdom? Who made the sea and dry land? I the LORD, Who formed the light, and created the darkness. Who hath entered the abyss, and hath brought up water from the deep? I the LORD, the searcher of hearts and reins. Who hath known all things, both first and last? I the LORD, Who made all things in number, weight, and measure. I am the Maker of heaven and earth, the Ruler of all ages.

I know all secret things, and reveal what is hidden. I embrace all things, and behold the causes of each. I am GOD, and change not : with Whom the causes of all wondrous things stand immutable.

I am the Almighty GOD, Whose power

passeth all knowledge. I am the Most High, Whose height is unattainable. I am Goodness, Whose Being is incommunicable. I am ever present, yet the most concealed. I am the most inward, and yet most removed from the senses. I hear all things without trouble, and rule all without dissension. All things past and to come are before my sight as the present. I alike excel all bodily and spiritual creatures. I am called by many names, yet am conformable to none even in thought. I suddenly appear, and ere it is known, again as suddenly disappear. Verily I am a GOD that hideth Himself, and then do I manifest My dispensations to them that love Me.

3. I said also to the loving soul :

I will hide My face from her for a little while : for a moment I will leave her, to see whether she loveth Me purely. It is a great matter to love purely, for this is to love Me, not on account of herself, nor for any temporal advantage nor even spiritual consolation ; but solely for my own sake, and herself finally for love of Me, and not for aught to be hoped from Me.

It is not the lot of all so to love Me ; but this prerogative of pure love belongs only to the most perfect soul. But that which is

still imperfect must needs be tried, and exercised ; that she may know how much she loves, and if she has reached contempt of self. Thou saidest in thy heart, "I love truly," and again and again didst thou repeat — "I love." But I trust not in words, or thoughts only ; therefore in truth I will try thee.

4. When I am present and speak fair words unto thee ; when I give devotion, or increase my gifts in thee ; when all is prosperous, or for the most part, smooth, then thou devoutly sayest : "My Beloved, I love Thee." And thou sayest well : For I am indeed most worthy of thy love ; and all that can be said or thought of Me is lovely and sweet, and worthy of everlasting praise. But for thee to love and praise Me for good things, what great thing is this ? For even so do the sinners. Nay, they often bless Me, when they have received the objects of their evil desires. But praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner. Whoso then loves Me for a benefit, or consolation, what does he more than the covetous wordling ?

Advance, advance, and ascend unto perfection. Be ashamed to be always weak, and callow ; learn to feed on strong meat, and to be no more fed with the milk of babes.

Pass over to the number of the mighty men of David, who hold the spear, and sword, and shield. Take up thy Cross, and follow me. Haste to be reckoned among those, who burn for my sake to bear tribulation, and many kinds of privations.

Thou lookest too much for comfort. Therefore I will try thee, and bend thee another way, that thou mayest know what thou art able to suffer, lest thou seem to thyself innocent and holy. I will visit thee with tribulation, and wrath, and indignation, and attacks of evil angels. Some shall take away what is thine ; and some shall deny what thou needest. Some shall revile thee ; others oppose thee face to face. Some shall lay a heavy yoke upon thee ; others lead thee whither thou wouldest not. Some shall afflict thee without, others within. Others shall be raised to state and honours, while thou shalt be left to contumely, and labours. In all these, and greater than these, shalt thou be tried, like a mighty wrestler. I will retire, yet will not dismiss thee till I have proved diligently whether thou blessest Me, to My face only. But if thou lovest Me with all thy heart, and blessest My name at all times, then thou art worthy to be called My Spouse, and to be admitted into my secret chamber.

But if thou canst not yet bear My rod, and thinkest this discipline severe, bemoaning over many days My absence, though thou unceasingly and lovingly seekest Me, I will send thee My staff that thou mayest rise ; and after this I will come, and thou shalt be restored to former grace. For I would not have thee faint altogether, for the soul that loveth Me, I also love. And if thou lovest not perfectly, yet I despise not thee as being a little one ; but will provide for thy increase. Thy well-being is My care : wherefore I would not have thee perplexed on account of Me.

5. I know, indeed, what thou art able to bear, and so temper My visitations ; I would not have thee tempted beyond what thou canst bear, and fall away. If I tarry, wait for Me and abide the day of visitation. I will verily come and make good My promise. But be thou instant in prayer, diligent in holy reading, and in all things show forth patience and endurance. For I am not ignorant that during My absence thou hast been in sorrow ; but I am not pleased that thou art so soon cast down, and abandonest all hope, as if I would not return. Where is thy faith ? In this chiefly hast thou need of much faith ; for although thou seest Me not,

thou art seen by Me, to Whom thou shouldst trust thyself, and all that thou hast. For, although thou knowest not My judgments, yet the language of firm faith saith, "Whatever GOD disposes and doeth is good." I tell thee, then, for thy comfort, that this sickness is not unto death, but to the glory of GOD. I took away the object of thy longing, and wished to try thy faith and love. All this I did that thou mightest know thine own weakness more clearly, and understand My goodness more. Thou knowest not thyself so well as I know thee. I know thee and all thine, not only in time, but from eternity. See, then, what it is that cometh to thee from Me; see how poor thou art in thyself when thou art left by Me. Thou hast not yet gone far enough in knowledge of thyself. And because this knowledge is good for thee, I wished thee to learn it by experience.

It is good for thee at times to be left, and afflicted, and humbled, that so thou mayest more palpably feel thy own weakness. I know that this tends most to thy advancement. And if thou art thus made more prudent and watchful in every particular, what hast thou lost? Thou art often self-confident and ignorant of thyself, thinking thou hast the good which thou hast not.

6. Thou art deceived by love of self, and forgetting the Giver, abusest the gift. I inebriated thee, but thou forgettest that it was a cluster of grapes from My Vine. Prove now thyself, and own what strength thou hast. If what thou hadst was of thyself, why dost thou not still keep it? In that thou couldst not do so, acknowledge that it came from above. Ascribe honour, then, to My grace, and confess that without Me thou canst do nothing. Reflect how needful I am to thee, how sufficient, and how I alone can confirm thee in all good. Where wast thou before I called thee, but in thy sins? And where art thou now, but whither I have led thee? Yea, when was it ever well with thee without Me?

7. And I said, "Never, dearest LORD. Thou art my One, mine only One, my Beloved, most faithful in all, and above all."

Why, then, didst thou think evil with thyself, to go after other lovers? What wast thou displeased at in Me? Was it My Glory, or My Beauty?

"Truly, O LORD, there is none in heaven, or on earth, like unto Thee, in beauty and glory, in riches and power. Thou alone art the most high above all creatures. The heavens are Thine; the earth also is Thine.

Thou hast laid the foundation of the round world, and all that is therein. Much hast Thou given to the creatures. In them Thy great beauty, wisdom, and goodness shine forth ; but then it is nothing in comparison with Thy blest and glorious Presence. Now have I learnt, by experience, that it is a bitter thing for me to have left Thee but for an hour."

