

Thomas a Kempis - THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

by Thomas a Kempis

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FOREWORD

Let's face it, trying to be Christ in today's world is tough!

I imagine every Christian would agree the greatest achievement any person may accomplish in this life is to be like Jesus Christ. Many would say in this modern world it is not possible; or that only a saintly few may reach this goal. After all, we live in a materialistic, secular world so the ordinary person can't be expected to become like Christ, right?

WRONG!!!

Every Christian has for a destiny to be changed into the image of his Lord. In fact, I believe this book, Imitation of Christ, is an important resource for anyone to achieve that transformation. I hope you find, after reading Imitation of Christ, that being Christ in your world is not only a desirable goal, it is a goal which may be relatively easily achieved.

However, the big problem is most books on the subject are filled with theological doublespeak and not enough actual suggestions for the everyday person to use in becoming more Christ-like. You practically had to be a theologian to figure it out.

Sound at all familiar? I know from experience - I have been looking for a book written in understandable, straightforward language for years.

Then one night I dreamt about a book that had belonged to my grandfather. It was a book he had kept on his nightstand and, I am told, he would often pick it up to read a little before bed. In fact, the morning he passed away, I found that book on his nightstand next to his bed. My grandmother later gave me that book.

When I awoke from my dream, I knew I had to review the book again. I hadn't looked at it in years. I too had kept it next to my bed. But after a while of not looking at it, I had put it away somewhere. I just couldn't remember where! I looked every where in my room, in my closets, in my bookcases and in the basement. I finally gave up - for the moment. The next day I repeated my search - again to no avail!

I was so disappointed! I knew it was the right time to read this book again. I remembered

it contained centuries old advice to help a person to be a better Christian.

I just had to find it. Every night I spent time trying to find that book. Days past, weeks past -- I still could not find my grandfather's book.

So I finally broke down and began to search local book stores and my library. It took quite some time but I was finally able to get my hands on another copy.

I found re-reading this book so rewarding that I decided to update the translation, to make it more readable. Together with E Publishing Enterprises, LLC I published it to it readily available for others. I hope you enjoy it and find it as beneficial to your faith as I have.

Sincerely,

F. Keats Boyd, III

Editor & Publisher

If you enjoy this book you may also enjoy E Publishing Enterprises, LLC's traditional version of *Imitation of Christ*.

Please visit our website at www.christinyourworld.com

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The treatise "Of the Imitation of Christ" appears to have been originally written in Latin early in the fifteenth century. Its exact date and its authorship are still a matter of debate. Manuscripts of the Latin version survive in considerable numbers all over Western Europe, and they, with the vast list of translations and of printed editions, testify to its almost unparalleled popularity. One scribe attributes it to St. Bernard of Clairvaux; but the fact that it contains a quotation from St. Francis of Assisi, who was born thirty years after the death of St. Bernard, disposes of this theory. In England there exist many manuscripts of the first three books, called "Musica Ecclesiastica," frequently ascribed to the English mystic Walter Hilton. But Hilton seems to have died in 1395, and there is no evidence of the existence of the work before 1400. Many manuscripts scattered throughout Europe ascribe the book to Jeanle Charlier de Gerson, the great Chancellor of the University of Paris, who was a leading figure in the Church in the earlier part of the fifteenth century. The most probable author, however, especially when the internal evidence is considered, is Thomas Haemmerlein, known also as Thomas a Kempis, from his native town of Kempen, near the Rhine, about forty miles north of Cologne. Haemmerlein, who was born in 1379 or 1380, was a member of the order of the Brothers of Common Life, and spent the last seventy years of his life at Mount St. Agnes, a monastery of Augustinian canons in the diocese of Utrecht. Here he died on July 26, 1471, after an uneventful life spent in copying manuscripts, reading, and composing, and in the peaceful routine of monastic piety.

With the exception of the Bible, no Christian writing has had so wide a vogue or so sustained a popularity as this. And yet, in one sense, it is hardly an original work at all. Its structure it owes largely to the writings of the medieval mystics, and its ideas and phrases are a mosaic from the Bible and the Fathers of the early Church. But these elements are interwoven with such delicate skill and a religious feeling at once so ardent and so sound that it promises to remain, what it has been for five hundred years, the supreme call and guide to spiritual aspiration.

THE FIRST BOOK

ADMONITIONS PROFITABLE FOR THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

CHAPTER I

Of the imitation of Christ, and of contempt of the world and all its vanities

1. He that follows me shall not walk in darkness(1), says the Lord. There are the words of Christ; and they teach us how far we must imitate His life and character, if we seek true illumination, and deliverance from all blindness of heart. Let it be our most earnest study, therefore, to dwell upon the life of Jesus Christ.

2. His teaching surpasses all teaching of holy men, and such as have His Spirit find therein the hidden manna.(2) But there are many who, though they frequently hear the Gospel, yet feel but little longing after it, because they have not the mind of Christ. He, therefore, that will fully and with true wisdom understand the words of Christ, let him strive to conform his whole life to that mind of Christ.

3. What does it profit you to enter into deep discussion concerning the Holy Trinity, if you lack humility, and be thus displeasing to the Trinity? For verily it is not deep words that make a man holy and upright; it is a good life which makes a man dear to God. I had rather feel contrition than be skillful in the definition thereof. If you know the whole Bible, and the sayings of all the philosophers, what should all this profit you without the love and grace of God? Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, save to love God, and Him only to serve. That is the highest wisdom, to cast the world behind us, and to reach forward to the heavenly kingdom.

4. It is vanity then to seek after, and to trust in, the riches that shall perish. It is vanity, too, to covet honors, and to lift up ourselves on high. It is vanity to follow the desires of the flesh and be led by them, for this shall bring misery at the last. It is vanity to desire a long life, and to have little care for a good life. It is vanity to take thought only for the life which now is, and not to look forward to the things which shall be hereafter. It is vanity to love that which quickly passes away, and not to hasten where eternal joy abides.

5. Always be mindful of the saying,(3) The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. Strive, therefore, to turn away your heart from the love of the things that are seen, and to set it upon the things that are not seen. For they who follow after their own fleshly lusts, defile the conscience, and destroy the grace of God.

(1) John viii. 12. (2) Revelations ii. 17.

(3) Ecclesiastes i. 8.

CHAPTER II

Of thinking humbly of oneself

1. There is naturally in every man a desire to know, but what profits knowledge without the fear of God? Better of a surety is a lowly peasant who serves God, than a proud philosopher who watches the stars and neglects the knowledge of himself. He who knows himself well is vile in his own sight; neither regards he the praises of men. If I knew all the things that are in the world, and were not in charity, what should it help me before God, who is to judge me according to my deeds?

2. Rest from inordinate desire of knowledge, for therein is found much distraction and deceit. Those who have knowledge desire to appear learned, and to be called wise. Many things there are to know which profits little or nothing to the soul. And foolish out of measure is he who attends upon other things rather than those which serve to his soul's health. Many words satisfy not the soul, but a good life refreshes the mind, and a pure conscience gives great confidence towards God.

3. The greater and more complete your knowledge, the more severely shalt you be judged, unless you have lived holily. Therefore be not lifted up by any skill or knowledge that you have; but rather fear concerning the knowledge which is given to you. If it seems to you that you know many things, and understand them well, know also that there are many more things which you know not. Be not high-minded, but rather confess thine ignorance. Why do you desire to lift yourself above another, when there are found many more learned and more skilled in the Scripture than thou? If you wilt know and learn anything with profit, love to be yourself unknown and to be counted for nothing.

4. That is the highest and most profitable lesson, when a man truly knows and judges lowly of himself. To account nothing of one's self, and to think always kindly and highly of others, this is great and perfect wisdom. Even should you see your neighbor sin openly and grievously, yet you ought not to reckon yourself better than he, for you know not how long you shalt keep thine integrity. All of us are weak and frail; hold you no man more frail than yourself.

CHAPTER III

Of the knowledge of truth

1. Happy is the man whom Truth by itself does teach, not by figures and transient words, but as it is in itself.(1) Our own judgement and feelings often deceive us, and we discern but little of the truth. What does it profit to argue about hidden and dark things, concerning which we shall not be even reprov'd in the judgement, because we knew them not? Oh, grievous folly, to neglect the things which are profitable and necessary, and to give our minds to things which are curious and hurtful! Having eyes, we see not.

2. And what have we to do with talk about genus and species! He to whom the Eternal Word speaks is free from multiplied questioning. From this One Word are all things, and all things speak of Him; and this is the Beginning which also speaks to us.(2) No man without Him understands or rightly judges. The man to whom all things are one, who brings all things to one, who sees all things in one, he is able to remain steadfast of spirit, and at rest in God. O God, you are the Truth, make me one with You in everlasting love. It often fatigues me to read and listen to many things; in You is all that I wish for and desire. Let all the doctors hold their peace; let all creation keep silence before You: speak to me alone.

3. The more a man has unity and simplicity in himself, the more things and the deeper things he understands; and that without labor, because he receives the light of understanding from above. The spirit which is pure, sincere, and steadfast, is not distracted though it has many works to do, because it does all things to the honor of God, and strives to be free from all thoughts of self-seeking. Who is so full of hindrance and annoyance to you as thine own undisciplined heart? A man who is good and devout arranges beforehand within his own heart the works which he has to do abroad; and so is not drawn away by the desires of his evil will, but subjects everything to the judgement of right reason. Who has a harder battle to fight than he who strives for self-mastery? And this should be our endeavor, even to master self, and thus daily to grow stronger than self, and go on unto perfection.

4. All perfection has some imperfection joined to it in this life, and all our power of sight is not without some darkness. A lowly knowledge of yourself is a surer way to God than the deep searching of man's learning. Not that learning is to be blamed, nor the taking account of anything that is good; but a good conscience and a holy life is better than all. And because many seek knowledge rather than good living, therefore they go astray, and bear little or no fruit.

5. O if they would give that diligence to the rooting out of vice and the planting of virtue which they give unto vain questions; there had not been so many evil doings and stumbling-blocks among the laity, nor such ill living among houses of religion. Of a surety, at the Day of Judgement it will be demanded of us, not what we have read, but what we have done; not how well we have spoken, but how holily we have lived. Tell me, where now are all those masters and teachers, whom you know well, whilst they were yet with you, and flourished in learning? Their stalls are now filled by others, who perhaps never have one thought concerning them. Whilst they lived they seemed to be somewhat, but now no one speaks of them.

6. Oh how quickly passes the glory of the world away! Would that their life and knowledge had agreed together! For then would they have read and inquired unto good purpose. How many perish through empty learning in this world, who care little for serving God. And because they love to be great more than to be humble, therefore they "have become vain in their imaginations." He only is truly great, who has great charity. He is truly great who deems himself small, and counts all height of honor as nothing. He is the truly wise man, who counts all earthly things as dung that he may win Christ. And he is the truly learned man, who does the will of God, and forsakes his own will.

(1) Psalm xciv. 12; Numbers xii. 8. (2) John viii. 25 (Vulg.).

CHAPTER IV

Of prudence in action

1. We must not trust every word of others or feeling within ourselves, but cautiously and patiently try the matter, whether it be of God. Unhappily we are so weak that we find it easier to believe and speak evil of others, rather than good. But they that are perfect, do not give ready heed to every news-bearer, for they know man's weakness that it is prone to evil and unstable in words.

2. This is great wisdom, not to be hasty in action, or stubborn in our own opinions. A part of this wisdom also is not to believe every word we hear, nor to tell others all that we hear, even though we believe it. Take counsel with a man who is wise and of a good conscience; and seek to be instructed by one better than yourself, rather than follow thine own inventions. A good life makes a man wise toward God, and gives him experience in many things. The more humble a man is in himself, and the more obedient towards God, the wiser will he be in all things, and the more shall his soul be at peace.

CHAPTER V

Of the reading of Holy Scriptures

1. It is Truth which we must look for in Holy Writ, not cunning of words. All Scripture ought to be read in the spirit in which it was written. We must rather seek for what is profitable in Scripture, than for what ministers to subtlety in discourse. Therefore we ought to read books which are devotional and simple, as well as those which are deep and difficult. And let not the weight of the writer be a stumbling-block to you, whether he be of little or much learning, but let the love of the pure Truth draw you to read. Ask not, who has said this or that but look to what he says.

2. Men pass away, but the truth of the Lord endures for ever. Without respect of persons God speaks to us in divers manners. Our own curiosity often hinders us in the readings of holy writings, when we seek to understand and discuss, where we should pass simply on. If you would profit by your reading, read humbly, simply, honestly, and not desiring to win a character for learning. Ask freely, and hear in silence the words of holy men; nor be displeased at the hard sayings of older men than thou, for they are not uttered without cause.

CHAPTER VI

Of inordinate affections

1. Whensoever a man desires aught above measure, immediately he becomes restless. The proud and the avaricious man are never at rest; while the poor and lowly of heart abide in the multitude of peace. The man who is not yet wholly dead to self, is soon tempted, and is overcome in small and trifling matters. It is hard for him who is weak in spirit, and still in part carnal and inclined to the pleasures of sense, to withdraw himself altogether from earthly desires. And therefore, when he withdraws himself from these, he is often sad, and easily angered too if any oppose his will.

2. But if, on the other hand, he yield to his inclination, immediately he is weighed down by the condemnation of his conscience; for that he has followed his own desire, and yet in no way attained the peace which he hoped for. For true peace of heart is to be found in resisting passion, not in yielding to it. And therefore there is no peace in the heart of a man who is carnal, nor in him who is given up to the things that are without him, but only in him who is fervent towards God and living the life of the Spirit.

CHAPTER VII

Of fleeing from vain hope and pride

1. Vain is the life of that man who puts his trust in men or in any created Thing. Be not ashamed to be the servant of others for the love of Jesus Christ, and to be reckoned poor in this life. Rest not upon yourself, but build your hope in God. Do what lies in your power, and God will help your good intent. Trust not in your learning, nor in the cleverness of any that lives, but rather trust in the favor of God, who resists the proud and gives grace to the humble.

2. Boast not yourself in your riches if you have them, nor in your friends if they be powerful, but in God, who gives all things, and in addition to all things desires to give even Himself. Be not lifted up because of your strength or beauty of body, for with only a slight sickness it will fail and wither away. Be not vain of your skilfulness or ability, lest you displease God, from whom comes every good gift which we have.

3. Count not yourself better than others, lest perchance you appear worse in the sight of God, who knows what is in man. Be not proud of your good works, for God's judgments are of another sort than the judgments of man, and what pleases man is oft times displeasing to Him. If you have any good, believe that other have more, and so you may preserve your humility. It is no harm to you if you place yourself below all others; but it is great harm if you place yourself above even one. Peace is ever with the humble man, but in the heart of the proud there is envy and continual wrath.

CHAPTER VIII

Of the danger of too much familiarity

1. Open not thine heart to every man, but deal with one who is wise and fears God. Be seldom with the young and with strangers. Be not a flatterer of the rich; nor willingly seek the society of the great. Let your company be the humble and simple, the devout and the gentle, and let your discourse be concerning things which edify. Be not familiar with any woman, but commend all good women alike unto God. Choose for your companions God and His Angels only, and flee from the notice of men.

2. We must love all men, but not make close companions of all. It sometimes falls out that one who is unknown to us is highly regarded through good report of him, whose actual person is nevertheless unpleasing to those who behold it. We sometimes think to please others by our intimacy, and forthwith displease them the more by the faultiness of character which they perceive in us.

CHAPTER IX

Of obedience and subjection

1. It is verily a great thing to live in obedience, to be under authority, and not to be at our own disposal. Far safer is it to live in subjection than in a place of authority. Many are in obedience from necessity rather than from love; these take it amiss, and repine for small cause. Nor will they gain freedom of spirit, unless with all their heart they submit themselves for the love of God. Though you run hither and thither, you wilt not find peace, save in humble subjection to the authority of him who is set over you. Fancies about places and change of them have deceived many.