8. Return then to Me, says my Beloved. It is enough that thou hast hitherto wandered away to and fro. Learn henceforth to be steadfast and gentle, hoping and trusting in Me, not only in the day of My visitation, but more fully in the night of temptation. I left thee, that so being wearied thou mightest more quickly return to Me ; and, cheated of outward comfort, mightest at length learn how great a boon is My love, to which I have so many times invited thee. Understand, now, that it is not without reason that thou art sometimes left ; that thou remainest without devotion—art afflicted with weariness—worn down by temptations—afflicted on all sides—and that thou findest no counsel, discoverest no aid, but sufferest on every hand distress and want. I leave thee, that thou mayest learn how needful My presence is for thee, not only in one thing, or even in

great matters, but in every action, in every place and time, in the morning as in the evening, and wherever thou art, or wherever thou mayest go or remain. Thus wilt thou be taught to walk more warily with thy Beloved, to abstain from vanities, and guard against offences.

9. I leave thee that thou mayest know how much thou lovest Me—that the measure of thy love may appear to thee as it is. Thou didst think thyself stronger and happier than thou wert ; but it became clear when My aid was withdrawn for a little, that thou wast poor and miserable. How could thy love be known unless thou bearest sufferings with meekness ? Sometimes I see thee become lukewarm, and that thou mayest be aroused to fervour and diligence in seeking Me, I hide myself for a little while, as a Lover at the door. I see and know all things ; but trial is useful in many ways, and often gives greater knowledge. If thou lovest Me, thou wilt not be slow in seeking me. If I am pleasing to thee, thou wilt search more eagerly.

Knowest thou not that wealth won by toil is tended with greater care ? Who longs for rest so much as the weary traveller ? To whom is love so pleasant as to him who has

known what it is to grieve for the Beloved ? Is not a treasure that is lost and found again more dear than before ? Therefore is thy joy double, and thy gladness twofold, because of the intermitted presence of the Beloved.

For thy good, then, I withdraw Myself ; and this not in anger, but with a gracious dispensation I sport, as it were, with them that love Me. Let this suffice thee for the present, since so much thou hast deserved to hear. But I give thee leave to return to Me, as oft as thou feelest My need. I have never closed My bowels of compassion to the humble and devout suppliant.





XVIII.

OF CONFIDENCE IN DIVINE MERCY.

“**M**Y GOD is my mercy, and therefore
I am not confounded.”

Let none deem it strange that I desire so frequently to hold converse with the LORD my GOD, since His loving kindness often draws me on, slothful though I am, and inflames me to prayer and meditation, so that for me not to answer His words would be harsh and ungrateful.

But haply some one may object, Dost thou not then fear GOD, since thou art in truth an unclean sinner, and unworthy even of life? Whence cometh this presumption of heart? And since thou art the least of all, and more to be despised than all, why dost thou still thrust thyself forward into Divine discourse, and whom takest thou thyself to be.

2. O LORD, my Beloved, answer for me, because the mouth of the sinner is opened against me. If I would justify myself, my mouth will condemn me; and if I should shew myself clean, my soul should prove me wicked. Thou knowest my foolishness and

confusion ; speak Thou, and I will willingly hold my peace.

And the voice of my Beloved answered and said,

“ Heed not the words of them that upbraid thee, but listen rather to what I have said, ‘ I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.’ Can I not do what I will? Who shall resist My will? If I choose to confer any benefit upon thee, though the least of My disciples, who will convict Me of sin? Let him that is without sin cast the first stone at thee. And if they also are sinners, why do they detract from My grace? Thou didst not choose Me, but My mercy hath prevented thee.

“ Dare any still murmur against thee because thou hast come unto Me ; surely their murmurings are not against thee, but openly against Me, because I receive sinners and eat with them. And why shouldest thou not claim such fellowship when I more gladly give than withdraw ? ”

3. And I said to Him, “ Beloved LORD, impute it not unto them, but to me and my sins. I deny not that for which they have spoken evil of me, but I confess that it is even worse than they know.”

He again said, “ It is good for thee that thou hast humbled thyself, for thereby thou shalt

be the more enriched, and shalt more readily obtain My grace. Nor shall thou be cast away because thou art a sinner and weak, though thou oughtest on that account to despise thyself, and never cease to remember in how many things thou hast failed. But lest over anxiety oppress thee, consider how often I make of sinners neighbours and friends, choosing the humble, and leaving the self-confident far off. I demand not of thee aught that is thine, but this only I ask, love Me with a pure heart, and it is enough."

And I said, "Alas me ! that I have nothing to offer worthy of Thy love."

And He replied, "I need none of those things which the world brings to please Me. I require none such. Love of itself is enough, only let it glow, and continue with Me. And what are the things than can adorn a man ? Are they not all mine, whether they shine in the body or in the soul ? Moreover as for those things that belong to the world, and adorn the body, these should concern thee but little. But those which belong to the beauty of virtue concern thee, and should be thy care, that thou mayest walk well pleasing before GOD in the light of the living. Rightly, however, hast thou humbled and accused thyself both outwardly and inwardly

in the presence of My Majesty, by confessing in truth thy weaknesses and sins, and bitterly lamenting them; for thou art not worthy to claim familiar converse with Me, Who am a mirror without spot, and thou a sinner, and unclean from infancy. Remember then thy frail condition and My noble greatness, and so with humble reverence come confidently unto Me. For I am He that blotteth out sins and iniquities, and justifieth the ungodly, pardoning all his sins for My Name's sake.

4. "Nor are those the whole of my benefits, for I am prepared to bestow still greater gifts of mercy. For I choose to show mercy rather than to be angry, willing to spare rather than to punish. But this seemeth too little for Me, and I am not content after the first grace but to add a second and third, nay, My mercies are without end, and the number of My graces and benefits cannot be told. In a word, after the pardon of sinners, after their penitence and full satisfaction, I oftentimes restore the joy of My saving countenance, by pouring out the more abundant grace of the HOLY SPIRIT. And although the sinner still continue in the flesh, yet I receive him into My friendship, so that there be no confusion felt

for past sins, but rather thanksgiving and the voice of praise, because old things have passed away and all become new.

“So compassionate and merciful am I, that I am ever more ready to pardon than thou to repent; more ready to give than thou to ask. Why then fearest thou? Why dost thou tremble to approach the fountain of so much mercy? And why dost thou estrange thyself from My grace so freely bestowed? Nay, even though thou knewest that I intended to deny thee, thou shouldest not cease from prayer, nor despair of being heard, but rather persevere more instantly until thou receivest. For My mercies are infinite, and what is denied at one time may be given at another.

5. “How knowest thou but that I may at length turn My face unto thee, and grant thee the desire of thy heart? What saith the Prophet of Me, ‘Draw near unto Him and be enlightened, and your face shall not be ashamed.’ I rather blame thee for coming so seldom, rather than for the frequency of thy approach, thy timid modesty more than thy too great confidence of pardon. To trust in my goodness is a proof of true humility and of great faith. I say this that thou mayest not sin, and if thou hast sinned, despair not,

but quickly rise again ; for thou still hast hope, and an Advocate with the FATHER.