2. True it is that every man willingly follows his own bent, and is the more inclined to those who agree with him. But if Christ is amongst us, then it is necessary that we sometimes yield up our own opinion for the sake of peace. Who is so wise as to have perfect knowledge of all things? Therefore trust not too much to thine own opinion, but be ready also to hear the opinions of others. Though thine own opinion be good, yet if for the love of God you forgo it, and follow that of another, you shalt the more profit thereby.

3. Ofttimes I have heard that it is safer to hearken and to receive counsel than to give it. It may also come to pass that each opinion may be good; but to refuse to hearken to others when reason or occasion requires it, is a mark of pride or wilfulness.

CHAPTER X

Of the danger of superfluity of words

1. Avoid as far as you can the tumult of men; for talk concerning worldly things, though it be innocently undertaken, is a hindrance, so quickly are we led captive and defiled by vanity. Many a time I wish that I had held my peace, and had not gone amongst men. But why do we talk and gossip so continually, seeing that we so rarely resume our silence without some hurt done to our conscience? We like talking so much because we hope by our conversations to gain some mutual comfort, and because we seek to refresh our wearied spirits by variety of thoughts. And we very willingly talk and think of those things which we love or desire, or else of those which we most dislike.

2. But alas! it is often to no purpose and in vain. For this outward consolation is no small hindrance to the inner comfort which comes from God. Therefore must we watch and pray that time pass not idly away. If it be right and desirable for you to speak, speak things which are to edification. Evil custom and neglect of our real profit tend much to make us heedless of watching over our lips. Nevertheless, devout conversation on spiritual things helps not a little to spiritual progress, most of all where those of kindred mind and spirit find their ground of fellowship in God.

CHAPTER XI

Of seeking peace of mind and of spiritual progress

1. We may enjoy abundance of peace if we refrain from busying ourselves with the sayings and doings of others, and things which concern not ourselves. How can he abide long time in peace who occupies himself with other men's matters, and with things without himself, and meanwhile pays little or rare heed to the self within? Blessed are the single-hearted, for they shall have abundance of peace.

2. How came it to pass that many of the Saints were so perfect, so contemplative of Divine things? Because they steadfastly sought to mortify themselves from all worldly desires, and so were enabled to cling with their whole heart to God, and be free and at leisure for the thought of Him. We are too much occupied with our own affections, and too anxious about transitory things. Seldom, too, do we entirely conquer even a single fault, nor are we zealous for daily growth in grace. And so we remain lukewarm and unspiritual.

3. Were we fully watchful of ourselves, and not bound in spirit to outward things, then might we be wise unto salvation, and make progress in Divine contemplation. Our great and grievous stumbling-block is that, not being freed from our affections and desires, we strive not to enter into the perfect way of the Saints. And when even a little trouble befalls us, too quickly are we cast down, and fly to the world to give us comfort.

4. If we would quit ourselves like men, and strive to stand firm in battle, then should we see the Lord helping us from Heaven. For He Himself is always ready to help those who strive and who trust in Him; yea, He provides for us occasions for striving, to the end that we may win the victory. If we look upon our progress in religion as a progress only in outward observances and forms, our devoutness will soon come to an end. But let us lay the axe to the very root of our life, that, being cleansed from affections, we may possess our souls in peace.

5. If each year should see one fault rooted out from us, we should go quickly on to perfection. But on the contrary, we often feel that we were better and holier in the beginning of our conversion than after many years of profession. Zeal and progress ought to increase day by day; yet now it seems a great thing if one is able to retain some portion of his first ardor. If we would put some slight stress on ourselves at the beginning, then afterwards we should be able to do all things with ease and joy.

6. It is a hard thing to break through a habit, and a yet harder thing to go contrary to our own will.

Yet if you overcome not slight and easy obstacles, how shalt you overcome greater ones? Withstand your will at the beginning, and unlearn an evil habit, lest it lead you little by little into worse difficulties. Oh, if you know what peace to yourself your holy life should bring to yourself, and what joy to others, I believe you would be more zealous for spiritual profit.

CHAPTER XII

Of the uses of adversity

1. It is good for us that we sometimes have sorrows and adversities, for they often make a man lay to heart that he is only a stranger and sojourner, and may not put his trust in any worldly thing. It is good that we sometimes endure contradictions, and are hardly and unfairly judged, when we do and mean what is good. For these things help us to be humble, and shield us from vain-glory. For then we seek the more earnestly the witness of God, when men speak evil of us falsely, and give us no credit for good.

2. Therefore ought a man to rest wholly upon God, so that he needs not seek much comfort at the hand of men. When a man who fears God is afflicted or tried or oppressed with evil thoughts, then he sees that God is the more necessary unto him, since without God he can do no good thing. Then he is heavy of heart, he groans, he cries out for the very discontentedness of his heart. Then he grows weary of life, and would fain depart and be with Christ. By all this he is taught that in the world there can be no perfect security or fulness of peace.

CHAPTER XIII

Of resisting temptation

1. So long as we live in the world, we can not be without trouble and trial. Wherefore it is written in Job, The life of man upon the earth is a trial.(1) And therefore ought each of us to give heed concerning trials and temptations, and watch unto prayer, lest the devil find occasion to deceive; for he never sleeps, but goes about seeking whom he may devour. No man is so perfect in holiness that he has never temptations, nor can we ever be wholly free from them.

2. Yet, notwithstanding, temptations turn greatly unto our profit, even though they be great and hard to bear; for through them we are humbled, purified, and instructed. All Saints have passed through much tribulation and temptation, and have profited thereby. And they who endured not temptation became reprobate and fell away. There is no position so sacred, no place so secret, that it is without temptations and adversities.

3. There is no man wholly free from temptations so long as he lives, because we have the root of temptation within ourselves, in that we are born in concupiscence. One temptation or sorrow passes away, and another comes; and always we shall have somewhat to suffer, for we have fallen from perfect happiness. Many who seek to fly from temptations fall yet more deeply into them. By flight alone we cannot overcome, but by endurance and true humility we are made stronger than all our enemies.

4. He who only resists outwardly and pulls not up by the root, shall profit little; nay, rather temptations will return to him the more quickly, and will be the more terrible. Little by little, through patience and longsuffering, you shalt conquer by the help of God, rather than by violence and thine own strength of will. In the midst of temptation often seek counsel; and deal not hardly with one who is tempted, but comfort and strengthen him as you would have done unto yourself.

5. The beginning of all temptations to evil is instability of temper and want of trust in God; for even as a ship without a helm is tossed about by the waves, so is a man who is careless and infirm of purpose tempted, now on this side, now on that. As fire tests iron, so does temptation the upright man. Oftentimes we know not what strength we have; but temptation reveals to us what we are. Nevertheless, we must watch, especially in the beginnings of temptation; for then is the foe the more easily mastered, when he is not suffered to enter within the mind, but is met outside the door as soon as he has knocked. Wherefore one saith,

Check the beginnings; once you mightn't have cured,
But now 'this past your skill, too long has it endured.

For first comes to the mind the simple suggestion, then the strong imagination, afterwards pleasure, evil affection, assent. And so little by little the enemy enters in altogether, because he was not resisted at the beginning. And the longer a man delays his resistance, the weaker he grows, and the stronger grows the enemy against him.

6. Some men suffer their most grievous temptations in the beginning of their conversion, some at the end. Some are sorely tried their whole life long. Some there are who are tempted but lightly, according to the wisdom and justice of the ordering of God, who knows the character and circumstances of men, and orders all things for the welfare of His elect.

7. Therefore we ought not to despair when we are tempted, but the more fervently should cry unto God, that He will vouchsafe to help us in all our tribulation; and that He will, as St. Paul saith, with the temptation make a way to escape that we may be able to bear it.(2) Let us therefore humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God in all temptation and trouble, for He will save and exult such as are of an humble spirit.

8. In temptations and troubles a man is proved, what progress he has made, and therein is his reward the greater, and his virtue does the more appear. Nor is it a great thing if a man be devout and zealous so long as he suffers no affliction; but if he behave himself patiently in the time of adversity, then there is hope of great progress. Some are kept safe from great temptations, but are overtaken in those which are little and common, that the humiliation may teach them not to trust to themselves in great things, being weak in small things.

(1) Job vii. I (Vulg.). (2) I Corinthians x. 13.

CHAPTER XIV

On avoiding rash judgement

1. Look well unto yourself, and beware that you judge not the doings of others. In judging others a man labors in vain; he often errs, and easily falls into sin; but in judging and examining himself he always labors to good purpose. According as a matter touches our fancy, so oftentimes do we judge of it; for easily do we fail of true judgement because of our own personal feeling. If God were always the sole object of our desire, we should the less easily be troubled by the erring judgement of our fancy.

2. But often some secret thought lurking within us, or even some outward circumstance, turns us aside. Many are secretly seeking their own ends in what they do, yet know it not. They seem to live in good peace of mind so long as things go well with them, and according to their desires, but if their desires be frustrated and broken, immediately they are shaken and displeased. Diversity of feelings and opinions very often brings about dissensions between friends, between countrymen, between religious and godly men.

3. Established custom is not easily relinquished, and no man is very easily led to see with the eyes of another. If you rest more upon your own reason or experience than upon the power of Jesus Christ, your light shall come slowly and hardly; for God wills us to be perfectly subject unto Himself, and all our reason to be exalted by abundant love towards Him.

CHAPTER XV

Of works of charity

1. For no worldly good whatsoever, and for the love of no man, must anything be done which is evil, but for the help of the suffering a good work must sometimes be postponed, or be changed for a better; for herein a good work is not destroyed, but improved. Without charity no work profits, but whatsoever is done in charity, however small and of no reputation it be, brings forth good fruit; for God verily considers what a man is able to do, more than the greatness of what he does.

2. He does much who loves much. He does much who does well. He does well who ministers to the public good rather than his own. Oftentimes that seems to be charity which is rather carnality, because it springs from natural inclination, self-will, hope of repayment, desire of gain.

3. He who has true and perfect charity, in no wise seeks his own good, but desires that God alone be altogether glorified. He envies none, because he longs for no selfish joy; nor does he desire to rejoice in himself, but longs to be blessed in God as the highest good. He ascribes good to none save to God only, the Fountain whence all good proceeds, and the End, the Peace, the joy of all Saints. Oh, he who has but a spark of true charity, has verily learned that all worldly things are full of vanity.

CHAPTER XVI

Of bearing with the faults of others

1. Those things which a man cannot amend in himself or in others, he ought patiently to bear, until God shall otherwise ordain. Believe that perhaps it is better for your trial and patience, without which our merits are but little worth. Nevertheless you ought, when you find such impediments, to beseech God that He would vouchsafe to sustain you, that you be able to bear them with a good will.

2. If one who is once or twice admonished refuse to hearken, strive not with him, but commit all to God, that His will may be done and His honor shown in His servants, for He knows well how to convert the evil unto good. Endeavor to be patient in bearing with other men's faults and infirmities whatsoever they be, for you yourself also have many things which have need to be borne with by others. If you can not make thine own self what you desire, how shalt you be able to fashion another to thine own liking. We are ready to see others made perfect, and yet we do not amend our own shortcomings.

3. We will that others be straitly corrected, but we will not be corrected ourselves. The freedom of others displeases us, but we are dissatisfied that our own wishes shall be denied us. We desire rules to be made restraining others, but by no means will we suffer ourselves to be restrained. Thus therefore does it plainly appear how seldom we weigh our neighbor in the same balance with ourselves. If all men were perfect, what then should we have to suffer from others for God?

4. But now has God thus ordained, that we may learn to bear one another's burdens, because none is without defect, none without a burden, none sufficient of himself, none wise enough of himself; but it behooves us to bear with one another, to comfort one another, to help, instruct, admonish one another. How much strength each man has is best proved by occasions of adversity; for such occasions do not make a man frail, but show of what temper he is.

CHAPTER XVII

Of a religious life

1. It behooves you to learn to mortify yourself in many things, if you wilt live in amity and concord with other men. It is no small thing to dwell in a religious community or congregation, and to live there without complaint, and therein to remain faithful even unto death. Blessed is he who has lived a good life in such a body, and brought it to a happy end. If you wilt stand fast and wilt profit as you ought, hold yourself as an exile and a pilgrim upon the earth. You wilt have to be counted as a fool for Christ, if you wilt lead a religious life.

2. The clothing and outward appearance are of small account; it is change of character and entire mortification of the affections which make a truly religious man. He who seeks aught save God and the health of his soul, shall find only tribulation and sorrow. Now can he stand long in peace, who strives not to be least of all and servant of all.

3. You art called to endure and to labor, not to a life of ease and trifling talk. Here therefore are men tried as gold in the furnace. No man can stand, unless with all his heart he will humble himself for God's sake.

CHAPTER XVIII

Of the example of the Holy Fathers

1. Consider now the lively examples of the holy fathers, in whom shone forth real perfectness and religion, and you shalt see how little, even as nothing, is all that we do. Ah! What is our life when compared to theirs? They, saints and friends of Christ as they were, served the Lord in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in labor and weariness, in watching and fasting, in prayer and holy meditations, in persecutions and much rebuke.

2. O how many and grievous tribulations did the Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, endure; and all others who would walk in the footsteps of Christ. For they hated their souls in this world that they might keep them unto life eternal. O how strict and retired a life was that of the holy fathers who dwelt in the desert! what long and grievous temptations they did suffer! how often were they assaulted by the enemy! what frequent and fervid prayers did they offer unto God! what strict fasts did they endure! what fervent zeal and desire after spiritual profit did they manifest! how bravely did they fight that their vices might not gain the mastery! how entirely and steadfastly did they reach after God! By day they labored, and at night they gave themselves oftentimes unto prayer; yea, even when they were laboring they ceased not from mental prayer.

3. They spent their whole time profitably; every hour seemed short for retirement with God; and through the great sweetness of contemplation, even the need of bodily refreshment was forgotten. They renounced all riches, dignities, honors, friends, kinsmen; they desired nothing from the world; they ate the bare necessities of life; they were unwilling to minister to the body even in necessity. Thus were they poor in earthly things, but rich above measure in grace and virtue. Though poor to the outer eye, within they were filled with grace and heavenly benedictions.

4. They were strangers to the world, but unto God they were as kinsmen and friends. They seemed unto themselves as of no reputation, and in the world's eyes contemptible; but in the sight of God they were precious and beloved. They stood fast in true humility, they lived in simple obedience, they walked in love and patience; and thus they waxed strong in spirit, and obtained great favor before God. To all religious men they were given as an example, and they ought more to provoke us unto good living than the number of the lukewarm tempts to carelessness of life.

5. O how great was the love of all religious persons at the beginning of this sacred institution! O what devoutness of prayer! what rivalry in holiness! what strict discipline was observed! what reverence and obedience under the rule of the master showed they in all things! The traces of them

that remain until now testify that they were truly holy and perfect men, who fighting so bravely trod the world underfoot. Now a man is counted great if only he be not a transgressor, and if he can only endure with patience what he has undertaken.

6. O the coldness and negligence of our times, that we so quickly decline from the former love, and it is become a weariness to live, because of sloth and lukewarmness. May progress in holiness not wholly fall asleep in you, who many times have seen so many examples of devout men!

CHAPTER XIX

Of the exercises of a religious man

1. The life of a Christian ought to be adorned with all virtues, that he may be inwardly what he outwardly appears unto men. And verily it should be yet better within than without, for God is a discernor of our heart, Whom we must reverence with all our hearts wheresoever we are, and walk pure in His presence as do the angels. We ought daily to renew our vows, and to kindle our hearts to zeal, as if each day were the first day of our conversion, and to say, "Help me, O God, in my good resolutions, and in Your holy service, and grant that this day I may make a good beginning, for hitherto I have done nothing!"

2. According to our resolution so is the rate of our progress, and much diligence is needful for him who would make good progress. For if he who resolves bravely oftentimes falls short, how shall it be with him who resolves rarely or feebly? But manifold causes bring about abandonment of our resolution, yet a trivial omission of holy exercises can hardly be made without some loss to us. The resolution of the righteous depends more upon the grace of God than upon their own wisdom; for in Him they always put their trust, whatsoever they take in hand. For man proposes, but God disposes; and the way of a man is not in himself.(1)

3. If a holy exercise be sometimes omitted for the sake of some act of piety, or of some brotherly kindness, it can easily be taken up afterwards; but if it be neglected through distaste or slothfulness, then is it sinful, and the mischief will be felt. Strive as earnestly as we may, we shall still fall short in many things. Always should some distinct resolution be made by us; and, most of all, we must strive against those sins which most easily beset us. Both our outer and inner life should be straitly examined and ruled by us, because both have to do with our progress.

4. If you can not be always examining yourself, you can at certain seasons, and at least twice in the day, at evening and at morning. In the morning make your resolves, and in the evening inquire into your life, how you have sped to-day in word, deed, and thought; for in these ways you have often perchance offended God and your neighbor. Gird up your loins like a man against the assaults of the devil; bridle thine appetite, and you wilt soon be able to bridle every inclination of the flesh. Be you never without something to do; be reading, or writing, or praying, or meditating, or doing something that is useful to the community. Bodily exercises, however, must be undertaken with discretion, nor are they to be used by all alike.

5. The duties which are not common to all must not be done openly, but are safest carried on in

secret. But take heed that you be not careless in the common duties, and more devout in the secret; but faithfully and honestly discharge the duties and commands which lie upon you, then afterwards, if you have still leisure, give yourself to yourself as your devotion leads you. All cannot have one exercise, but one suits better to this man, and another to that. Even for the diversity of season different exercises are needed, some suit better for feasts, some for fasts. We need one kind in time of temptations, and others in time of peace and quietness. Some are suitable to our times of sadness, and others when we are joyful in the Lord.

6. When we draw near the time of the great feasts, good exercises should be renewed, and the prayers of holy men more fervently besought. We ought to make our resolutions from one Feast to another, as if each were the period of our departure from this world, and of entering into the eternal feast. So ought we to prepare ourselves earnestly at solemn seasons, and the more solemnly to live, and to keep straightest watch upon each holy observance, as though we were soon to receive the reward of our labors at the hand of God.

7. And if this be deferred, let us believe ourselves to be as yet ill-prepared, and unwarier as yet of the glory which shall be revealed in us at the appointed season; and let us study to prepare ourselves the better for our end. Blessed is that servant, as the Evangelist Luke has it, whom, when the Lord comes He shall find watching. Verily I say unto you He will make him ruler over all that He has.(2)

(1) Jeremiah x. 23. (2) Luke xii. 43, 44.

CHAPTER XX

Of the love of solitude and silence

1. Seek a suitable time for your meditation, and think frequently of the mercies of God to you. Leave curious questions. Study such matters as bring you sorrow for sin rather than amusement. If you withdraw yourself from trifling conversation and idle goings about, as well as from novelties and gossip, you shalt find your time sufficient and apt for good meditation. The greatest saints used to avoid as far as they could the company of men, and chose to live in secret with God.

2. One has said, "As oft as I have gone among men, so oft have I returned less a man." This is what we often experience when we have been long time in conversation. For it is easier to be altogether silent than it is not to exceed in word. It is easier to remain hidden at home than to keep sufficient guard upon yourself out of doors. He, therefore, that seeks to reach that which is hidden and spiritual, must go with Jesus "apart from the multitude." No man safely goes abroad who loves not to rest at home. No man safely talks but he who loves to hold his peace. No man safely rules but he who loves to be subject. No man safely commands but he who loves to obey.

3. No man safely rejoices but he who has the testimony of a good conscience within himself. The boldness of the Saints was always full of the fear of God. Nor were they the less earnest and humble in themselves, because they shone forth with great virtues and grace. But the boldness of wicked men springs from pride and presumption, and at the last turns to their own confusion. Never promise yourself security in this life, howsoever good a monk or devout a solitary you seemest.

4. Often those who stand highest in the esteem of men, fall the more grievously because of their over great confidence. Wherefore it is very profitable unto many that they should not be without inward temptation, but should be frequently assaulted, lest they be over confident, lest they be indeed lifted up into pride, or else lean too freely upon the consolations of the world. O how good a conscience should that man keep, who never sought a joy that passes away, who never became entangled with the world! O how great peace and quiet should he possess, who would cast off all vain care, and think only of healthful and divine things, and build his whole hope upon God!

5. No man is woryour of heavenly consolation but he who has diligently exercised himself in holy compunction. If you wilt feel compunction within your heart, enter into your chamber and shut out the tumults of the world, as it is written, Commune with your own heart in your own chamber and be still.(1) In retirement you shalt find what often you wilt lose abroad. Retirement, if you continue therein, grows sweet, but if you keep not in it, begets weariness. If in the beginning of your

conversion you dwell in it and keep it well, it shall afterwards be to you a dear friend, and a most pleasant solace.

6. In silence and quiet the devout soul goes forward and learns the hidden things of the Scriptures. Therein finds she a fountain of tears, wherein to wash and cleanse herself each night, that she may grow the more dear to her Maker as she dwells the further from all worldly distraction. To him who withdraws himself from his acquaintance and friends God with his holy angels will draw nigh. It is better to be unknown and take heed to oneself than to neglect oneself and work wonders. It is praiseworthy for a religious man to go seldom abroad, to fly from being seen, to have no desire to see men.

7. Why would you see what you may not have? The world passes away and the lust thereof. The desires of sensuality draw you abroad, but when an hour is past, what does you bring home, but a weight upon your conscience and distraction of heart? A merry going forth brings often a sorrowful return, and a merry evening makes a sad morning? So does all carnal joy begin pleasantly, but in the end it gnaws away and destroys. What can you see abroad which you see not at home? Behold the heaven and the earth and the elements, for out of these are all things made.

8. What can you see anywhere which can continue long under the sun? You believe perchance you shalt be satisfied, but you wilt never be able to attain unto this. If you should see all things before you at once, what would it be but a vain vision? Lift up thine eyes to God on high, and pray that your sin and negligence may be forgiven. Leave vain things to vain men, and mind you the things which God has commanded you. Shut your door upon you, and call unto yourself Jesus your beloved. Remain with Him in your chamber, for you shalt not elsewhere find so great peace. If you had not gone forth nor listened to vain talk, you had better kept yourself in good peace. But because it sometimes delights you to hear new things, you must therefore suffer trouble of heart.

(1) Psalm iv. 4.

CHAPTER XXI

Of compunction of heart

1. If you wilt make any progress keep yourself in the fear of God, and long not to be too free, but restrain all your senses under discipline and give not yourself up to senseless mirth. Give yourself to compunction of heart and you shalt find devotion. Compunction opens the way for many good things, which dissoluteness is wont quickly to lose. It is wonderful that any man can ever rejoice heartily in this life who considers and weighs his banishment, and the manifold dangers which beset his soul.

2. Through lightness of heart and neglect of our shortcomings we feel not the sorrows of our soul, but often vainly laugh when we have good cause to weep. There is no true liberty nor real joy, save in the fear of God with a good conscience. Happy is he who can cast away every cause of distraction and bring himself to the one purpose of holy compunction. Happy is he who puts away from him whatsoever may stain or burden his conscience. Strive manfully; custom is overcome by custom. If you know how to let men alone, they will gladly let you alone to do thine own works.

3. Busy not yourself with the affairs of others, nor entangle yourself with the business of great men. Keep always thine eye upon yourself first of all, and give advice to yourself specially before all your dearest friends. If you have not the favor of men, be not thereby cast down, but let your concern be that you hold not yourself so well and circumspectly, as becomes a servant of God and a devout monk. It is often better and safer for a man not to have many comforts in this life, especially those which concern the flesh. But that we lack divine comforts or feel them rarely is to our own blame, because we seek not compunction of heart, not utterly cast away those comforts which are vain and worldly.

4. Know yourself to be unwearied of divine consolation, and weary rather of much tribulation. When a man has perfect compunction, then all the world is burdensome and bitter to him. A good man will find sufficient cause for mourning and weeping; for whether he considers himself, or ponders concerning his neighbor, he knows that no man lives here without tribulation, and the more thoroughly he considers himself, the more thoroughly he grieves. Grounds for just grief and inward compunction there are in our sins and vices, wherein we lie so entangled that we are but seldom able to contemplate heavenly things.

5. If you thought upon your death more often than how long your life should be, you would doubtless strive more earnestly to improve. And if you did seriously consider the future pains of hell, I believe

you would willingly endure toil or pain and fear not discipline. But because these things reach not the heart, and we still love pleasant things, therefore we remain cold and miserably indifferent.

6. Oftentimes it is from poverty of spirit that the wretched body is so easily led to complain. Pray therefore humbly unto the Lord that He will give you the spirit of compunction and say in the language of the prophet, Feed me, O Lord, with bread of tears, and give me plenteousness of tears to drink.(1)

(1) Psalm lxxv. 5.

CHAPTER XXII

On the contemplation of human misery

1. You art miserable wheresoever you art, and whithersoever you turn, unless you turn you to God. Why art you disquieted because it happens not to you according to your wishes and desires? Who is he that has everything according to his will? Neither I, nor thou, nor any man upon the earth. There is no man in the world free from trouble or anguish, though he were King or Pope. Who is he who has the happiest lot? Even he who is strong to suffer somewhat for God.

2. There are many foolish and unstable men who say, "See what a prosperous life that man has, how rich and how great he is, how powerful, how exalted." But lift up thine eyes to the good things of heaven, and you shalt see that all these worldly things are nothing, they are utterly uncertain, yea, they are wearisome, because they are never possessed without care and fear. The happiness of man lies not in the abundance of temporal things but a moderate portion suffices him. Our life upon the earth is verily wretchedness. The more a man desires to be spiritual, the more bitter does the present life become to him; because he the better understands and sees the defects of human corruption. For to eat, to drink, to watch, to sleep, to rest, to labor, and to be subject to the other necessities of nature, is truly a great wretchedness and affliction to a devout man, who would fain be released and free from all sin.

3. For the inner man is heavily burdened with the necessities of the body in this world. Wherefore the prophet devoutly prays to be freed from them, saying, Deliver me from my necessities, O Lord.(1) But woe to those who know not their own misery, and yet greater woe to those who love this miserable and corruptible life. For to such a degree do some cling to it (even though by laboring or begging they scarce procure what is necessary for subsistence) that if they might live here always, they would care nothing for the Kingdom of God.

4. Oh foolish and faithless of heart, who lie buried so deep in worldly things, that they relish nothing save the things of the flesh! Miserable ones! they will too sadly find out at the last, how vile and worthless was that which they loved. The saints of God and all loyal friends of Christ held as nothing the things which pleased the flesh, or those which flourished in this life, but their whole hope and affection aspired to the things which are above. Their whole desire was borne upwards to everlasting and invisible things, lest they should be drawn downwards by the love of things visible.

5. Lose not, brother, your loyal desire of progress to things spiritual. There is yet time, the hour is not past. Why wilt you put off your resolution? Arise, begin this very moment, and say, "Now is

the time to do: now is the time to fight, now is the proper time for amendment." When you art ill at ease and troubled, then is the time when you art nearest unto blessing. You must go through fire and water that God may bring you into a wealyour place. Unless you put force upon yourself, you wilt not conquer your faults. So long as we carry about with us this frail body, we cannot be without sin, we cannot live without weariness and trouble. Gladly would we have rest from all misery; but because through sin we have lost innocence, we have lost also the true happiness. Therefore must we be patient, and wait for the mercy of God, until this tyranny be overpast, and this mortality be swallowed up of life.

6. O how great is the frailty of man, which is ever prone to evil! To-day you confessed your sins, and tomorrow you commit again the sins you did confess. Now dost you resolve to avoid a fault, and within an hour you behave yourself as if you had never resolved at all. Good cause have we therefore to humble ourselves, and never to think highly of ourselves, seeing that we are so frail and unstable. And quickly may that be lost by our negligence, which by much labor was hardly attained through grace.

7. What shall become of us at the end, if at the beginning we are lukewarm and idle? Woe unto us, if we choose to rest, as though it were a time of peace and security, while as yet no sign appears in our life of true holiness. Rather had we need that we might begin yet afresh, like good novices, to be instructed unto good living, if haply there might be hope of some future amendment and greater spiritual increase.

(1) Psalm xxv. 17.

CHAPTER XXIII

1. Very quickly will there be an end of you here; take heed therefore how it will be with you in another world. Today man is, and to-morrow he will be seen no more. And being removed out of sight, quickly also he is out of mind. O the dulness and hardness of man's heart, which thinks only of the present, and looks not forward to the future. You ought in every deed and thought so to order yourself, as if you wert to die this day. If you had a good conscience you would not greatly fear death. It were better for you to watch against sin, than to fly from death. If to-day you art not ready, how shalt you be ready to-morrow? To-morrow is an uncertain day; and how know you that you shalt have a to-morrow?

2. What does it profit to live long, when we amend so little? Ah! long life does not always amend, but more often the Increases guilt. Oh that we might spend a single day in this world as it ought to be spent! Many there are who reckon the years since they were converted, and yet oftentimes how little is the fruit thereof. If it is a fearful thing to die, it may be perchance a yet more fearful thing to live long. Happy is the man who has the hour of his death always before his eyes, and daily prepares himself to die. If you have ever seen one die, consider that you also shalt pass away by the same road.

3. When it is morning reflect that it may be you shalt not see the evening, and at eventide dare not to boast yourself of the morrow. Always be you prepared, and so live that death may never find you unprepared. Many die suddenly and unexpectedly. For at such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man comes.(1) When that last hour shall come, you wilt begin to think very differently of your whole life past, and wilt mourn bitterly that you have been so negligent and slothful.

4. Happy and wise is he who now strives to be such in life as he would fain be found in death! For a perfect contempt of the world, a fervent desire to excel in virtue, the love of discipline, the painfulness of repentance, readiness to obey, denial of self, submission to any adversity for love of Christ; these are the things which shall give great confidence of a happy death. Whilst you art in health you have many opportunities of good works; but when you are in sickness I know not how much you wilt be able to do. Few are made better by infirmity: even as they who wander much abroad seldom become holy.

5. Trust not your friends and kinsfolk, nor put off the work of your salvation to the future, for men will forget you sooner than you think. It is better for you now to provide in time, and to send some good before you, than to trust to the help of others. If you art not anxious for yourself now, who, think thou, will be anxious for you afterwards? Now the time is most precious. Now is the accepted

time, now is the day of salvation. But alas! that you spend not well this time, wherein you might lay up treasure which should profit you everlastingly. The hour will come when you shalt desire one day, yea, one hour, for amendment of life, and I know not whether you shalt obtain.

6. Oh, dearly beloved, from what danger you might free yourself, from what great fear, if only you would always live in fear, and in expectation of death! Strive now to live in such wise that in the hour of death you may rather rejoice than fear. Learn now to die to the world, so shalt you begin to live with Christ. Learn now to contemn all earthly things, and then may you freely go unto Christ. Keep under your body by penitence, and then shalt you be able to have a sure confidence.

7. Ah, foolish one! why think you that you shalt live long, when you art not sure of a single day? How many have been deceived, and suddenly have been snatched away from the body! How many times have you heard how one was slain by the sword, another was drowned, another falling from on high broke his neck, another died at the table, another whilst at play! One died by fire, another by the sword, another by the pestilence, another by the robber. Thus comes death to all, and the life of men swiftly passes away like a shadow.

8. Who will remember you after your death? And who will entreat for you? Work, work now, oh dearly beloved, work all that you can. For you know not when you shalt die, not what shall happen unto you after death. While you have time, lay up for yourself undying riches. Think of nought but of your salvation; care only for the things of God. Make to yourself friends, by venerating the saints of God and walking in their steps, that when you fail, you may be received into everlasting habitations.(2)

9. Keep yourself as a stranger and a pilgrim upon the earth, to whom the things of the world appertain not. Keep thine heart free, and lifted up towards God, for here have we no continuing city.(3) To Him direct your daily prayers with crying and tears, that your spirit may be found woryour to pass happily after death unto its Lord. Amen.

(1) Matthew xxiv. 44. (2) Luke xvi. 9. (3) Hebrews xiii. 14.