“ Wouldest thou wait to be worthy before thou drawest nigh ? But how of thyself couldst thou become so ? If only the good and worthy, the great and perfect were to draw nigh to Me, what would become of the sinners and publicans ? For what says the Gospel ? ‘ And the publicans and sinners drew near to JESUS to hear Him.’ Let then the unworthy draw near that they may become worthy, the wicked that they may be made good, the little and imperfect that they may become great and perfect. Let each and all come that they may receive of the fulness of the living fountain.

“ I am the Fountain of Life that cannot be exhausted. Whoso thirsts, let him come to Me and drink ; whoso hath nothing, let him come and buy without price ; whoso is sick, that he may be made whole ; whoso is lukewarm, that he may be inflamed ; whoso is fearful, that he may be strengthened ; whoso is sorrowful, let him come to be consoled ; whoso is dry, let him come to be filled with the richness and fulness of the Spirit ; whoso is wearied, let him come to be refreshed with joy.

“ Behold, it is My delight to be with the

sons of men. Whoso desireth wisdom, let him come to My teaching ; whoso longeth for riches, let him come to receive eternal and incorruptible ; whoso is ambitious of honours, let him come to inherit an eternal inheritance in Heaven ; whoso longeth for happiness, let him come that he may possess it without fear and danger ; whoso yearns for an abundance of all good things, let him come to Me to enjoy the sovereign, eternal, and infinite good.

“I am He that giveth all temporal goods, and more than that I give eternal good in the heavenly kingdoms. Nor shall I fail in My promise to any one whose saving observance of My commands hath been fully kept. Whoso hath rightly striven in this world, shall be gloriously crowned in Heaven.”





XIX.

OF LONGING FOR DIVINE ENJOYMENT.

“**L**ET the meditation of my heart be
always before Thee.”

What can be sweeter, or more pleasant to the faithful soul, than to meditate devoutly on the LORD GOD, her Beloved, Whom though she cannot as yet behold in clear and beatific vision, she may at least make as present by zealous remembrance.

Let her then contemplate as though in a glass darkly, Whom she cannot yet see face to face. Let her nevertheless search for Him in Scriptures, and similitudes, Whom she cannot contemplate in His own brightness.

Oh ! that her zeal in seeking the face of the LORD would never grow cold in me, but grow more fervent day by day ! The soul that loves GOD, burns unceasingly to enjoy the vision of Him : because the vision of GOD is highest bliss, and perfect happiness. She longs therefore for this beatitude, until all her longing, united to its end, is satisfied and appeased ; since she cannot rest content with any present good.

For she hath learnt by frequent experience, that the more she wanders from heavenly bliss, the more and more she is unhappy and disquieted ; since there is nothing steadfast, and lasting in creatures, by which her craving can be relieved.

2. Let her return then to Him by Whom she was made ; and seek for bliss from Him, from Whom she had her origin ; for He, Who created the soul, alone can satisfy her longings with good things. For such is her love, that when He is taken away there is no good in which she can rest contented ; no pleasure which she can safely enjoy.

Tarry not here then, O my soul, for this is not the place of thy rest ; but rise upwards and ascend to Him that made thee.

Even He Who hath already sent His messengers, and invites thee to return to Him. The longings for eternal life He hath implanted are so many messengers unto thee ; and when thou hast received them, gird thee and prepare to walk. Thou walkest, when thou longest to see Him ; when thou strivest to please Him ; when thou renouncest things below ; when for love of Him thou doest what is to be done, or doest not what is to be left undone. For thou couldst not have sought Him unless He had

first sought thee, and awakened holy desires within thee. For in truth that soul languishes, not with love, but deadly weariness, which hath not been irradiated with the warmth of the Eternal Sun. But when the south wind sweetly blows, then she will be thawed from cold and sorrow ; then with longings for the inspired Light, she begins to burn for the secret of incomprehensible Divinity.

3. O wondrous heat of the true Sun, what glowings dost thou beget in the loving soul ! Thou dissipatest the darkness of sorrow, and changest laborious toil as if it had not been. By one simple gleam Thou comfortest long nights and days of poverty. O medicine of the sorrowful, Thou bright lamp to those that err and stray, shine Thou constantly upon me ; take up Thy abode with me till the everlasting light breaks forth in me ! O how sweet and pleasant shall be Thy presence, since from Thy remembrance only so many joys arise ! How gladly would I turn unto Thee ! how freely renounce all, that I may deserve to be comforted with Thy grace. For it will be no hard task for the soul longing to see Thy face, to strip itself of all delight in present things, since she already feeleth a greater pleasure within, or

waiteth with confidence for still greater to be bestowed on her.

4. Let none foolishly suppose that Thou wilt long leave the devout soul without consolation ; or that it shall receive but little gifts of grace, for all her victories over nature ; since no earthly delight, of whatsoever character, or that can be conceived even in thought, can be compared, for quality or quantity of sweetness, with Thy heavenly consolation. Labour then, O faithful soul, so to present thyself to CHRIST the Heavenly Bridegroom, that thou mayest be ever worthy of His Grace, and consolation ; since by Him and in Him thou shalt find that most fully, which will comfort thee in every strait. The more constantly thou drawest nigh, and pressest the more closely to His side, the sweeter and more pleasant will He be. But if thou withdrawest thyself, thou alone wilt suffer loss ; while He, remaining alone in His beauty, shall feel no sorrow nor trouble.

Thou standest in need of His goodness, not He of yours. Therefore thou mayest be made happier by Him : but verily not He by thee. He alone is self-sufficient, the only One to Whom nothing can be added, and from Whom nothing can be taken away. By His grace are all things that live, feel, or

understand. And therefore it is meet that all things that have being should bless and praise Him.

5. O, if I could tell and explain Him to thee fully, how gladly would I do so ! But that which is ineffable cannot be expressed as it really is. So also what is inconceivable is truly grasped by no thought or words. And though this be so, yet meanwhile in thy human capacity meditate on thy Creator, consoling thyself with the remembrance of His sweetness, until He show thee the presence of His countenance in His Heavenly Kingdom.





XX.

OF THE SOUL'S LONGING FOR GLORY

“**I** SAID in mine haste, I am cut off from before Thine eyes.”

My heart is smitten within me because of the delay of Thy glory. I will speak then and commune with Thee in the bitterness of my soul. The strength of Thy love constraineth me to speak, and suffers me not to hide anything from Thee. What then shall I say? “Behold, my GOD, in peace my bitterness is most bitter.”

Whoso understands not, knoweth not what these words mean. Not so I; but I both know and feel them, and therefore am not ashamed to sing with the Prophet to Thee, the LORD my GOD. I speak to Whom all things are known; Who also in Thy good pleasure hast given me to know and understand, lest haply I should glorify myself overmuch, or be esteemed as something by the foolish.

I can unfold to Thee what I have received from Thee. But what need have I to tell Thee, since Thou knowest all things, and

lookest for aid from none? And what kind of consolation can come to Thee, Who art the Comforter of the desolate? Therefore it can profit me alone, who yet have need of the comfort of words; that by good and sweet words I may quicken my love towards Thee, and gain some refreshment for my desolate soul.

For since I cannot behold Thee present, I will mourn Thy absence; even as that is a sign of love, and very soothing to the loving soul. Now the meaning of this verse begins to appear, because it is well written of the loving soul. For the more ardently she loves, and the more vehemently she yearns for things eternal, the more truly does she feel the force of these few words within her.

They are not cold words but to him that loveth not, nor is it a silent lute but to the callous heart. The loving and burning soul knoweth them; and her heart is warm within her as oft as she is inflamed with love of eternal peace. Therefore does she speak to Thee, the LORD her GOD, and not to men to whom she desires to be unknown.

And if at times she speaks to men, they hear but what is audible to the ear; but whenever she speaketh to Thee, she speaketh inwardly and in love rather than in words.

Behold, she saith, in peace my bitterness is most bitter. As if she confessed in this wise : Since, through Thy gift, I have been restored to peace of mind, the deceitful condition of this world becomes more grievous unto me. For in this peace I see how far apart I am from supreme peace. And, indeed, formerly filled with earthly desires, and wrought upon by various passions, I was much hindered from my inner self, and thereby from the contemplation of heavenly things, for which I should have mourned ; and yet I could not, because through carelessness I had lost the sense of inward sorrow. But now, when the throng of vain thoughts has been stilled, I rest a little in peace of mind, and with all the desire of my heart am drawn to things above ; yet still I mourn, for that I enjoy not heavenly goods, yea more than I did grieve when I was tormented by the evils of the world.

2. It is bitterness for my soul to dwell in this world, and walk under the burden of sin. But this is most bitter, when having collected my affections as best I can, on One alone, I enjoy blest peace of heart, and when with all my might I run into the embraces of eternal peace, yet I am prevented from attaining to it, on account of the bonds of this

mortality. And therefore I am compelled to cry unto Thee with mourning, and say : O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?

I feel no heavier burthen than being so long a pilgrim from Thee in this world ; in that glowing with love, I seek no consolation besides Thee. For I have learnt by most certain experience that my soul cannot be satisfied with the good things of this present life, nor attain to true bliss, until united to Thee she shall be received into a heavenly mansion. For although whilst in the body she may love exceedingly, and burn and contemplate ; yet unsatisfied are her affections, till she has put off the flesh. Therefore in the attainment of the Chief Good only, and in the light of Thy countenance, is her end consummated.

3. O King of Heaven, lovely beyond all ; O my Beloved most beautiful, and most to be desired, when wilt Thou fill me with joy, with Thy countenance ? When wilt Thou satisfy all my longings from Thy eternal fountain ? My soul hath thirsted for Thee, and is troubled with manifold sorrow, in that she has not attained to Thee. As long as I am in the flesh, and see Thee not, all I look upon brings me sadness. My heart grows

warm within me, so that, not once but continually, in my transport I say: "When shall I come, and appear before the face of my GOD?"

Yet still my love increases, my longings burn more strongly, so that I cease not to weep day and night, when day by day I think, "Where is my GOD?" For sweet is it to the loving soul to weep for Thee when she cannot have that for which she longs, but can only wait and weep. The loving soul is more fed and comforted by such tears than if she had all earthly things; for if she loved these she would not weep at all for Thee.

4 Oh! how blessed and well-pleasing to Thee is the pouring out of such tears, since in truth they are the destroyers of worldly joys, and temporal lusts, and the devout purchasers of heavenly consolations. Wherefore this overflow of holy tears is a token of the specially devout and loving only. But far different cause for tears have they who are constrained thereto by wretched necessities. This one weeps because he is sick, another because he is oppressed, another because he is injured, and another because his will is thwarted. Thou alone, O devout soul, sheddest the tears of Divine Love; but as regards temporal losses and transitory

causes, thou leavest all to the true judgment of GOD, and givest GOD thanks.

Let none however of the indevout, seeing thee weeping, judge thee foolish or impatient, in that these tears do not oppress but refresh—do not stain but cleanse; nor are they hurtful to the eyes, in that they purify the eyes of the heart. Let others think what they will of thee, I cannot think otherwise but well of thee, for I would drink large draughts of such tears.

5. If (saith He) thou wouldest weep with Me, thou mayest also be comforted with Me.

6. Would that thy soul were as mine, then thou wouldest be ignorant no more of what I feel. I know in whom I have believed, and am convinced that it is easier to deny the existence of heaven and earth than that of GOD. Yea, I know that He is the GOD of my soul, and that I can never be happy without perfect contemplation of Him, and since this is not yet bestowed upon Me, nor confirmed for ever, I grieve that I am deprived of so great a blessedness, that I am still surrounded by the darkness of life, and so weighed down by my own infirmity that I cannot endure that light; and that whatever I meditate of the heavenly glory, lasts for so short a moment, and is so clouded.

7. Wherefore I often repeat my mourning in the place of song, and when they daily say unto me, Where is thy GOD? my spirit is more and more pierced within me. For in anxious suspense I say, where is my good and the perfect joy of my heart? where peace and true rest? where all these ineffable goods but in my GOD? And when shall I enjoy them but when united to Him, and there is none between? And when shall I be there? I believe and hope, but possess not.

Where then is my GOD Whom I so love, and as yet see not; Whose love so often wounds me, Whose absence saddens me, and Whose visitation but now and then refreshes me? Where is my GOD, Whom once to have seen is to have learnt all things? Where is my GOD in Whom my heart and flesh long continually to exult? Where is my GOD, for Whom I endure so many labours and sorrows? the remembrance of Whom is sweet, but Whose dearer presence banisheth all sadness from the heart. Where is my hope and the object of all my glorying? Are they not in Thee, my GOD, the health of my countenance?

Show me Thy glory, turn not Thy face from Me, and I will cease to complain. If

I contend somewhat with Thee, rebuke me not, for love that is strong hath many wonderful ways. I am forced to wait, and thereby the more driven on by desire for Thee, and thus the combat of love still continues.



XXI.

*OF THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE
HEAVENLY COUNTRY.*

“**ORD**, I have loved the beauty of
Thine House and the habitation
of Thy glory.”

How gladly I would be with Thee, Thou knowest well my GOD ; and how ardently I long for it, I cannot sufficiently declare. I wish not this only when it is ill with me ; but however well it is with me, still my desire is to be with Thee alone.

But how shall my longing be satisfied ? For me to be here is wearisome,—yet I must remain ; I long to be with Thee, yet I may not. Nothing remains then but for me patiently to endure this delay, and resign myself to Thy will. For should I repine, when Thou wouldst have it so ? Oh ! God forbid, since many saints whose hearts were in Heaven, have still endured a long sojourn in this world. If Thou wilt then to prolong my pilgrimage here, I will obey, however long it pleaseth Thee. But yet that my desire of eating with Thee may be more pleasant during its period of expectation, I

would within myself meditate a little on the heavenly mansion. Yet I presume not to penetrate into the least of those joys, which Thou hast prepared for them that love Thee ; but a little here and there I will gather for meditation, that my affection, oft weighed down and infected by earthly things, may be again excited and uplifted to the hope of life eternal.