CHAPTER XXIV

Of the judgment and punishment of the wicked

1. In all that you do, remember the end, and how you wilt stand before a strict judge, from whom nothing is hid, who is not bribed with gifts, nor accepts excuses, but will judge righteous judgment. O most miserable and foolish sinner, who art sometimes in fear of the countenance of an angry man, what wilt you answer to God, who knows all your misdeeds? Why dost you not provide for yourself against the day of judgment, when no man shall be able to be excused or defended by means of another, but each one shall bear his burden himself alone? Now does your labor bring forth fruit, now is your weeping acceptable, your groaning heard, your sorrow well pleasing to God, and cleansing to your soul.

2. Even here on earth the patient man finds great occasion for purifying his soul. When suffering injuries he grieves more for the other's malice than for his own wrong; when he prays heartily for those that spitefully use him, and forgives them from his heart; when he is not slow to ask pardon from others; when he is swifter to pity than to anger; when he frequently denies himself and strives altogether to subdue the flesh to the spirit. Better is it now to purify the soul from sin, than to cling to sins from which we must be purged hereafter. Truly we deceive ourselves by the inordinate love which we bear towards the flesh.

3. What is it which that fire shall devour, save your sins? The more you spare yourself and follow the flesh, the more heavy shall your punishment be, and the more fuel art you heaping up for the burning. For wherein a man has sinned, therein shall he be the more heavily punished. There shall the slothful be pricked forward with burning goads, and the gluttons be tormented with intolerable hunger and thirst. There shall the luxurious and the lovers of pleasure be plunged into burning pitch and stinking brimstone, and the envious shall howl like mad dogs for very grief.

4. No sin will there be which shall not be visited with its own proper punishment. The proud shall be filled with utter confusion, and the covetous shall be pinched with miserable poverty. An hour's pain there shall be more grievous than a hundred years here of the bitterest penitence. No quiet shall be there, no comfort for the lost, though here sometimes there is respite from pain, and enjoyment of the solace of friends. Be you anxious now and sorrowful for your sins, that in the day of judgment you may have boldness with the blessed. For then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him and made no account of his labours.(1) Then shall he stand up to judge, he who now submits himself in humility to the judgments of men. Then shall the poor and humble man have great confidence, while the proud is taken with fear on every side.

5. Then shall it be seen that he was the wise man in this world who learned to be a fool and despised for Christ. Then shall all tribulation patiently borne delight us, while the mouth of the ungodly shall be stopped. Then shall every godly man rejoice, and every profane man shall mourn. Then the afflicted flesh shall more rejoice than if it had been always nourished in delights. Then the humble garment shall put on beauty, and the precious robe shall hide itself as vile. Then the little poor cottage shall be more commended than the gilded palace. Then enduring patience shall have more might than all the power of the world. Then simple obedience shall be more highly exalted than all worldly wisdom.

6. Then a pure and good conscience shall more rejoice than learned philosophy. Then contempt of riches shall have more weight than all the treasure of the children of this world. Then shalt you find more comfort in having prayed devoutly than in having fared sumptuously. Then you wilt rather rejoice in having kept silence than in having made long speech. Then holy deeds shall be far stronger than many fine words. Then a strict life and sincere penitence shall bring deeper pleasure than all earthly delight. Learn now to suffer a little, that then you may be enabled to escape heavier sufferings. Prove first here, what you art able to endure hereafter. If now you art able to bear so little, how wilt you be able to endure eternal torments? If now a little suffering makes you so impatient, what shall hell-fire do then? Behold of a surety you art not able to have two Paradises, to take your fill or delight here in this world, and to reign with Christ hereafter.

7. If even unto this day you had ever lived in honors and pleasures, what would the whole profit you if now death came to you in an instant? All therefore is vanity, save to love God and to serve Him only. For he who loves God with all his heart fears not death, nor punishment, nor judgment, nor hell, because perfect love gives sure access to God. But he who still delights in sin, no marvel if he is afraid of death and judgment. Nevertheless it is a good thing, if love as yet cannot restrain you from evil, that at least the fear of hell should hold you back. But he who puts aside the fear of God cannot long continue in good, but shall quickly fall into the snares of the devil.

CHAPTER XXV

Of the zealous amendment of our whole life

1. Be you watchful and diligent in God's service, and bethink you often why you have renounced the world. Was it not that you might live to God and become a spiritual man? Be zealous, therefore, for your spiritual profit, for you shalt receive shortly the reward of your labors, and neither fear nor sorrow shall come any more into your borders. Now shalt you labor a little, and you shalt find great rest, yea everlasting joy. If you shalt remain faithful and zealous in labor, doubt not that God shall be faithful and bountiful in rewarding you. It is your duty to have a good hope that you wilt attain the victory, but you must not fall into security lest you become slothful or lifted up.

2. A certain man being in anxiety of mind, continually tossed about between hope and fear, and being on a certain day overwhelmed with grief, cast himself down in prayer before the altar in church, and meditated within himself, saying, "Oh! if I but knew that I should still persevere," and presently heard within him a voice from God, "And if you did know it, what would you do? Do now what you would do then, and you shalt be very secure." And straightway being comforted and strengthened, he committed himself to the will of God and the perturbation of spirit ceased, neither had he a mind any more to search curiously to know what should befall him hereafter, but studied rather to inquire what was the good and acceptable will of God, for the beginning and perfecting of every good work.

3. Hope in the Lord and be doing good, saith the Prophet; dwell in the land and you shalt be fed(1) with its riches. One thing there is which holds back many from progress and fervent amendment, even the dread of difficulty, or the labor of the conflict. Nevertheless they advance above all others in virtue who strive manfully to conquer those things which are most grievous and contrary to them, for there a man profits most and merits greater grace where he most overcomes himself and mortifies himself in spirit.

4. But all men have not the same passions to conquer and to mortify, yet he who is diligent shall attain more profit, although he have stronger passions, than another who is more temperate of disposition, but is withal less fervent in the pursuit of virtue. Two things specifically avail unto improvement in holiness, namely firmness to withdraw ourselves from the sin to which by nature we are most inclined, and earnest zeal for that good in that which we are most lacking. And strive also very earnestly to guard against and subdue those faults which displease you most frequently in others.

5. Gather some profit to your soul wherever you are, and wherever you see or hear good examples, stir yourself to follow them, but where you see anything which is blameworthy, take heed that you do not the same; or if at any time you have done it, strive quickly to amend yourself. As thine eye observes others, so again are the eyes of others upon you. How sweet and pleasant is it to see zealous and godly brethren temperate and of good discipline; and how sad it is to see them walking disorderly, not practicing the duties to which they are called. How hurtful a thing it is to neglect the purpose of their calling, and turn their inclinations to things which are none of their business.

6. Be mindful of the duties which you have undertaken, and set always before you the remembrance of the Crucified. Truly ought you to be ashamed as you look upon the life of Jesus Christ, because you have not yet endeavored to conform yourself more unto Him, though you have been a long time in the way of God. A religious man who exercises himself seriously and devoutly in the most holy life and passion of our Lord shall find there abundantly all things that are profitable and necessary for him, neither is there need that he shall seek anything better beyond Jesus. Oh! if Jesus crucified would come into our hearts, how quickly, and completely should we have learned all that we need to know!

7. He who is earnest receives and bears well all things that are laid upon him. He who is careless and lukewarm has trouble upon trouble, and suffers anguish upon every side, because he is without inward consolation, and is forbidden to seek that which is outward. He who is living without discipline is exposed to grievous ruin. He who seeks easier and lighter discipline shall always be in distress, because one thing or another gives him displeasure.

8. O! if no other duty lay upon us but to praise the Lord our God with our whole heart and voice! Oh! if you never had need to eat or drink, or sleep, but wert always able to praise God, and to give yourself to spiritual exercises alone; then should you be far happier than now, when for so many necessities you must serve the flesh. O! that these necessities were not, but only the spiritual refreshment of the soul, which alas we taste too seldom.

9. When a man has come to this, that he seeks comfort from no created thing, then does he perfectly begin to enjoy God, then also will he be well contented with whatsoever shall happen unto him. Then will he neither rejoice for much nor be sorrowful for little, but he commits himself altogether and with full trust unto God, who is all in all to him, to whom nothing perishes nor dies, but all things live to Him and obey His every word without delay.

10. Remember always thine end, and how the time which is lost returns not. Without care and diligence you shalt never get virtue. If you begin to grow cold, it shall begin to go ill with you, but if you give yourself unto zeal you shalt find much peace, and shalt find your labor the lighter because

of the grace of God and the love of virtue. A zealous and diligent man is ready for all things. It is greater labor to resist sins and passions than to toil in bodily labors. He who shuns not small faults falls little by little into greater. At eventide you shalt always be glad if you spend the day profitably. Watch over yourself, stir yourself up, admonish yourself, and howsoever it be with others, neglect not yourself. The more violence you dost unto yourself, the more you shall profit. Amen.

(1) Psalm xxxvii. 3.

THE SECOND BOOK

ADMONITIONS CONCERNING THE INNER LIFE

CHAPTER I

Of the inner life

1. The kingdom of God is within you,(1) saith the Lord. Turn you with all thine heart to the Lord and forsake this miserable world, and you shalt find rest unto your soul. Learn to despise outward things and to give yourself to things inward, and you shalt see the kingdom of God come within you. For the kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and it is not given to the wicked. Christ will come to you, and show you His consolation, if you prepare a woryour mansion for Him within you. All His glory and beauty is from within, and there it pleases Him to dwell. He often visits the inward man and holds with him sweet discourse, giving him soothing consolation, much peace, friendship exceeding wonderful.

2. Go to, faithful soul, prepare your heart for this bridegroom that he may vouchsafe to come to you and dwell within you, for so He saith, if any man loves me he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.(2) Give, therefore, place to Christ and refuse entrance to all others. When you have Christ, you art rich, and have sufficient. He shall be your provider and faithful watchman in all things, so that you have no need to trust in men, for men soon change and swiftly pass away, but Christ remains for ever and stands by us firmly even to the end.

3. There is no great trust to be placed in a frail and mortal man, even though he be useful and dear to us, neither should much sorrow arise within us if sometimes he oppose and contradict us. They who are on your side to-day, may to-morrow be against you, and often are they turned round like the wind. Put your whole trust in God and let Him be your fear and your love, He will answer for you Himself, and will do for you what is best. Here have you no continuing city,(3) and wheresoever you art, you art a stranger and a pilgrim, and you shalt never have rest unless you art closely united to Christ within you.

4. Why dost you cast thine eyes hither and thither, since this is not the place of your rest? In heaven ought your habitation to be, and all earthly things should be looked upon as it were in the passing by. All things pass away and you equally with them. Look that you cleave not to them lest you be taken with them and perish. Let your contemplation be on the Most High, and let your supplication be directed unto Christ without ceasing. If you can not behold high and heavenly things, rest you in the passion of Christ and dwell willingly in His sacred wounds. For if you devoutly fly to the wounds of Jesus, and the precious marks of the nails and the spear, you shalt find great comfort in tribulation, nor will the slights of men trouble you much, and you wilt easily bear their unkind words.

5. Christ also, when He was in the world, was despised and rejected of men, and in His greatest necessity was left by His acquaintances and friends to bear these reproaches. Christ was willing to suffer and be despised, and dare you complain of any? Christ had adversaries and gainsayers, and dost you wish to have all men your friends and benefactors? Whence shall your patience attain her crown if no adversity befall you? If you art unwilling to suffer any adversity, how shalt you be the friend of Christ? Sustain yourself with Christ and for Christ if you wilt reign with Christ.

6. If you had once entered into the mind of Jesus, and had tasted yea even a little of his tender love, then would you care nought for thine own convenience or inconvenience, but would rather rejoice at trouble brought upon you, because the love of Jesus makes a man to despise himself. He who loves Jesus, and is inwardly true and free from inordinate affections, is able to turn himself readily unto God, and to rise above himself in spirit, and to enjoy fruitful peace.

7. He who knows things as they are and not as they are said or seem to be, he truly is wise, and is taught of God more than men. He who knows how to walk from within, and to set little value upon outward things, requires not places nor waits for seasons, for holding his intercourse with God. The inward man quickly recollects himself, because he is never entirely given up to outward things. No outward labor and no necessary occupations stand in his way, but as events fall out, so does he fit himself to them. He who is rightly disposed and ordered within cares not for the strange and perverse conduct of men. A man is hindered and distracted in so far as he is moved by outward things.

8. If it were well with you, and you wert purified from evil, all things would work together for your good and profiting. For this cause do many things displease you and often trouble you, that you art not yet perfectly dead to yourself nor separated from all earthly things. Nothing so defiles and entangles the heart of man as impure love towards created things. If you reject outward comfort you wilt be able to contemplate heavenly things and frequently to be joyful inwardly.

(1) Luke xvii. 21. (2) John xiv. 23. (3) Hebrews xiii. 14.

CHAPTER II

Of lowly submission

1. Make no great account who is for you or against you, but mind only the present duty and take care that God be with you in whatsoever you dost. Have a good conscience and God will defend you, for he whom God will help no man's perverseness shall be able to hurt. If you know how to hold your peace and to suffer, without doubt you shalt see the help of the Lord. He knows the time and the way to deliver you, therefore must you resign yourself to Him. To God it belongs to help and to deliver from all confusion. Oftentimes it is very profitable for keeping us in greater humility, that others know and rebuke our faults.

2. When a man humbles himself for his defects, he then easily pacifies others and quickly satisfies those that are angered against him. God protects and delivers the humble man, He loves and comforts the humble man, to the humble man He inclines Himself, on the humble He bestows great grace, and when he is cast down He raises him to glory: to the humble He reveals His secrets, and sweetly draws and invites him to Himself. The humble man having received reproach, is yet in sufficient peace, because he rests on God and not on the world. Reckon not yourself to have profited in anywise unless you feel yourself to be inferior to all.

CHAPTER III

Of the good, peaceable man

1. First keep yourself in peace, and then shalt you be able to be a peacemaker towards others. A peaceable man does more good than a well-learned. A passionate man turns even good into evil and easily believes evil; a good, peaceable man converts all things into good. He who dwells in peace is suspicious of none, but he who is discontented and restless is tossed with many suspicions, and is neither quiet himself nor suffers others to be quiet. He often saith what he ought not to say, and omits what it were more expedient for him to do. He considers to what duties others are bound, and neglects those to which he is bound himself. Therefore be zealous first over yourself, and then may you righteously be zealous concerning your neighbor.

2. You know well how to excuse and to color thine own deeds, but you wilt not accept the excuses of others. It would be more just to accuse yourself and excuse your brother. If you wilt that others bear with you, bear you with others. Behold how far you art as yet from the true charity and humility which knows not how to be angry or indignant against any save self alone. It is no great thing to mingle the good and the meek, for this is naturally pleasing to all, and every one of us willingly enjoys peace and likes best those who think with us: but to be able to live peaceably with the hard and perverse, or with the disorderly, or those who oppose us, this is a great grace and a thing much to be commended and most wryour of a man.

3. There are who keep themselves in peace and keep peace also with others, and there are who neither have peace nor suffer others to have peace; they are troublesome to others, but always more troublesome to themselves. And there are who hold themselves in peace, and study to bring others unto peace; nevertheless, all our peace in this sad life lies in humble suffering rather than in not feeling adversities. He who knows best how to suffer shall possess the most peace; that man is conqueror of himself and lord of the world, the friend of Christ, and the inheritor of heaven.

CHAPTER IV

Of a pure mind and simple intention

1. By two wings is man lifted above earthly things, even by simplicity and purity. Simplicity ought to be in the intention, purity in the affection. Simplicity reaches toward God, purity apprehends Him and tastes Him. No good action will be distasteful to you if you be free within from inordinate affection. If you reach after and seek, nothing but the will of God and the benefit of your neighbor, you wilt entirely enjoy inward liberty. If thine heart were right, then should every creature be a mirror of life and a book of holy doctrine. There is no creature so small and vile but that it shows us the goodness of God.
2. If you wert good and pure within, then would you look upon all things without hurt and understand them aright. A pure heart sees the very depths of heaven and hell. Such as each one is inwardly, so judges he outwardly. If there is any joy in the world surely the man of pure heart possesses it, and if there is anywhere tribulation and anguish, the evil conscience knows it best. As iron cast into the fire loses rust and is made altogether glowing, so the man who turns himself altogether unto God is freed from slothfulness and changed into a new man.
3. When a man begins to grow lukewarm, then he fears a little labor, and willingly accepts outward consolation; but when he begins perfectly to conquer himself and to walk manfully in the way of God, then he counts as nothing those things which afore time seemed to be so grievous unto him.