2. Oh ! if that day would but dawn in which the joys of Heaven should carry me away. How joyful should I then be, and how happy count myself ! How blest should I doubtless be in steadfast peace ! There would then be no need to search into any thing, for no secrets would be hid.

But now my life is spent in the night, so that it is no wonder if my eye is dark amidst the clouds of glory. Yet will I lift up my eyes, looking afar off, and salute that Holy city Jerusalem, which is built in Heaven of living stones, that is of Angels and Holy men, ever full of praise and joyful song, praising GOD unceasingly.

Ah ! now, my soul, take the wings of thy longings, and rise upwards ; flee from the bodily senses : haste from the visible things of this world, to the holy habitation of GOD, to the new Jerusalem, established

in perpetual peace, crowned with glory and honour, and perfect in the abundance of all good things.

3. Behold things wonderful and ineffable, which it is not lawful for man to utter. The sense does not grasp, nor does human understanding comprehend how glorious GOD is in His saints, how wonderful in His Majesty. Extend thy thoughts even to the highest: dilate thy longings to everlasting eternity, and say with the Prophet, "Glorious things are spoken of Thee, holy city of GOD." There all that is longed for is won! yea, securely possessed. There GOD is seen face to face, clearly and not darkly; not hastily, nor for a time, but clearly without end. There is recognised the blessed and glorious TRINITY, and inseparable Unity, and adoration, praise, and benediction is given by all the citizens of Heaven.

There too, is the only One, the Beloved, more precious than all riches, that desirable treasure, my LORD JESUS CHRIST, the immortal Bridegroom of the Church; in Whom are all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of GOD, hidden from the world, but manifest to the blessed. Oh! how joyous are all saints in the presence of the Saint of saints, Who is the cause and origin of

their salvation. For there He speaks not to them in parables, but declareth openly to them of the FATHER; Himself their book, the Word from the beginning with GOD, teaching them, and fulfilling all things, so that there is nothing wanting to them in glory. Oh! blessed everlasting glory, which springs not from brief remembrance, but the Presence of GOD in the splendour of His saints.

4. There also is the most glorious Mother of GOD, the ever Virgin Mary, adorning the whole Heavenly court with her appearance and beauty; surrounded and attended by troops of virgins, like the flowers of roses, and lilies of the valley. There are Angels and Archangels in their several orders set, sedulously intent in Divine praises; of whom some are highest, some midst, some lower, divided according to their Hierarchies.

There are the Patriarchs and Prophets of old, who full of the HOLY GHOST sang beforehand of the coming of CHRIST, and now acknowledge and bless with ceaseless praises that same LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself, King of kings, the true GOD. Now they look upon their Redeemer face to face, Whom they had long looked for, and for Whose coming they had yearned with all their heart.

There are the illustrious and ever to be remembered preachers of CHRIST, the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord, filled with sanctity and grace, the founders of the Catholic Faith, but now the devout intercessors in eternal glory for those, whom they begat and instructed in the faith.

5. There in chief shines forth the venerable Baptist of CHRIST, John, the especial friend of the Bridegroom. There Peter, the Heavenly Key-bearer, Paul, the illustrious Doctor, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, James, and John, with the rest of the Apostles and Evangelists, the pillars of the Churches, to hold whose faith, and to follow whose example, is the way to everlasting life.

There are the illustrious Martyrs, empurpled in their own blood, but happy for ever with CHRIST, who though their bodies were most cruelly torn, could not be separated by torments from CHRIST.

There is the celebrated company of Confessors, who despising the world were deemed worthy to inherit the heavenly kingdom. There are the great and glorious Doctors, who by a holy life, went deeply into the contemplation of GOD, by which so many have left behind the lively image of holiness in their writings.

There too, are young men and maidens, old men and children, constantly praising GOD together ; and ascribing to the Divine Majesty whatever they have done that was good or virtuous, ever thankful, ever devout, ever happy, ever inflamed, never weary nor tired, but ever uplifted in the continual contemplation of GOD.

O ! how glorious is that kingdom in which all the saints, clothed in their first robe, and secure for ever, reign with CHRIST. There they now follow the Lamb, whithersoever He goeth : for there is no separation from Him, but they shall rejoice for ever, joying for eternity in the LORD.

6. Contemplate these things, my soul, and raise up thy thoughts, beyond all things visible. Truly this is a holy place, and the LORD is in it. Here peace and joy ever abound : Here is a continual flow of all good things, and an eternal absence of evil. Oh ! that thou couldest bear away somewhat of the ineffable joys of the saints, that thereby thy pilgrimage might be comforted for a time ; seeing that within me thou wilt here have only labours and sorrows, temptations, and the grief of the world. Oh ! that the Author of the light from above would vouchsafe thee some little, and not send thee back empty to

thy dry food ; but according to the riches of His superabundant grace, would purify and free thee from all material things, and lead thee even for a moment to the abyss of His eternal light. Would that thou couldst bring back from that heavenly sanctuary, the form and pattern of true holiness, which thou mayest imitate. For better and truer are the examples of the heavenly and confirmed, than the best which are tried by earthly proof.

Grant me, then, O LORD GOD, to know and understand, what constitutes the perfect felicity of the saints, not from their writings, but by the HOLY SPIRIT, who teacheth thee in heavenly secrets, far above what human sense can attain. Grant me also to raise my life with greater fervour to spiritual things, and midst the constant weight of tribulations, to hold steadfastly the palm of patience ; until the time come when, the debt of the flesh being paid, I may in Thy mercy attain to that bliss for which I long so ardently.





XXII.

*OF DRAWING NEAR UNTO CHRIST, THE
HOLY OF HOLIES, THE KING OF
ANGELS.*

“**T**HOU art my King, and my GOD.”
Arise, my soul, come and enter the wonderful tabernacle, even the House of GOD. For thou must cast aside all else, and come with suppliant reverence to salute our LORD JESUS CHRIST, thy SAVIOUR and Redeemer, Who is above all principality and power, the Joy and Crown of all saints, the sure hope and certain expectation of all the faithful.

He it is Who made and redeemed thee ; He laboured, and strove, and overcame for thee. He is thy advocate, and the propitiation for thy sins. He is thy Comforter, thy Preserver, and Guardian. He is thy only and chief one, this Beloved, Who feedeth among the lilies, and would rest upon thy bosom.

Who hath ever conferred such great boons upon thee ? Who hath ever loved thee with so great a love ? Approach, and give up thyself unto Him. Open thy heart to Him, and

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declare unto Him what thou hast so long carried within thee. None can better tell, or reveal to thee, what hope or counsel is fitting for thee in human affairs, which have such varying changes. Desire of Him to direct thy ways, and let them all repose in His counsels. For vain is the hope of men, but He is the steadfastness of peace. Through Him thou wilt have access to the FATHER, and by Him all grace is given unto thee, and increase of virtue imparted.

2. Whether thou art in sadness, or joy, ever have recourse unto Him ; for He is the mirror of life and the model of righteousness. He is the never failing light of the soul, the lover of purity, and the joy of the conscience. For His sake thou wilt readily learn to despise all objects of delight : for His sake all things that are bitter and displeasing will become endurable, yea, and borne for love of Him, shall rather bring thee pleasure. In a word, from Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things.

To Him above all should thy intentions, actions, words, reading, prayer, meditation, and thought be directed. By Him salvation is given unto thee, and life eternal prepared for thee. For Him thou wilt not fear to die, nor yet refuse to live ; because thou shouldst

trust in His faithfulness, and prefer nothing to His honour and love. Draw near then, now, and give thanks to thy Redeemer.

3. O JESUS, sweetest and lovely above all, be Thou most devoutly saluted, most highly praised, and now and for all eternity blessed above all. O most worthy JESUS, what honour can I ever pay unto Thee? or how return thanks unto Thee, Who hast shown such boundless mercies unto me? And could I find somewhat to offer unto Thee, was it not Thine before I gave it? What then shall I render? I have little or nothing, and can I sacrifice out of nothing?

Yet receive the sacrifice of my humility, poverty, and nothingness; and be all ascribed to Thee, which Thou hast been pleased to bestow upon me. Let the choirs of the angels, that minister continually before Thee, utter also great praises for me.

4. Let all the spirits of just men speak, repeating thy praise with highest jubilee. But what still can I do, in remembrance and praise of Thy most holy Name? Much should I do; yea I am held and bound in many things, but scarcely am I sufficient for the least. Therefore, O most sweet JESUS, I will read, and write, and sing of Thee. I will think of Thee, speak of Thee, work for

Thee, suffer for Thee. I will rejoice in Thee, praise, magnify, and glorify Thee.

For it is meet that I should adore Thee, for Thou art my GOD, in Whom I have believed, Whom I have loved, Whom I have sought after and desired for. Give me a sign for good, that mine eye may behold the beauty of Thy countenance in Heaven. I throw myself humbly at Thy feet, earnestly intreating Thy clemency with tears, until Thou deignest to have mercy upon me. Let my name be written in the book of life, and let not that be ever blotted out which Thy hand hath written there.

5. Unhappy me, and most unlike to Thy deserving saints, yet do I, trusting in Thy boundless merits, implore that I may be worthy at least to be reckoned among the weakest and lowest members of Thy elect. I know that my life and conversation are not such, that I may dare to place any confidence in myself; but all my hope and consolation consist and rest on the merits of Thy precious Blood, on which I wholly throw myself, with all that I have done, sinned, merited, and left undone.

Look, then, most merciful JESUS, on my poverty and want; mark the affections of my heart, which I bear towards Thee; not

because I am worthy, but because Thou art gracious, and disdainest not to be touched and loved by sinners. My impurity affrights me, but again Thy goodness and humility draw and allure me unto Thee ; Who of very charity consentedst not only to become man, but also for sinful man to suffer, die, and be buried. Therefore to Thee I flee for refuge, for in myself I find no good. Do Thou supply in me, what my own strength is little able to perform.

6. Thou hast made me long to salute Thee, to praise Thee, to bless Thee ; for Thou art my hope, and my portion in the land of the living.

The desire of my soul is to be with Thee in the Kingdom of Heaven ; but because my time has not yet come I will wait for Thee even until evening. Meanwhile, be this my comfort in the place of my pilgrimage, that I am mindful of Thy name, and Thy surpassing love ; and that I have Thee present in faith, and in the Sacraments of the Church. It would be insupportable for me to live in this world, unless my hope were in Thee, O LORD. For I cannot rejoice with the world ; and lest I remained without consolation and joy, I have resolved to place all my joy in Thee.

Much and oft should I go astray, and far and wide should I waver in my thoughts, if I kept not Thee in my remembrance and imagination. And in that I cannot conceive the greatness of Thy Divinity, nor understand Thine incorporeal verity, it is safer for me to turn to the actions and words of Thy humanity: because meditating on these things, I withdraw not altogether from Thy Divinity. Thanks to Thee, good JESUS, sweet and loving, because Thou hast deigned to become my brother, my bone, and my flesh.



XXIII.

OF BEING THANKFUL FOR BENEFITS.

“**B**LESSED be the Name of the
LORD for ever.”

May all be done to Thy service, O LORD my GOD—whatsoever I do, whether I read or write; whether I think, or speak, or understand. Let all my works begin and end in Thee, by Thee, and for Thee. What Thou hast given, receive again; and whence the rivers have sprung, thither let them return. Never is it better or sweeter for me, than when I simply attribute to Thee whatever I have said and done that is good.

I would fain return Thee thanks, and this I truly do, when all that is done and all that I have received I ascribe to Thee, and wholly to Thee. But what can I, a wicked and slothful servant, give back to Thee? My service were nothing, even though I do all that Thou hast commanded me. Wherefore I am reduced to nothing, and humbled in very deed. Well is it for me that Thou hast humbled me, that Thou alone mayest be justified, Thou alone praised by all; and that

most vile dust may never boast itself before Thee. Yet I will not cease from this, but desire to praise Thee with heart and voice ; for though I cannot do it worthily, it is yet wrong to be silent altogether, and make no acknowledgement unto Thee. Thou, my GOD, art my praise ; my song is ever of Thee.

2. Oh ! how would he, who knew even little of Thy glory, and what it is to glory in Thee, regard as nothing all the blandishments of this world's glory ! Oh ! how quickly would all earthly delight wither up in him, who had tasted even a little of Thy sweetness ! Oh ! how would he burn, who had received but a little spark of Thy love ! Yea, he would most gladly despise all things, that he might but cleave unto Thy love. And all that he could do and suffer for Thy love, would be indeed most sweet and light.

Oh ! how he would rejoice, and how eagerly would he run after Thee, mindful of all Thy benefits ! He would seek nothing more dear, profess nothing more blessed, follow nothing more eagerly, than to serve Thy love. For in loving Thee he would feel no burthen, for love beareth all burthens. And therefore those who complain of the burthen, prove that they are but little advanced in love. To

serve Thee from love is indeed most pleasant, and a solace of toil. For love looks not to its own advantage, nor fears to suffer inconvenience ; but seeketh in all things Thy good pleasure.

3. O how sweet a thing is Thy love, O CHRIST ! How pleasantly it sounds ! how sweetly it enters ! how strongly does it hold, and how fast doth it bind ! Oh ! would that it might bind me for ever to Thy service, and wholly fill me, and make me subject to Him, nay, all His own. For then I am most free, when captivated by Thy love, and divested of, and estranged from all self-love.

I am Thy servant, O LORD ; Thine, I say, whom Thou hast bought. I am freely Thine, nor ashamed to be not mine own. I wish not to have the disposal of myself ; aid me that I may be free from all self-will. Do Thou breathe upon me, and enkindle ; rouse up the little spark, and my heart shall burn, and become pure, and bright, and lovely : for Thy love banisheth all vice, and consumeth every sin. Do Thou keep fast the bonds of love, and so shall my poor service stand.