CHAPTER V

Of self-esteem

1. We cannot place too little confidence in ourselves, because grace and understanding are often lacking to us. Little light is there within us, and what we have we quickly lose by negligence. Oftentimes we perceive not how great is our inward blindness. We often do ill and excuse it worse. Sometimes we are moved by passion and count it zeal; we blame little faults in others and pass over great faults in ourselves. Quickly enough we feel and reckon up what we bear at the hands of others, but we reflect not how much others are bearing from us. He who would weigh well and rightly his own doings would not be the man to judge severely of another.

2. The spiritually-minded man puts care of himself before all cares; and he who diligently attends to himself easily keeps silence concerning others. You wilt never be spiritually minded and godly unless you are silent concerning other men's matters and take full heed to yourself. If you think wholly upon yourself and upon God, what you see out of doors shall move you little. Where art you when you art not present to yourself? and when you have overrun all things, what has it profited you, yourself being neglected? If you would have peace and true unity, you must put aside all other things, and gaze only upon yourself.

3. Then you shalt make great progress if you keep yourself free from all temporal care. You shalt lamentably fall away if you set a value upon any worldly thing. Let nothing be great, nothing high, nothing pleasing, nothing acceptable unto you, save God Himself or the things of God. Reckon as altogether vain whatsoever consolation comes to you from a creature. The soul that loves God looks not to anything that is beneath God. God alone is eternal and incomprehensible, filling all things, the solace of the soul, and the true joy of the heart.

CHAPTER VI

Of the joy of a good conscience

1. The testimony of a good conscience is the glory of a good man. Have a good conscience and you shalt ever have joy. A good conscience is able to bear exceeding much, and is exceeding joyful in the midst of adversities; an evil conscience is ever fearful and unquiet. You shalt rest sweetly if your heart condemn you not. Never rejoice unless when you have done well. The wicked have never true joy, nor feel internal peace, for there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.(1) And if they say "we are in peace, there shall no harm happen unto us, and who shall dare to do us hurt?" believe them not, for suddenly shall the wrath of God rise up against them, and their deeds shall be brought to nought, and their thoughts shall perish.

2. To glory in tribulation is not grievous to him who loves; for such glorying is glorying in the Cross of Christ. Brief is the glory which is given and received of men. Sadness always goes hand in hand with the glory of the world. The glory of the good is in their conscience, and not in the report of men. The joy of the upright is from God and in God, and their joy is in the truth. He who desires true and eternal glory cares not for that which is temporal; and he who seeks temporal glory, or who despises it from his heart, is proved to bear little love for that which is heavenly. He who cares for neither praises nor reproaches has great tranquillity of heart.

3. He will easily be contented and filled with peace, whose conscience is pure. You art none the holier if you art praised, nor the viler if you art reproached. You art what you art; and you can not be better than God pronounces you to be. If you consider well what you art inwardly, you wilt not care what men will say to you. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart:(2) man looks on the deed, but God considers the intent. It is the token of a humble spirit always to do well, and to set little by oneself. Not to look for consolation from any created thing is a sign of great purity and inward faithfulness.

4. He that seeks no outward witness on his behalf, shows plainly that he has committed himself wholly to God. For not he that commends himself is approved, as St. Paul saith, but whom the Lord commends.(3) To walk inwardly with God, and not to be held by any outer affections, is the state of a spiritual man.

(1) Isaiah vii. 21. (2) 1 Samuel xvi. 7.

(3) 2 Corinthians x. 18.

CHAPTER VII

Of loving Jesus above all things

1. Blessed is he who understands what it is to love Jesus, and to despise himself for Jesus' sake. He must give up all that he loves for his Beloved, for Jesus will be loved alone above all things. The love of created things is deceiving and unstable, but the love of Jesus is faithful and lasting. He who cleaves to created things will fall with their slipperiness; but he who embraces Jesus will stand upright for ever. Love Him and hold Him for your friend, for He will not forsake you when all depart from you, nor will he suffer you to perish at the last. You must one day be separated from all, whether you wilt or wilt not.

2. Cleave you to Jesus in life and death, and commit yourself unto His faithfulness, who, when all men fail you, is alone able to help you. Your Beloved is such, by nature, that He will suffer no rival, but alone will possess your heart, and as a king will sit upon His own throne. If you would learn to put away from you every created thing, Jesus would freely take up His abode with you. You wilt find all trust little better than lost which you has placed in men, and not in Jesus. Trust not nor lean upon a reed shaken with the wind, because all flesh is grass, and the goodness thereof falls as the flower of the field.(1)

3. You wilt be quickly deceived if you look only upon the outward appearance of men, for if you seek your comfort and profit in others, you shalt too often experience loss. If you seek Jesus in all things you shalt verily find Jesus, but if you seek yourself you shalt also find yourself, but to thine own hurt. For if a man seeks not Jesus he is more hurtful to himself than all the world and all his adversaries.

(1) Isaiah xl. 6.

CHAPTER VIII

Of the intimate love of Jesus

1. When Jesus is present all is well and nothing seems hard, but when Jesus is not present everything is hard. When Jesus speaks not within, our comfort is nothing worth, but if Jesus speaks but a single word great is the comfort we experience. Did not Mary Magdalene rise up quickly from the place where she wept when Martha said to her, The Master is come and calls for you?(2) Happy hour when Jesus calls you from tears to the joy of the spirit! How dry and hard art you without Jesus! How senseless and vain if you desire aught beyond Jesus! Is not this greater loss than if you should lose the whole world?

2. What can the word profit you without Jesus? To be without Jesus is the nethermost hell, and to be with Jesus is sweet paradise. If Jesus were with you no enemy could hurt you. He who finds Jesus finds a good treasure, yea, good above all good; and he who loses Jesus loses exceeding much, yea, more than the whole world. Most poor is he who lives without Jesus, and most rich is he who is much with Jesus.

3. It is great skill to know how to live with Jesus, and to know how to hold Jesus is great wisdom. Be you humble and peaceable and Jesus shall be with you. Be godly and quiet, and Jesus will remain with you. You can quickly drive away Jesus and lose His favor if you wilt turn away to the outer things. And if you have put Him to flight and lost Him, to whom wilt you flee, and whom then wilt you seek for a friend? Without a friend you can not live long, and if Jesus be not your friend above all you shalt be very sad and desolate. Madly therefore does you if you trusts or find joy in any other. It is preferable to have the whole world against you, than Jesus offended with you. Therefore of all that are dear to you, let Jesus be specially loved.

4. Let all be loved for Jesus' sake, but Jesus for His own. Jesus Christ alone is to be specially loved, for He alone is found good and faithful above all friends. For His sake and in Him let both enemies and friends be dear to you, and pray for them all that they may all know and love Him. Never desire to be specially praised or loved, because this belongs to God alone, who has none like unto Himself. Nor wish you that any one set his heart on you, nor do you give yourself up to the love of any, but let Jesus be in you and in every good man.

5. Be pure and free within yourself, and be not entangled by any created thing. You ought to bring a bare and clean heart to God, if you desire to be ready to see how gracious the Lord is. And in truth, unless you be prevented and drawn on by His grace, you wilt not attain to this, that having cast out

and dismissed all else, you alone art united with God. For when the grace of God comes to a man, then he becomes able to do all things, and when it departs then he will be poor and weak and given up unto troubles. In these you art not to be cast down nor to despair, but to rest with calm mind on the will of God, and to bear all things which come upon you unto the praise of Jesus Christ; for after winter comes summer, after night returns day, after the tempest a great calm.

(2) John xi. 28.

CHAPTER IX

Of the lack of all comfort

1. It is no hard thing to despise human comfort when divine is present. It is a great thing, yea very great, to be able to bear the loss both of human and divine comfort; and for the love of God willingly to bear exile of heart, and in nought to seek oneself, nor to look to one's own merit. What great matter is it, if you be cheerful of heart and devout when favor comes to you? That is an hour wherein all rejoice. Pleasantly enough does he ride whom the grace of God carries. And what marvel, if he feels no burden who is carried by the Almighty, and is led onwards by the Guide from on high?

2. We are willing to accept anything for comfort, and it is difficult for a man to be freed from himself. The holy martyr Laurence overcame the love of the world and even of his priestly master, because he despised everything in the world which seemed to be pleasant; and for the love of Christ he calmly suffered even God's chief priest, Sixtus, whom he dearly loved, to be taken from him. Thus by the love of the Creator he overcame the love of man, and instead of human comfort he chose rather God's good pleasure. So also learn you to resign any near and beloved friend for the love of God. Nor take it amiss when you have been deserted by a friend, knowing that we must all be parted from one another at last.

3. Mightily and long must a man strive within himself before he learn altogether to overcome himself, and to draw his whole affection towards God. When a man rests upon himself, he easily slips away into human comforts. But a true lover of Christ, and a diligent seeker after virtue, falls not back upon those comforts, nor seeks such sweetness as may be tasted and handled, but desires rather hard exercises, and to undertake severe labours for Christ.

4. When, therefore, spiritual comfort is given by God, receive it with giving of thanks, and know that it is the gift of God, not your desert. Be not lifted up, rejoice not overmuch nor foolishly presume, but rather be more humble for the gift, more wary and more careful in all your doings; for that hour will pass away, and temptation will follow. When comfort is taken from you, do not straightway despair, but wait for the heavenly visitation with humility and patience, for God is able to give you back greater favour and consolation. This is not new nor strange to those who have made trial of the way of God, for with the great saints and the ancient prophets there was often this manner of change.

5. Wherefore one said when the favour of God was present with him, I said in my prosperity I shall never be moved,(1) but he goes on to say what he felt within himself when the favor departed: You

did turn Your face from me, and I was troubled. In spite whereof he in no wise despairs, but the more instantly entreats God, and saith, Unto You, O Lord, will I cry, and will pray unto my God; and then he receives the fruit of his prayer, and testifies how he has been heard, saying, The Lord heard me and had mercy upon me, the Lord was my helper. But wherein? You have turned my heaviness into joy, You have put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness. If it was thus with the great saints, we who are poor and needy ought not to despair if we are sometimes in the warmth and sometimes in the cold, for the Spirit comes and goes according to the good pleasure of His will. Wherefore holy Job saith, You dost visit him in the morning, and suddenly You dost prove him.(2)

6. Whereupon then can I hope, or wherein may I trust, save only in the great mercy of God, and the hope of heavenly grace? For whether good men are with me, godly brethren or faithful friends, whether holy books or beautiful discourses, whether sweet hymns and songs, all these help but little, and have but little savor when I am deserted by God's favor and left to mine own poverty. There is no better remedy, then, than patience and denial of self, and an abiding in the will of God.

7. I have never found any man so religious and godly, but that he felt sometimes a withdrawal of the divine favor, and lack of fervor. No saint was ever so filled with rapture, so enlightened, but that sooner or later he was tempted. For he is not woryour of the great vision of God, who, for God's sake, has not been exercised by some temptation. For temptation is wont to go before as a sign of the comfort which shall follow, and heavenly comfort is promised to those who are proved by temptation. As it is written, To him that overcomes I will give to at of the tree of life.(3)

8. Divine comfort is given that a man may be stronger to bear adversities. And temptation follows, lest he be lifted up because of the benefit. The devil sleeps not; your flesh is not yet dead; therefore, cease you not to make yourself ready unto the battle, for enemies stand on your right hand and on your left, and they are never at rest.

(1) Psalm xxx. 6. (2) Job vii. 18. (3) Revelation ii. 7.

CHAPTER X

Of gratitude for the Grace of God

1. Why seek you rest when you art born to labor? Prepare yourself for patience more than for comforts, and for bearing the cross more than for joy. For who among the men of this world would not gladly receive consolation and spiritual joy if he might always have it? For spiritual comforts exceed all the delights of the world, and all the pleasures of the flesh. For all worldly delights are either empty or unclean, whilst spiritual delights alone are pleasant and honorable, the offspring of virtue, and poured forth by God into pure minds. But no man can always enjoy these divine comforts at his own will, because the season of temptation ceases not for long.

2. Great is the difference between a visitation from above and false liberty of spirit and great confidence in self. God does well in giving us the grace of comfort, but man does ill in not immediately giving God thanks thereof. And thus the gifts of grace are not able to flow unto us, because we are ungrateful to the Author of them, and return them not wholly to the Fountain whence they flow. For grace ever becomes the portion of him who is grateful and that is taken away from the proud, which is wont to be given to the humble.

3. I desire no consolation which takes away from me compunction, I love no contemplation which leads to pride. For all that is high is not holy, nor is everything that is sweet good; every desire is not pure; nor is everything that is dear to us pleasing to God. Willingly do I accept that grace whereby I am made humbler and more wary and more ready to renounce myself. He who is made learned by the gift of grace and taught wisdom by the stroke of the withdrawal thereof, will not dare to claim any good thing for himself, but will rather confess that he is poor and needy. Give unto God the thing which is God's,(1) and ascribe to yourself that which is thine; that is, give thanks unto God for His grace, but for yourself alone confess your fault, and that your punishment is deserved for your fault.

4. Sit you down always in the lowest room and you shalt be given the highest place.(2) For the highest cannot be without the lowest. For the highest saints of God are least in their own sight, and the more glorious they are, so much the lowlier are they in themselves; full of grace and heavenly glory, they are not desirous of vain-glory; resting on God and strong in His might, they cannot be lifted up in any wise. And they who ascribe unto God all the good which they have received, "seek not glory one of another, but the glory which comes from God only," and they desire that God shall be praised in Himself and in all His Saints above all things, and they are always striving for this very thing.

5. Be thankful, therefore, for the least benefit and you shalt be woryour to receive greater. Let the least be unto you even as the greatest, and let that which is of little account be unto you as a special gift. If the majesty of the Giver be considered, nothing that is given shall seem small and of no worth, for that is not a small thing which is given by the Most High God. Yea, though He gave punishment and stripes, we ought to be thankful, because He ever does for our profit whatever He suffers to come upon us. He who seeks to retain the favor of God, let him be thankful for the favor which is given, and patient in respect of that which is taken away. Let him pray that it may return; let him be wary and humble that he lose it not.

(1) Matthew xxii. 21. (2) Luke xiv. 10.

CHAPTER XI

Of the fewness of those who love the Cross of Jesus

1. Jesus has many lovers of his heavenly kingdom, but few bearers of His Cross. He has many seekers of comfort, but few of tribulation. He finds many companions of His table, but few of His fasting. All desire to rejoice with Him, few are willing to undergo anything for His sake. Many follow Jesus that they may eat of His loaves, but few that they may drink of the cup of His passion. Many are astonished at His Miracles, few follow after the shame of His Cross. Many love Jesus so long as no adversities happen to them. Many praise Him and bless Him, so long as they receive any comforts from Him. But if Jesus hide Himself and withdraw from them a little while, they fall either into complaining or into too great dejection of mind.

2. But they who love Jesus for Jesus' sake, and not for any consolation of their own, bless Him in all tribulation and anguish of heart as in the highest consolation. And if He should never give them consolation, nevertheless they would always praise Him and always give Him thanks.

3. Oh what power has the pure love of Jesus, unmixed with any gain or love of self! Should not all they be called mercenary who are always seeking consolations? Do they not prove themselves lovers of self more than of Christ who are always seeking their own gain and advantage? Where shall be found one who is willing to serve God altogether for nought?