4. I know that my service bringeth no profit to Thee ; yet it advantageth me to do what I know is grateful unto Thee. Would

that I could do this, and not keep silence ; that I could declare and not hide Thy works. For when shall I be worthy enough to meditate on all the benefits that Thou hast conferred upon me? Thou hast shown great mercy, O LORD, unto Thy servant ; but I, alas ! have not returned thanks unto Thee, as Thou hast richly deserved. And therefore have pains and sorrows of heart taken hold upon me, and I cannot repay Thy benefits, so many and so great.

Would that I could even once thank Thee worthily and entirely for them all. But what can come out from him, in whom there is nothing? From an empty vessel nothing can be poured forth. What then shall I do? I must give something, since none may appear empty before Thee ; for Thou canst not bear ingratitude.

5. O that I were possessed of but one thing in the world which I could offer Thee, and which would be acceptable in Thy sight! What wouldest Thou have, Beloved LORD? for doubtless Thou needest not my goods. Why demandest Thou then an offering from me? None is richer than Thou; and yet dost Thou ask something from me? I would (Thou saith) have thee wholly. For this is expedient for thee if thou wouldest deserve

My grace. I will give thee grace, and thou shalt return Me thanks, and thus we will maintain a mutual and continual love between us. Give thyself to Me, and thou hast given all.

O JESUS, Fount of all Good, Fountain of Life, Fountain of Grace, Fountain of Sweetness, Fountain of Eternal Wisdom, now, most merciful, pour forth the gift of heavenly grace, and teach me ever to thank Thee, and above all to give myself up to Thee, because this is the dearest gift I can make. This I understand, and to this I agree. Take me, behold I am wholly Thine, and that I have is Thine. One thing there is I cannot give Thee ; and what is that ?

It is my sin which is all mine own, and is not therefore to be imputed unto Thee. Sin is all mine, and every failing in me is to be attributed to it alone ; but unto Thee be glory and thanksgiving for all Thy benefits.

6. But now to bring them to remembrance I will call to mind a few of Thy benefits out of many, even such as move me and are most prominent. For time does not allow nor thought avail to search through all. Their number exceeds all measure, their greatness surpasses thought, and their worth is above all price. For they cannot be bought, in

that they are freely given, and no return is asked but grateful thanks ; but from the unthankful all shall be taken away.

7. First then, I thank Thee, O LORD my GOD, Creator of all things, for that Thou hast deigned to create me a rational man, and surpassing all the works of Thy hands, to create in me a soul made after Thine own image and likeness. This is the first and great benefit given me of Thy free goodness. For I made not myself, but Thou madest me, introducing me into the world by the parents whom Thou madest to perform Thy will.

And behold I am more excellent in body than any other creature, and preferred above all beasts and fowls of the air, because made after the image of GOD, capable of eternal wisdom, and a partaker by nature of light uncreated and truth unchangeable.

For all therefore that I am, for life, and understanding, I return Thee unceasing thanks, wishing and praying that all creatures also in heaven and on earth may praise and exalt Thy wonderful Name for ever. I bless Thee, O FATHER and LORD of heaven and earth, Who hast created all things out of nothing by Thy Only Begotten SON in the HOLY SPIRIT. Of Thy power and free will and not from any necessity hast Thou created

all things to make Thy might known unto the sons of men ; and well hast Thou disposed this visible world by Thy invisible wisdom coeternal with Thyself.

May every creature bless Thee and be subject to Thee in all things, and made to minister unto the human race. For when Thou commandest, the Heavens give rain at fitting seasons, and the earth bringeth forth fruit in abundance. The sun and the moon shine fair upon the earth, and the stars in their order move in the night season.

The fountains are full, the rivers flow, and fishes of divers kinds swim in the waters. The birds of the air fly through the heaven and sing, the goats, and the heifers, and the harts leap on the mountains. The sheep and all cattle rejoice in goodly pastures, and the different animals traverse the forests. The meadows are green, and the plains are decked with flowers, and all the trees of the woods put forth leaves and fruits. These are Thy works, O GOD, Who alone doest great wonders.

8. The second benefit shown me is the mystery of the Incarnation, the work of Redemption, and the price of our salvation, the special fruit of Thy Passion and Death. O mighty work of mercy, work of most excellent

charity, of greatest humility, and of singular patience! Truly man deserved not this, this none of the Angels could accomplish, although the Prophets marvelled; this the Apostles saw and taught, this all the faithful have received, and this above all the elect love and worship.

This benefit fully considered inflames the desire, excites the heart, nourishes devotion, enlightens the mind, cleanses the affections, draws up to Heaven, withdraws from the world, leads and unites the soul to CHRIST. This gift is far above all measure greater than the former, yet He is One who hath made and given both unto us, even JESUS CHRIST, our LORD GOD.

For it would have profited me nothing to have been born into this world had I not been to be redeemed by the price of His precious Blood. Grace therefore came to my assistance, Thy divine mercy more and more increased, and plenteous redemption was poured forth, for when nature was corrupted it could never be repaired without the aid of its Creator.

O, FATHER of Mercies, and GOD of all consolation, Thou deliverest up Thy Son to ransom a lost slave. O! wonderful condescension of mercy towards us,

which neither men nor angels can ever unfold.

9. O most sweet JESUS, beginning and end of our salvation, Thou alone knowest, Thou alone canst bring aid to us who are wretched and condemned. For Thou deignedst to appear before man in the most humble and abject form of a servant, and from Thy sole pitying love alone receivedst the sentence of cruel death for us mortal worms. O JESUS, Fountain of goodness and mercy, Light of eternal light, and spotless mirror of the Majesty of GOD, inflame my heart by the meditation of this ineffable benefit which Thou pleasest to confer on me and all the world. This benefit is general as was the first, and sufficient for the salvation of all, but the fruit thereof is not effectual to all because of the unbelief and wickedness of many. But it is indeed salutary and profitable to Thy elect for whom all things were created, and again made new in Thee, O JESU CHRIST !

O good JESU, how great benefits didst Thou bestow upon us in Thy humanity? Thou wast made our brother and our flesh, that we might be reputed the sons of GOD, and have access by Thee to the FATHER, Whose offended justice none could appease but Thou, of Whom Himself said, " This is

My beloved SON, in Whom I am well pleased."

Happy is the soul that diligently calls to mind, vehemently loves, and worthily reverences the sacraments of our redemption, and gives thanks to Thee for all, and trusts more to Thy will than her own weak sense. For none is able of himself to search out this mystery, nor is it grasped by human wisdom, but rather by the strength of faith and intuition of a pure heart is it enlightened from above. Blessed is he, who is worthy to receive through grace, what the wise men of the world could not learn by the light of nature.

O JESU, Wisdom of the FATHER, make me to understand in the light of faith this great and wondrous mystery of Thy Incarnation. Because in this lies all the sweetness of our salvation, the highest love abounds, and the fulness of Thy unsearchable wisdom shines forth.