4. Rarely is any one found so spiritual as to be stripped of all selfish thoughts, for who shall find a man truly poor in spirit and free of all created things? "His value is from afar, yea from the ends of the earth." A man may give away all his goods, yet that is nothing; and if he do many deeds of penitence, yet that is a small thing; and though he understand all knowledge, yet that is afar off; and if he have great virtue and zealous devotion, yet much is lacking unto him, yea, one thing which is the most necessary to him of all. What is it then? That having given up all things besides, he give up himself and go forth from himself utterly, and retain nothing of self-love; and having done all things which he knows to be his duty to do, that he feel that he has done nothing. Let him not reckon that much which might be much esteemed, but let him pronounce himself to be in truth an unprofitable servant, as the Truth Himself saith, When ye have done all things that are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants.(1) Then may he be truly poor and naked in spirit, and be able to say with the Prophet, As for me, I am poor and needy.(2) Nevertheless, no man is richer than he, no man stronger, no man freer. For he knows both how to give up himself and all things, and how to be lowly in his own eyes.

(1) Luke xvii. 10. (2) Psalm xxv. 16.

CHAPTER XII

Of the royal way of the Holy Cross

1. That seems a hard saying to many, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his Cross and follow Me.(1) But it will be much harder to hear that last sentence, Depart from me, ye wicked, into eternal fire.(2) For they who now willingly hear the word of the Cross and follow it, shall not then fear the hearing of eternal damnation. This sign of the Cross shall be in heaven when the Lord comes to Judgment. Then all servants of the Cross, who in life have conformed themselves to the Crucified, shall draw nigh unto Christ the Judge with great boldness.

2. Why fear you then to take up the cross which leads to a kingdom? In the Cross is health, in the Cross is life, in the Cross is protection from enemies, in the Cross is heavenly sweetness, in the Cross strength of mind, in the Cross joy of spirit, in the Cross the height of virtue, in the Cross perfection of holiness. There is no health of the soul, no hope of eternal life, save in the Cross. Take up therefore, your cross and follow Jesus and you shalt go into eternal life. He went before you bearing His Cross and died for you upon the Cross, that you also may bear your cross and may love to be crucified upon it. For if you be dead with Him, you shalt also live with Him, and if you be a partaker of His sufferings you shalt be also of His glory.

3. Behold everything depends upon the Cross, and everything lies in dying; and there is none other way unto life and to true inward peace, except the way of the Holy Cross and of daily mortification. Go where you wilt, seek whatsoever you wilt, and you shalt find no higher way above nor safer way below, than the way of the Holy Cross. Dispose and order all things according to thine own will and judgment, and you shalt ever find something to suffer either willingly or unwillingly, and thus you shalt ever find your cross. For you shalt either feel pain of body, or tribulation of spirit within your soul.

4. Sometimes you wilt be forsaken of God, sometimes you wilt be tried by your neighbor, and which is more, you wilt often by wearisome to yourself. And still you can not be delivered nor eased by any remedy or consolation, but must bear so long as God will. For God will have you learn to suffer tribulation without consolation, and to submit yourself fully to it, and by tribulation by made more humble. No man understands the Passion of Christ in his heart so well as he who has had somewhat of the life suffering himself. The Cross therefore is always ready, and every where waits for you. You can not flee from it whithersoever you hurry, for withersoever you come, you bear yourself with you, and shalt ever find yourself. Turn you above, turn you below, turn you without, turn you within, and in them all you shalt find the Cross; and needful is it that you everywhere possess patience if you

wilt have internal peace and gain the everlasting crown.

5. If you willingly bear the Cross, it will bear you, and will bring you to the end which you seek, even where there shall be the end of suffering; though it shall not be here. If you bear it unwillingly, you make a burden for yourself and greatly increases your load, and yet you must bear it. If you cast away one cross, without doubt you shalt find another and perchance a heavier.

6. Think you to escape what no mortal has been able to avoid? Which of the saints in the world has been without the cross and tribulation? For not even Jesus Christ our Lord was one hour without the anguish of His Passion, so long as He lived. It behooved, He said, Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and so to enter into his glory.(3) And how dost you seek another way than this royal way, which is the way of the Holy Cross?

7. The whole life of Christ was a cross and martyrdom, and dost you seek for yourself rest and joy? You art wrong, you art wrong, if you seek aught but to suffer tribulations, for this whole mortal life is full of miseries, and set round with crosses. And the higher a man has advanced in spirit, the heavier crosses he will often find, because the sorrow of his banishment increases with the strength of his love.

8. But yet the man who is thus in so many wise afflicted, is not without refreshment of consolation, because he feels abundant fruit to be growing within him out of the bearing of his cross. For whilst he willing submits himself to it, every burden of tribulation is turned into an assurance of divine comfort, and the more the flesh is wasted by affliction, the more is the spirit strengthened mightily by inward grace. And oftentimes so greatly is he comforted by the desire for tribulation and adversity, through love of conformity to the Cross of Christ, that he would not be without sorrow and tribulation; for he believes that he shall be the more acceptable to God, the more and the heavier burdens he is able to bear for His sake. That is not the virtue of man, but the grace of Christ which has such power and energy in the weak flesh, that what it naturally hates and flees from, this it draws to and loves through fervor of spirit.

9. It is not in the nature of man to bear the cross, to love the cross, to keep under the body and to bring it into subjection, to fly from honors, to bear reproaches meekly, to despise self and desire to be despised, to bear all adversities and losses, and to desire no prosperity in this world. If you look to yourself, you wilt of yourself be able to do none of this; but if you trust in the Lord, endurance shall be given you from heaven, and the world and the flesh shall be made subject to your command. Yea, you shalt not even fear thine adversary the devil, if you be armed with faith and signed with the Cross of Christ.

10. Set yourself, therefore, like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to the manful bearing of the Cross of your Lord, who out of love was crucified for you. Prepare yourself for the bearing many adversities and manifold troubles in this wretched life; because so it shall be with you wheresoever you art, and so in very deed you shalt find it, wherever you hide yourself. This it must be; and there is no means of escaping from tribulation and sorrow, except to bear them patiently. Drink you lovingly your Lord's cup if you desire to be His friend and to have your lot with Him. Leave consolations to God, let Him do as seems best to Him concerning them. But do you set yourself to endure tribulations, and reckon them the best consolations; for the sufferings of this present time are not worryour to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us,(4) nor would they be even if you wert to endure them all.

11. When you have come to this, that tribulation is sweet and pleasant to you for Christ's sake, then reckon that it is well with you, because you have found paradise on earth. So long as it is hard to you to suffer and you desire to escape, so long it will not be well with you, and tribulations will follow you everywhere.

12. If you set yourself to that you ought, namely, to suffer and to die, it shall soon go better with you, and you shalt find peace. Though you should be caught up with Paul unto the third heaven,(5) you art not on that account secure from suffering evil. I will show him, saith Jesus, what great things he must suffer for My Name's sake.(6) It remains, therefore, to you to suffer, if you wilt love Jesus and serve Him continually.

13. Oh that you wert worryour to suffer something for the name of Jesus, how great glory should await you, what rejoicing among all the saints of God, what bright example also to your neighbor! For all me commend patience, although few be willing to practice it. You ought surely to suffer a little for Christ when many suffer heavier things for the world.

14. Know you of a surety that you ought to lead the life of a dying man. And the more a man dies to himself, the more he begins to live towards God. None is fit for the understanding of heavenly things, unless he has submitted himself to bearing adversities for Christ. Nothing more acceptable to God, nothing more healthful for yourself in this world, than to suffer willingly for Christ. And if it were thine to choose, you ought rather to wish to suffer adversities for Christ, than to be refreshed with manifold consolations, for you would be more like Christ and more conformed to all saints. For our worthiness and growth in grace lies not in many delights and consolations, but rather in bearing many troubles and adversities.

15. If indeed there had been anything better and more profitable to the health of men than to suffer, Christ would surely have shown it by word and example. For both the disciples who followed Him,

and all who desire to follow Him, He plainly exhorts to bear their cross, and saith, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow Me.(7) So now that we have thoroughly read and studied all things, let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.(8)

(1) Matthew xvi. 24. (2) Matthew xxv. 41. (3) Luke xxiv. 46.

(4) Romans viii. 18. (5) 2 Corinthians xii. 2.

(6) Acts ix. 16. (7) Luke ix. 23. (8) Acts xiv. 21.

THE THIRD BOOK

ON INWARD CONSOLATION

CHAPTER I

Of the inward voice of Christ to the faithful soul

1. I will hearken what the Lord God shall say within me.(1) Blessed is the soul which hears the Lord speaking within it, and receives the word of consolation from His mouth. Blessed are the ears which receive the echoes of the soft whisper of God, and turn not aside to the whisperings of this world. Blessed truly are the ears which listen not to the voice that sounds without, but to that which teaches truth inwardly. Blessed are the eyes which are closed to things without, but are fixed upon things within. Blessed are they who search inward things and study to prepare themselves more and more by daily exercises for the receiving of heavenly mysteries. Blessed are they who long to have leisure for God, and free themselves from every hindrance of the world. Think on these things, O my soul, and shut the doors of your carnal desires, so may you hear what the Lord God will say within you.

2. These things saith your Beloved, "I am your salvation, I am your peace and your life. Keep you unto Me, and you shalt find peace." Put away you all transitory things, seek those things that are eternal. For what are all temporal things but deceits, and what shall all created things help you if you be forsaken by the Creator. Therefore put all things else away and give yourself to the Creator, to be well pleasing and faithful to Him, that you may be able to attain true blessedness.

(1) Psalm lxxxv. 8.

CHAPTER II

What the truth saith inwardly without noise of words

1. Speak Lord, for your servant hears.(1) I am Your servant; O give me understanding that I may know Your testimonies. Incline my heart unto the words of Your mouth.(2) Let your speech distill as the dew. The children of Israel spake in old time to Moses, Speak you unto us and we will hear, but let not the Lord speak unto us lest we die.(3) Not thus, O Lord, not thus do I pray, but rather with Samuel the prophet, I beseech You humbly and earnestly, Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears. Let not Moses speak to me, nor any prophet, but rather speak Thou, O Lord, who did inspire and illuminate all the prophets; for You alone without them can perfectly fill me with knowledge, whilst they without You shall profit nothing.

2. They can indeed utter words, but they give not the spirit. They speak with exceeding beauty, but when You art silent they kindle not the heart. They give us scriptures, but You make known the sense thereof. They bring us mysteries, but You reveal the things which are signified. They utter commandments, but You help to the fulfilling of them. They show the way, but You give strength for the journey. They act only outwardly, but You dost instruct and enlighten the heart. They water, but You give the increase. They cry with words, but You give understanding to the hearer.

3. Therefore let not Moses speak to me, but Thou, O Lord my God, Eternal Truth; lest I die and bring forth no fruit, being outwardly admonished, but not enkindled within; lest the word heard but not followed, known but not loved, believed but not obeyed, rise up against me in the judgment. Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears; You have the words of eternal life.(4) Speak unto me for some consolation unto my soul, for the amendment of my whole life, and for the praise and glory and eternal honor of Your Name.

(1) I Samuel iii. 9. (2) Psalm cxix. 125. (3) Exodus xx. 19.

(4) John vi. 68.

CHAPTER III

How all the words of God are to be heard with humility, and how many consider them not

1. "My Son, hear My words, for My words are most sweet, surpassing all the knowledge of the philosophers and wise men of this world. My words are spirit, and they are life,(1) and are not to be weighed by man's understanding. They are not to be drawn forth for vain approbation, but to be heard in silence, and to be received with all humility and with deep love."

2. And I said, "Blessed is the man whom You teach, O Lord, and instruct him in Your law, that You may give him rest in time of adversity,(2) and that he be not desolate in the earth."

3. "I," saith the Lord, "taught the prophets from the beginning, and even now cease I not to speak unto all; but many are deaf and hardened against My voice; many love to listen to the world rather than to God, they follow after the desires of the flesh more readily than after the good pleasure of God. The world promises things that are temporal and small, and it is served with great eagerness. I promise things that are great and eternal, and the hearts of mortals are slow to stir. Who serves and obeys Me in all things, with such carefulness as he serves the world and its rulers?"

Be you ashamed, O Sidon, saith the sea;
And if you reason seek, hear you me.(3)

For a little reward men make a long journey; for eternal life many will scarce lift a foot once from the ground. Mean reward is sought after; for a single piece of money sometimes there is shameful striving; for a thing which is vain and for a trifling promise, men shrink not from toiling day and night."

4. "But, O shame! for an unchangeable good, for an inestimable reward, for the highest honor and for a glory that fades not away, it is irksome to them to toil even a little. Be you ashamed therefore, slothful and discontented servant, for they are found readier unto perdition than you unto life. They rejoice more heartily in vanity than you in the truth. Sometimes, indeed, they are disappointed of their hope, but my promise fails no man, nor sends away empty him who trusts in Me. What I have promised I will give; what I have said I will fulfil; if only a man remain faithful in My love unto the end. Therefore am I the rewarder of all good men, and a strong approver of all who are godly.

5. "Write My words in your heart and consider them diligently, for they shall be very needful to you in time of temptation. What you understand not when you read, you shalt know in the time of your

visitation. I am wont to visit Mine elect in twofold manner, even by temptation and by comfort, and I teach them two lessons day by day, the one in chiding their faults, the other in exhorting them to grow in grace. He who has my words and rejects them has one who shall judge him at the last day."

A PRAYER FOR THE SPIRIT OF DEVOTION

6. O Lord my God, You are all my good, and who am I that I should dare to speak unto You? I am the very poorest of Your servants, an abject worm, much poorer and more despicable than I know or dare to say. Nevertheless remember, O Lord, that I am nothing, I have nothing, and can do nothing. You only art good, just and holy; You can do all things, art over all things, fill all things, leaving empty only the sinner. Call to mind Your tender mercies, and fill my heart with Your grace, You who wilt not that Your work should return to You void.

7. How can I bear this miserable life unless Your mercy and grace strengthen me? Turn not away Your face from me, delay not Your visitation. Withdraw not You Your comfort from me, lest my soul "gasp after you as a thirsty land." Lord, teach me to do Your will, teach me to walk humbly and uprightly before You, for You are my wisdom, who know me in truth, and knew me before the world was made and before I was born into the world.

(1) John vi. 63. (2) Psalm xciv. 13. (3) Isaiah xxiii. 4.

CHAPTER IV

How we must walk in truth and humility before God

1. "My Son! walk before Me in truth, and in the simplicity of your heart seek Me continually. He who walks before Me in the truth shall be safe from evil assaults, and the truth shall deliver him from the wiles and slanders of the wicked. If the truth shall make you free, you shalt be free indeed, and shalt not care for the vain words of men."
2. Lord, it is true as You say let it, I pray You, be so with me; let Your truth teach me, let it keep me and preserve me safe unto the end. Let it free me from all evil and inordinate affection, and I will walk before You in great freedom of heart.
3. "I will teach you," saith the Truth, "the things which are right and pleasing before Me. Think upon your sins with great displeasure and sorrow, and never think yourself anything because of your good works. Verily you art a sinner, liable to many passions, yea, tied and bound with them. Of yourself you always tend unto nothing, you wilt quickly fall, quickly be conquered, quickly disturbed, quickly undone. You have nought whereof to glory, but many reasons why you should reckon yourself vile, for you art far weaker than you art able to comprehend.
4. "Let, therefore, nothing which does seem to you great; let nothing be grand, nothing of value or beauty, nothing worryour of honor, nothing lofty, nothing praiseworyour or desirable, save what is eternal. Let the eternal truth please you above all things, let thine own great vileness displease you continually. Fear, denounce, flee nothing so much as thine own faults and sins, which ought to be more displeasing to you than any loss whatsoever of goods. There are some who walk not sincerely before me, but being led by curiosity and pride, they desire to know my secret things and to understand the deep things of God, whilst they neglect themselves and their salvation. These often fall into great temptations and sins because of their pride and curiosity, for I am against them.
5. "Fear you the judgments of God, fear greatly the wrath of the Almighty. Shrink from debating upon the works of the Most High, but search narrowly thine own iniquities into what great sins you have fallen, and how many good things you have neglected. There are some who carry their devotion only in books, some in pictures, some in outward signs and figures; some have Me in their mouths but little in their hearts. Others there are who, being enlightened in their understanding and purged in their affections, continually long after eternal things, hear of earthly things with unwillingness, obey the necessities of nature with sorrow. And these understand what the Spirit of truth speaks in them; for He teaches them to despise earthly things and to love heavenly; to neglect the world and

to desire heaven all the day and night."