Let Thy servant advance more and more in the increase of virtues, and the performance of good works, and be instructed more and more in the memorable secret of Thy Incarnation, and in the depths of Thy sacred passion, until I am altogether drawn onwards to Thy inner depths. For the manifestation of so great love and mercy is a

very deep abyss, yea a divine and vast ocean which cannot be passed over, and in which the spiritual fishes whom Thou hast inclosed in the net of faith, swim to and fro.

10. Oh ! may such great love and sweetness, so great humility and kindness, ever live in my remembrance, and may somewhat of the mystery of the Incarnation and Passion appear and be intermingled in every sacrifice of prayer, and every exercise of devotion, to be offered as purest frankincense and most sweet balsam with a rich odour to GOD the FATHER. Let now those who have been redeemed of the LORD, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy, sing with me a canticle of Divine praise, and sing a hymn of mental rejoicing with thanksgiving unto Him. And let all the angels standing round the throne fall upon their faces, and adore the Lamb of GOD Who has taken away the sin of the world, saying,

Praise and honour belong unto Thee, O LORD. To Thee be ascribed blessing and honour, thanksgiving and the voice of praise, power and might, majesty and wisdom, to Thee, our LORD GOD, JESUS CHRIST, for ever and ever. Amen.

11. The third benefit, not inferior to those that have gone before, is the grace of justifi-

cation, by which Thou hast mercifully drawn me to conversion and amendment of life ; bestowing upon me penitency for sins, the hope of pardon, and a resolve to do well, and serve Thee for ever.

Considering this, the blessed Apostle S. Paul exhorts his disciples not to be ungrateful for so great a benefit, but being mindful of the heavenly grace, to strive to return thanks worthy their high calling. "Ye see," says he, "your calling, brethren : that not many wise men, not many mighty men are called ; but GOD hath chosen the weak things of this world."

These things I now consider in regard to myself, who, weak and contemptible in this world, have been snatched by Thy holy calling from this shipwreck, to be united with Thy fellowship of saints to serve Thee. And that I might not go back, I have freely bound myself with a vow, which, verily, I attribute not to my own merits, but to Thy Providence.

For this do I greatly praise and bless Thee, for that Thou hast vouchsafed to call me by Thy grace, to give me a good will, and to cast from me the burthen of sins. For Thou hast put me under Thy sweet yoke, softening my mind with the unction of Thy Spirit,

Whom the world knoweth not, and seeth not, neither can understand. Preserve in me this good will, O merciful LORD, and increase the gifts of Thy grace, as long as I am in this visible world.

I know that this calling is a great benefit, which is not given to all, but to those for whom it is prepared of the FATHER, since it is not of him that willeth or of him that runneth, but of GOD that showeth mercy, so that every mouth that speaketh vain things may be stopped, and every man be subject unto Thee, and that no flesh may glory in Thy sight, nor claim for itself anything as of its own merits, or good works. For hadst Thou dealt with me according to Thy justice, I should ere now have been numbered with those who are in hell. But Thy goodness, O LORD, hath spared me, and hast given me opportunity of pardon, that I might not become like the son of eternal perdition.

Therefore I am bound to render Thee greater praise for so mighty a benefit, and would that I could repay it in worthy words and acts all the days of my life! And I beseech Thee that for thanks Thou wouldst accept my poor services, by which I desire to deserve Thee, and which I offer to Thee out of love, that the bounden duty of my service

may spring from the root of and finally tend to Thy good pleasure and honour ; and that so my heart may be never turned away from love of Thee : but that my soul and body may flourish and persevere in Thy most holy service, as long as there is any breath within me, and I have any use of my senses or any remembrance of Thee.

May Thy praise never depart from my mouth nor the abundance of Thy benefits from my heart. But if Thy servant liveth many years—even if he were to live a hundred, or a thousand, yet may he not be lukewarm, or kept from serving Thee in humility and subjection ; but I will as freely and devoutly serve Thee, as in that hour and day when my heart was first touched, and, strengthened by Thee, follow Thee, the only LORD, with pure and entire mind.

Nor shall any coming weakness or adversity hinder this my resolve ; but as I now feel, and in Thy hearing, my GOD, propose, so also by Thy aid I desire to fulfil what has once gone out of my lips. But if this resolution be broken through any frailty or infirmity, since no man upon earth is so righteous as to live and sin not, yet will I not despair, nor let Thee go, but forthwith bend the knees of my heart, and with much con-

trition and tears, offer to Thee my sorrowful and wounded conscience, to be made whole with the medicine of Thy grace, and to be fixed more strongly than before in the purpose I have taken. I will not repent of my good endeavour; nay, I will rather give thanks unto Thee, in that I have once been enabled to gain this much,—even my resolution to fight for ever under Thy banners.

Oh! Almighty and merciful GOD, Who createdst me out of nothing, and Who knewest from the beginning the weakness and fall of man, Thou canst most mercifully pardon all my transgressions, and make up all that I have left undone, restore all I have lost, heal the diseased, purify the unclean, enlighten such as are in darkness, bow down the lofty, rekindle the extinct, rebuild what was broken down, recover the negligent, reprove the depraved, level the uneven, restrain the curious, collect the scattered, compose the disordered, yea, change the whole condition of my mind for the better, that so my former resolve may fail in nothing; but that even the occasions of sin may co-operate for good to me, who am humbly prostrate at Thy feet. Lo! this is the change of the right hand of GOD Most High: this His heavenly visita-

tion; this the manifold bestowal of His Divine mercy.

12. Accept also as a thank-offering all the devout services of the Holy Church, with the unanimous concord of all the heavenly court. And may all the saints from the beginning of the world, who have been enlightened and called by Thy grace, and may all faithful Christians of every people, and tongue, and nation who now are, and have been before us, and that shall come after us, celebrate alike, and praise together Thy most sweet and glorious Name, which is above every name blessed for ever. Let them again and again repeat with joy immense, universal praises to Thy most worthy Name. Let them repeat them as many times as there are stars in Heaven, fishes in the sea, blades of grass on the earth, or letters in the Bible.

And when they have done all this, and humbly offered up all for me, I will then confess to Thee that even yet they have fallen short of Thy ineffable praise which I would fain magnify with all my strength, and exalt above all measure until I attain to those heavenly praises which the voices of mortal men are not able now to reach nor set forth.

13. Thou seest now, O my soul, the greatness and preciousness of the benefits of thy Creator and Redeemer, the LORD thy GOD, to thank Whom even all created beings are insufficient, whom He hath created for the glory and praise of His blessed Name, Who verily needs no glory, for that He is alone sufficient for Himself, and He Who is His own glory. Behold from their multitude I could not set all His benefits before thine eyes, but out of the mighty number I have chosen three precious gifts as did the Magi when they made their offerings unto the LORD, and in them all the rest may be included. For every benefit, if thou considerest, is either of nature or of grace, or of superexcellence, and whatever there is may be readily referred to one of these three. In Creation thou hast the benefit of nature, in Redemption of superexcellence, in Justification the gift of grace.

For all and each of these, glory be to Thee, HOLY TRINITY, one co-equal Godhead as it was before all worlds, now is, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

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