CHAPTER V

Of the wonderful power of the Divine Love

1. I bless You, O Heavenly Father, Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, for that You have vouchsafed to think of me, poor that I am. O, Father of Mercies and God of all comfort,(1) I give thanks unto You, who refresh me sometimes with thine own comfort, when I am unworthy of any comfort. I bless and glorify You continually, with thine only begotten Son and the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, for ever and ever. O Lord God, Holy lover of my soul, when You shalt come into my heart, all my inward parts shall rejoice. You art my glory and the joy of my heart. You art my hope and my refuge in the day of my trouble.

2. But because I am still weak in love and imperfect in virtue, I need to be strengthened and comforted by You; therefore visit You me often and instruct me with Your holy ways of discipline. Deliver me from evil passions, and cleanse my heart from all inordinate affections, that, being healed and altogether cleansed within, I may be made ready to love, strong to suffer, steadfast to endure.

3. Love is a great thing, a good above all others, which alone makes every heavy burden light, and equalize every inequality. For it bears the burden and makes it no burden, it makes every bitter thing to be sweet and of good taste. The surpassing love of Jesus impels to great works, and excites to the continual desiring of greater perfection. Love wills to be raised up, and not to be held down by any mean thing. Love wills to be free and aloof from all worldly affection, lest its inward power of vision be hindered, lest it be entangled by any worldly prosperity or overcome by adversity. Nothing is more sweet than love, nothing more strong, nothing more lofty, nothing more broad, nothing more pleasant, nothing more full or better in heaven nor on earth, for love was born of God and cannot rest save in God above all created things.

4. He who loves flies, runs, and is glad; he is free and not hindered. He gives all things for all things, and has all things in all things, because he rests in One who is high above all, from whom every good flows and proceeds. He looks not for gifts, but turns himself to the Giver above of all good things. Love oftentimes knows no measure, but breaks out above all measure; love feels no burden, reckons not labors, strives after more than it is able to do, pleads not impossibility, because it judges all things which are lawful for it to be possible. It is strong therefore for all things, and it fulfills many things, and is successful where he who loves not fails and lies down.

5. Love is watchful, and whilst sleeping still keeps watch; though fatigued it is not weary, though pressed it is not forced, though alarmed it is not terrified, but like the living flame and the burning

torch, it breaks forth on high and securely triumphs. If a man loves, he knows what this voice cries. For the ardent affection of the soul is a great clamor in the ears of God, and it saith: My God, my Beloved! You art all mine, and I am all Thine.

6. Enlarge You me in love, that I may learn to taste with the innermost mouth of my heart how sweet it is to love, to be dissolved, and to swim in love. Let me be holden by love, mounting above myself through exceeding fervor and admiration. Let me sing the song of love, let me follow You my Beloved on high, let my soul exhaust itself in Your praise, exulting with love. Let me love You more than myself, not loving myself except for Your sake, and all men in You who truly love You, as the law of love commands which shines forth from You.

7. Love is swift, sincere, pious, pleasant, gentle, strong, patient, faithful, prudent, long-suffering, manly, and never seeking her own; for wheresoever a man seeks his own, there he falls from love. Love is circumspect, humble, and upright; not weak, not fickle, nor intent on vain things; sober, chaste, steadfast, quiet, and guarded in all the senses. Love is subject and obedient to all that are in authority, vile and lowly in its own sight, devout and grateful towards God, faithful and always trusting in Him even when God hides His face, for without sorrows we cannot live in love.

8. He who is not ready to suffer all things, and to conform to the will of the Beloved, is not warier to be called a lover of God. It behooves him who loves to embrace willingly all hard and bitter things for the Beloved's sake, and not to be drawn away from Him because of any contrary accidents.

(1) 2 Corinthians i. 3.

CHAPTER VI

Of the proving of the true lover

1. "My Son, you art not yet strong and prudent in your love."
2. Wherefore, O my Lord?
3. "Because for a little opposition you fall away from your undertakings, and too eagerly seek after consolation. The strong lover stands fast in temptations, and believes not the evil persuasions of the enemy. As in prosperity I please him, so in adversity I do not displease."
4. "The prudent lover considers not the gift of the lover so much as the love of the giver. He looks for the affection more than the value, and sets all gifts lower than the Beloved. The noble lover rests not in the gift, but in Me above every gift."
5. "All is not lost, though you sometimes think of Me or of My saints, less than you should desire. That good and sweet affection which you sometimes perceive is the effect of present grace and some foretaste of the heavenly country; but hereon you must not too much depend, for it goes and comes. But to strive against the evil motions of the mind which come to us, and to resist the suggestions of the devil, is a token of virtue and great merit."
6. "Therefore let not strange fancies disturb you, whencesoever they arise. Bravely observe your purpose and your upright intentions towards God. It is not an illusion when you art sometimes suddenly carried away into rapture, and then suddenly art brought back to the wonted vanities of your heart. For you dost rather unwillingly undergo them than cause them; and so long as they displease you and you strive against them, it is a merit and no loss."
7. "Know you that thine old enemy altogether strives to hinder your pursuit after good, and to deter you from every godly exercise, to wit, the contemplation of the Saints, the pious remembrance of My passion, the profitable recollection of sin, the keeping of your own heart, and the steadfast purpose to grow in virtue. He suggests to you many evil thoughts, that he may work in you weariness and terror, and so draw you away from prayer and holy reading. Humble confession displeases him, and if he were able he would make you to cease from Communion. Believe him not, nor heed him, though many a time he has laid for you the snares of deceit. Account it to be from him, when he suggests evil and unclean thoughts. Say unto him, 'Depart unclean spirit; put on shame, miserable one; horribly unclean are you, who bring such things to my ears. Depart from me, detestable

deceiver; you shalt have no part in me; but Jesus shall be with me, as a strong warrior, and you shalt stand confounded. Rather would I die and bear all suffering, than consent to you. Hold your peace and be dumb; I will not hear you more, though you plot more snares against me. The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom then shall I fear? Though a host of men should rise up against me, yet shall not my heart be afraid. The Lord is my strength and my Redeemer.'(1)

8. "Strive you like a good soldier; and if sometimes you fail through weakness, put on your strength more bravely than before, trusting in My more abundant grace, and take you much heed of vain confidence and pride. Because of it many are led into error, and sometimes fall into blindness well-nigh irremediable. Let this ruin of the proud, who foolishly lift themselves up, be to you for a warning and a continual exhortation to humility."

(1) Psalm xxvii. 1-3; xix. 14.

CHAPTER VII

Of hiding our grace under the guard of humility

1. "My Son, it is better and safer for you to hide the grace of devotion, and not to lift yourself up on high, nor to speak much thereof, nor to value it greatly; but rather to despise yourself, and to fear as though this grace were given to one unworthy thereof. Nor must you depend too much upon this feeling, for it can very quickly be turned into its opposite. Think when you art in a state of grace how miserable and poor you art wont to be without grace. Nor is there advance in spiritual life in this alone, that you have the grace of consolation, but that you humbly and unselfishly and patiently take the withdrawal thereof; so that you cease not from the exercise of prayer, nor suffer your other common duties to be in anywise neglected; rather do your task more readily, as though you had gained more strength and knowledge; and do not altogether neglect yourself because of the dearth and anxiety of spirit which you feel.

2. "For there are many who, when things have not gone prosperous with them, become forthwith impatient or slothful. For the way of a man is not in himself,(1) but it is God's to give and to console, when He will, and as much as He will, and whom He will, as it shall please Him, and no further. Some who were presumptuous because of the grace of devotion within them, have destroyed themselves, because they would do more than they were able, not considering the measure of their own littleness, but rather following the impulse of the heart than the judgment of reason. And because they presumed beyond what was well-pleasing unto God, therefore they quickly lost grace. They became poor and were left vile, who had built for themselves their nest in heaven; so that being humbled and stricken with poverty, they might learn not to fly with their own wings, but to put their trust under My feathers. They who are as yet new and unskilled in the way of the Lord, unless they rule themselves after the counsel of the wise, may easily be deceived and led away.

3. "But if they wish to follow their own fancies rather than trust the experience of others, the result will be very dangerous to them if they still refuse to be drawn away from their own notion. Those who are wise in their own conceits, seldom patiently endure to be ruled by others. It is better to have a small portion of wisdom with humility, and a slender understanding, than great treasures of sciences with vain self-esteem. It is better for you to have less than much of what may make you proud. He does not very discreetly who gives up himself entirely to joy, forgetting his former helplessness and the chaste fear of the Lord, which fears to lose the grace offered. Nor is he very wise, after a manly sort, who in time of adversity, or any trouble whatsoever, bears himself too despairingly, and feels concerning Me less trustfully than he ought.

4. "He who in time of peace wills to be over secure shall be often found in time of war over dispirited and full of fears. If you knew always how to continue humble and moderate in yourself, and to guide and rule thine own spirit well, you would not so quickly fall into danger and mischief. It is good counsel that when fervor of spirit is kindled, you should meditate how it will be with you when the light is taken away. Which when it does happen, remember that still the light may return again, which I have taken away for a time for a warning to you, and also for mine own glory. Such a trial is often more useful than if you had always things prosperous according to thine own will.

5. "For merits are not to be reckoned by this, that a man has many visions or consolations, or that he is skilled in the Scriptures, or that he is placed in a high situation; but that he is grounded upon true humility and filled with divine charity, that he always purely and uprightly seeks the honor of God, that he sets not by himself, but unfeignedly despises himself, and even rejoices to be despised and humbled by others more than to be honored."

(1) Jeremiah x. 23.

CHAPTER VIII

Of a low estimation of self in the sight of God

1. I will speak unto my Lord, who am but dust and ashes. If I count myself more, behold You stand against me, and my iniquities bear true testimony, and I cannot gainsay it. But if I abase myself, and bring myself to nought, and shrink from all self-esteem, and grind myself to dust, which I am, Your grace will be favorable unto me, and Your light will be near unto my heart; and all self-esteem, how little soever it be, shall be swallowed up in the depths of my nothingness, and shall perish for ever. There You show to me myself, what I am, what I was, and whither I have come: so foolish was I and ignorant.(1) If I am left to myself, behold I am nothing, I am all weakness; but if suddenly You look upon me, immediately I am made strong, and filled with new joy. And it is great marvel that I am so suddenly lifted up, and so graciously embraced by You, since I am always being carried to the deep by my own weight.

2. This is the doing of Your love which freely goes before me and succors me in so many necessities, which guards me also in great dangers and snatches me, as I may truly say, from innumerable evils. For verily, by loving myself amiss, I lost myself, and by seeking and sincerely loving You alone, I found both myself and You, and through love I have brought myself to yet deeper nothingness: because You, O most sweet Lord, deal with me beyond all merit, and above all which I dare ask or think.

3. Blessed be Thou, O my God, because though I be unworthy of all Your benefits, Your bountiful and infinite goodness never ceases to do good even to ingrates and to those who are turned far from You. Turn You us unto Yourself, that we may be grateful, humble, and godly, for You art our salvation, our courage, and our strength.

(1) Psalm lxxiii. 22.

CHAPTER IX

That all things are to be referred to God, as the final end

1. "My Son, I must be your Supreme and final end, if you desire to be truly happy. Out of such purpose your affection shall be purified, which too often is sinfully bent upon itself and upon created things. For if you seek yourself in any matter, straightaway you wilt fail within yourself and grow barren. Therefore refer everything to Me first of all, for it is I who gave you all. So look upon each blessing as flowing from the Supreme Good, and thus all things are to be attributed to Me as their source.

2. "From Me the humble and great, the poor and the rich, draw water as from a living fountain, and those who serve Me with a free and faithful spirit shall receive grace for grace. But he who will glory apart from Me, or will be delighted with any good which lies in himself, shall not be established in true joy, nor shall be enlarged in heart, but shall be greatly hindered and thrown into tribulation. Therefore you must not ascribe any good to yourself, nor look upon any virtue as belonging to any man, but ascribe it all unto God, without whom man has nothing. I gave all, I will receive all again, and with great strictness require I the giving of thanks.

3. "This is the Truth, and by it the vanity of boasting is put to flight. And if heavenly grace and true charity shall enter into you, there shall be no envy, nor straitening of the heart, nor shall any self-love take possession of you. For divine charity conquers all things, and enlarges all the powers of the soul. If you art truly wise, you wilt rejoice in Me alone, you wilt hope in Me alone; for there is none good but one, that is God,(1) Who is to be praised above all things, and in all things to receive blessing."

(1) Luke xviii. 19.

CHAPTER X

That is it sweet to despise the world and to serve God

1. Now will I speak again, O my Lord, and hold not my peace; I will say in the ears of my God, my Lord, and my King, who is exalted above all, Oh how plentiful is Your goodness which You have laid up for them that fear You!(1) But what art You to those who love You? What to those who serve You with their whole heart? Truly unspeakable is the sweetness of the contemplation of You, which You bestow upon those who love You. In this most of all You have showed me the sweetness of Your charity, that when I was not, You made me, and when I wandered far from You, You brought me back that I might serve You, and command me to love You.

2. O Fountain of perpetual love, what shall I say concerning You? How shall I be unmindful of You, who did vouchsafe to remember me, even after I pined away and perished? You have had mercy beyond all hope upon Your servant, and have showed Your grace and friendship beyond all deserving. What reward shall I render You for this Your grace? For it is not given unto all to renounce this world and its affairs, and to take up a religious life. For is it a great thing that I should serve You, whom every creature ought to serve? It ought not to seem a great thing to me to serve You; but rather this appears to me a great and wonderful thing, that You vouchsafe to receive as Your servant one so poor and unworthy, and to join him unto Your chosen servants.

3. Behold all things which I have are Thine, and with them I serve You. And yet verily it is You who serve me, rather than I You. Behold the heaven and the earth which You have created for the service of men; they are at Your bidding, and perform daily whatsoever You dost command. Yea, and this is little; for You have even ordained the Angels for the service of man. But it surpasses even all these things, that You Yourself did vouchsafe to minister unto man, and did promise that You would give Yourself unto him.

4. What shall I render unto You for all these Your manifold mercies? Oh that I were able to serve You all the days of my life! Oh that even for one day I were enabled to do You service warier of Yourself! For verily You art warier of all service, all honor, and praise without end. Verily You art my God, and I am Your poor servant, who am bound to serve You with all my strength, nor ought I ever to grow weary of Your praise. This is my wish, this is my exceeding great desire, and whatsoever is lacking to me, vouchsafe You to supply.

5. It is great honor, great glory to serve You, and to despise all for Your sake. For they shall have great grace who of their own will shall submit themselves to Your most holy service. They who for

Your love have cast away every carnal delight shall find the sweetest consolation of the Holy Ghost. They who enter the narrow way of life for Your Name's sake, and have put away all worldly cares, shall attain great liberty of spirit.

6. Oh grateful and delight some service of God, whereby man is made truly free and holy! Oh sacred condition of the religious servant, which makes man equal to the Angels, well-pleasing unto God, terrible to evil spirits, and acceptable to all faithful ones! Oh service to be embraced and ever desired, in which the highest good is promised, and joy is gained which shall remain for evermore!

(1) Psalm xxxi. 21.

CHAPTER XI

That the desires of the heart are to be examined and governed

1. "My Son, you have still many things to learn, which you have not well learned yet."
2. What are they, Lord?
3. "To place your desire altogether in subjection to My good pleasure, and not to be a lover of yourself, but an earnest seeker of My will. Your desires often excite and urge you forward; but consider with yourself whether you art not more moved for thine own objects than for My honor. If it is Myself that you seek, you shalt be well content with whatsoever I shall ordain; but if any pursuit of thine own lies hidden within you, behold it is this which hinders and weighs you down.
4. "Beware, therefore, lest you strive too earnestly after some desire which you have conceived, without taking counsel of Me; lest haply it repent you afterwards, and that displease you which before pleased, and for which you did long as for a great good. For not every affection which seems good is to be forthwith followed; neither is every opposite affection to be immediately avoided. Sometimes it is expedient to use restraint even in good desires and wishes, lest through importunity you fall into distraction of mind, lest through want of discipline you become a stumbling-block to others, or lest by the resistance of others you be suddenly disturbed and brought to confusion.
5. "Sometimes, indeed, it is needful to use violence, and manfully to strive against the sensual appetite, and not to consider what the flesh may or not will; but rather to strive after this, that it may become subject, however unwillingly, to the spirit. And for so long it ought to be chastised and compelled to undergo slavery, even until it be ready for all things, and learn to be contented with little, to be delighted with things simple, and never to murmur at any inconvenience."

CHAPTER XII

Of the inward growth of patience, and of the struggle against evil desires

1. O Lord God, I see that patience is very necessary unto me; for many things in this life fall out contrary. For howsoever I may have contrived for my peace, my life cannot go on without strife and trouble.

2. "You speak truly, My Son. For I will not that you seek such a peace as is without trials, and knows no adversities; but rather that you should judge yourself to have found peace, when you art tried with manifold tribulations, and proved by many adversities. If you shalt say that you art not able to bear much, how then wilt you sustain the fire hereafter? Of two evils we should always choose the less. Therefore, that you may escape eternal torments hereafter, strive on God's behalf to endure present evils bravely. Do you think that the children of this world suffer nought, or but little? You wilt not find it so, even though you find out the most prosperous.

3. "'But,' you wilt say, 'they have many delights, and they follow their own wills, and thus they bear lightly their tribulations.'

4. "Be it so, grant that they have what they list; but how long, think you will it last? Behold, like the smoke those who are rich in this world will pass away, and no record shall remain of their past joys. Yea, even while they yet live, they rest not without bitterness and weariness and fear. For from the very same thing wherein they find delight, thence they oftentimes have the punishment of sorrow. Justly it befalls them, that because out of measure they seek out and pursue pleasures, they enjoy them not without confusing and bitterness. Oh how short, how false, how inordinate and wicked are all these pleasures! Yet because of their sottishness and blindness men do not understand; but like brute beasts, for the sake of a little pleasure of this corruptible life, they incur death of the soul. You therefore, my son, go not after your lusts, but refrain yourself from thine appetites.(1) Delight you in the Lord, and He shall give you your heart's desire.(2)

5. "For if you wilt truly find delight, and be abundantly comforted of Me, behold in the contempt of all worldly things and in the avoidance of all worthless pleasures shall be your blessing, and fulness of consolation shall be given you. And the more you withdraw yourself from all solace of creatures, the more sweet and powerful consolations shalt you find. But at the first you shalt not attain to them, without some sorrow and hard striving. Long-accustomed habit will oppose, but it shall be overcome by better habit. The flesh will murmur again and again, but will be restrained by fervor of spirit. The old serpent will urge and embitter you, but will be put to flight by prayer; moreover,

by useful labor his entrance will be greatly obstructed."

(1) Ecclesiastes xviii. 30. (2) Psalm xxxvii. 4.

CHAPTER XIII

Of the obedience of one in lowly subjection after the example of Jesus Christ

1. "My Son, he who strives to withdraw himself from obedience, withdraws himself also from grace, and he who seeks private advantages, loses those which are common unto all. If a man submit not freely and willingly to one set over him, it is a sign that his flesh is not yet perfectly subject to himself, but often resists and murmurs. Learn therefore quickly to submit yourself to him who is over you, if you seek to bring thine own flesh into subjection. For the outward enemy is very quickly overcome if the inner man have not been laid low. There is no more grievous and deadly enemy to the soul than you art to yourself, if you art not led by the Spirit. You must not altogether conceive contempt for yourself, if you wilt prevail against flesh and blood. Because as yet you inordinately love yourself, therefore you shrink from yielding yourself to the will of others.

2. "But what great thing is it that thou, who art dust and nothingness, yield yourself to man for God's sake, when I, the Almighty and the Most High, who created all things out of nothing, subjected Myself to man for your sake? I became the most humble and despised of men, that by My humility you mightest overcome your pride. Learn to obey, O dust! Learn to humble yourself, O earth and clay, and to bow yourself beneath the feet of all. Learn to crush your passions and to yield yourself in all subjection.

3. "Be zealous against yourself, nor suffer pride to live within you, but so show yourself subject and of no reputation, that all may be able to walk over you, and tread you down as the clay in the streets. What have thou, O foolish man, of which to complain? What, O vile sinner, canst you answer to those who speak against you, seeing you have so often offended God, and many a time have deserved hell? But Mine eye has spared you, because your soul was precious in My sight; that you mightest know My love, and mightest be thankful for My benefits; and that you mightest give yourself altogether to true subjection and humility, and patiently bear the contempt which you meritest."

CHAPTER XIV

Of meditation upon the hidden judgments of God,
that we may not be lifted up because of our well-doing

1. You sendest forth Your judgments against me, O Lord, and shakest all my bones with fear and trembling, and my soul trembles exceedingly. I stand astonished, and remember that the heavens are not clean in your sight.(1) If You chargest Thine angels with folly, and didst spare them not, how shall it be unto me? Stars have fallen from heaven, and what shall I dare who am but dust? They whose works seemed to be praiseworthy, fell into the lowest depths, and they who did eat Angels' food, them have I seen delighted with the husks that the swine do eat.

2. There is therefore no holiness, if You O Lord, withdraw Thine hand. No wisdom profits, if You leave off to guide the helm. No strength avails, if You cease to preserve. No purity is secure, if You protect it not. No self-keeping avails, if Your holy watching be not there. For when we are left alone we are swallowed up and perish, but when we are visited, we are raised up, and we live. For indeed we are unstable, but are made strong through You; we grow cold, but are rekindled by You.

3. Oh, how humbly and abjectly must I reckon of myself, how must I weigh it as nothing, if I seem to have nothing good! Oh, how profoundly ought I to submit myself to Your unfathomable judgments, O Lord, when I find myself nothing else save nothing, and again nothing! Oh weight unmeasurable, oh ocean which cannot be crossed over, where I find nothing of myself save nothing altogether! Where, then, is the hiding-place of glory, where the confidence begotten of virtue? All vain-glory is swallowed up in the depths of Your judgments against me.

4. What is all flesh in Your sight? For how shall the clay boast against Him that fashioned it?(2) How can he be lifted up in vain speech whose heart is subjected in truth to God? The whole world shall not lift him up whom Truth has subdued; nor shall he be moved by the mouth of all who praise him, who has placed all his hope in God. For they themselves who speak, behold, they are all nothing; for they shall cease with the sound of their words, but the truth of the Lord endures for ever.(3)

(1) Job xv. 15. (2) Psalm xxix. 16. (3) Psalm cxvii. 2.

CHAPTER XV

How we must stand and speak, in everything that we desire

1. "My Son, speak you this in every matter, 'Lord, if it please You, let this come to pass. Lord, if this shall be for Thine honour, let it be done in Your Name. Lord, if you see it good for me, and approve it as useful, then grant me to use it for Your honour. But if you knowest that it shall be hurtful unto me, and not profitable for the health of my soul, take the desire away from me!' For not every desire is from the Holy Ghost, although it appear to a man right and good. It is difficult to judge with certainty whether a good or an evil spirit move you to desire this or that, or whether you art moved by thine own spirit. Many have been deceived at the last, who seemed at the beginning to be moved by a good spirit.

2. "Therefore, whatsoever seems to you desirable, you must always desire and seek after it with the fear of God and humility of heart, and most of all, must altogether resign yourself, and commit all unto Me and say, 'Lord, you knowest what is best; let this or that be, according as You wilt. Give what You wilt, so much as You wilt, when You wilt. Do with me as You knowest best, and as best shall please You, and as shall be most to Thine honour. Place me where You wilt, and freely work Your will with me in all things. I am in Thine hand, and turn me in my course. Behold, I am Your servant, ready for all things; for I desire to live not to myself but to You. Oh, that I might live worthily and perfectly.'"

A PRAYER TO BE ENABLED TO DO GOD'S WILL PERFECTLY

3. Grant me Your grace, most merciful Jesus, that it may be with me, and work in me, and persevere with me, even unto the end. Grant that I may ever desire and wish whatsoever is most pleasing and dear unto You. Let Your will be mine, and let my will alway follow Thine, and entirely accord with it. May I choose and reject whatsoever You dost; yea, let it be impossible for me to choose or reject except according to Your will.

4. Grant that I may die to all worldly things, and for Your sake love to be despised and unknown in this world. Grant unto me, above all things that I can desire, to rest in You, and that in You my heart may be at peace. You art the true peace of the heart, You alone its rest; apart from You all things are hard and unquiet. In You alone, the supreme and eternal Good, I will lay me down in peace and take my rest.(1) Amen.

(1) Psalm iv. 9.

CHAPTER XVI

That true solace is to be sought in God alone

1. Whatsoever I am able to desire or to think of for my solace, I look for it not here, but hereafter. For if I alone had all the solaces of this world, and were able to enjoy all its delights, it is certain that they could not endure long. Wherefore, O my soul, you canst be fully comforted and perfectly refreshed, only in God, the Comforter of the poor, and the lifter up of the humble. Wait but a little while, my soul, wait for the Divine promise, and you shalt have abundance of all good things in heaven. If you longest too inordinately for the things which are now, you shalt lose those which are eternal and heavenly. Let temporal things be in the use, eternal things in the desire. You canst not be satisfied with any temporal good, for you wast not created for the enjoyment of these.

2. Although you hadst all the good things which ever were created, yet couldst not you be happy and blessed; all your blessedness and your felicity lies in God who created all things; not such felicity as seems good to the foolish lover of the world, but such as Christ's good and faithful servants wait for, and as the spiritual and pure in heart sometimes taste, whose conversation is in heaven.(1) All human solace is empty and short-lived; blessed and true is that solace which is felt inwardly, springing from the truth. The godly man everywhere bears about with him his own Comforter, Jesus, and saith unto Him: "Be with me, Lord Jesus, always and everywhere. Let it be my comfort to be able to give up cheerfully all human comfort. And if Your consolation fail me, let Your will and righteous approval be alway with me for the highest comfort. For You wilt not always be chiding, neither keepest You Thine anger for ever."(2)

(1) Philippians iii. 20. (2) Psalm cii. 9.

CHAPTER XVII

That all care is to be cast upon God

1. "My Son, suffer me to do with you what I will; I know what is expedient for you. You thinkest as a man, in many things you judgest as human affection persuades you."

2. Lord, what You sayest is true. Greater is Your care for me than all the care which I am able to take for myself. For too insecurely does he stand who casts not all his care upon You. Lord, so long as my will stands right and firm in You, do with me what You wilt, for whatsoever You shalt do with me cannot be aught but good. Blessed be You is You wilt leave me in darkness: blessed also be You if You wilt leave me in light. Blessed be You if You vouchsafe to comfort me, and always blessed be You if You cause me to be troubled.

3. "My Son! even thus you must stand if you desirest to walk with Me. You must be ready alike for suffering or rejoicing. You must be poor and needy as willingly as full and rich."

4. Lord, I will willingly bear for You whatsoever You wilt have to come upon me. Without choice I will receive from Your hand good and evil, sweet and bitter, joy and sadness, and will give You thanks for all things which shall happen to me. Keep me from all sin, and I will not fear death nor hell. Only cast me not away for ever, nor blot me out of the book of life. Then no tribulation which shall come upon me shall do me hurt.

CHAPTER XVIII

That temporal miseries are to be borne patiently after the example of Christ

1. "My Son! I came down from heaven for your salvation; I took upon Me your miseries not of necessity, but drawn by love that you mightest learn patience and mightest bear temporal miseries without murmuring. For from the hour of My birth, until My death upon the Cross, I ceased not from bearing of sorrow; I had much lack of temporal things; I oftentimes heard many reproaches against Myself; I gently bore contradictions and hard words; I received ingratitude for benefits, blasphemies for My miracles, rebukes for My doctrine."

2. Lord, because You wast patient in Your life, herein most of all fulfilling the commandment of Your Father, it is well that I, miserable sinner, should patiently bear myself according to Your will, and as long as You wilt have it so, should bear about with me for my salvation, the burden of this corruptible life. For although the present life seems burdensome, it is nevertheless already made very full of merit through Your grace, and to those who are weak it becomes easier and brighter through Your example and the footsteps of Your saints; but it is also much more full of consolation than it was of old, under the old Testament, when the gate of heaven remained shut; and even the way to heaven seemed more obscure when so few cared to seek after the heavenly kingdom. But not even those who were then just and in the way of salvation were able, before Your Passion and the ransom of Your holy Death, to enter the kingdom of heaven.

3. Oh what great thanks am I bond to give You, who have vouchsafed to show me and all faithful people the good and right way to Thine eternal kingdom, for Your way is our way, and by holy patience we walk to You who art our Crown. If You hadst not gone before and taught us, who would care to follow? Oh, how far would they have gone backward if they had not beheld Your glorious example! Behold we are still lukewarm, though we have heard of Your many signs and discourses; what would become of us if we had not such a light to help us follow You?

CHAPTER XIX

Of bearing injuries, and who shall be approved as truly patient

1. "What sayest thou, My Son? Cease to complain; consider My suffering and that of My saints. You have not yet resisted unto blood.(1) It is little which you sufferest in comparison with those who have suffered so many things, have been so strongly tempted, so grievously troubled, so manywise proved and tried. You ought therefore to call to mind the more grievous sufferings of others that you mightest bear your lesser ones more easily, and if they seem not to you little, see that it is not your impatience which is the cause of this. But whether they be little or whether they be great, study to bear them all with patience.

2. "So far as you settest yourself to bear patiently, so far you dost wisely and art deserving of the more merit; you shalt also bear the more easily if your mind and habit are carefully trained hereunto. And say not 'I cannot bear these things from such a man, nor are things of this kind to be borne by me, for he has done me grievous harm and imputes to me what I had never thought: but from another I will suffer patiently, such things as I see I ought to suffer.' Foolish is such a thought as this, for it considers not the virtue of patience, nor by whom that virtue is to be crowned, but it rather weights persons and offences against self.

3. "He is not truly patient who will only suffer as far as seems right to himself and from whom he pleases. But the truly patient man considers not by what man he is tried, whether by one above him, or by an equal or inferior, whether by a good and holy man, or a perverse and unworour; but indifferently from every creature, whatsoever or how often soever adversity happens to him, he gratefully accepts all from the hand of God and counts it great gain; for with God nothing which is borne for His sake, however small, shall lose its reward.

4. "Be you therefore ready for the fight if you wilt have the victory. Without striving you canst not win the crown of patience; if you wilt not suffer you refuseth to be crowned. But if you desirest to be crowned, strive manfully, endure patiently. Without labour you drawest not near to rest, nor without fighting come you to victory."

5. Make possible to me, O Lord, by grace what seems impossible to me by nature. You knowest how little I am able to bear, and how quickly I am cast down when a like adversity rises up against me. Whatsoever trial of tribulation may come to me, may it become unto me pleasing and acceptable, for to suffer and be vexed for Your sake is exceeding healthful to the soul.

(1) Hebrews xii. 4.

CHAPTER XX

Of confession of our infirmity and of the miseries of this life

1. I will acknowledge my sin unto You,(1) I will confess to You, Lord, my infirmity. It is often a small thing which casts me down and makes me sad. I resolve that I will act bravely, but when a little temptation comes, immediately I am in a great strait. Wonderfully small sometimes is the matter whence a grievous temptation comes, and whilst I imagine myself safe for a little space; when I am not considering, I find myself often almost overcome by a little puff of wind.

2. Behold, therefore, O Lord, my humility and my frailty, which is altogether known to You. Be merciful unto me, and draw me out of the mire that I sink not,(2) lest I ever remain cast down. This is what frequently throws me backward and confounds me before You, that I am so liable to fall, so weak to resist my passions. And though their assault is not altogether according to my will, it is violent and grievous, and it altogether wearies me to live thus daily in conflict. Herein is my infirmity made known to me, that hateful fancies always rush in far more easily than they depart.

3. Oh that Thou, most mighty God of Israel, Lover of all faithful souls, would look upon the labour and sorrow of Your servant, and give him help in all things whereunto he strives. Strengthen me with heavenly fortitude, lest the old man, this miserable flesh, not being yet fully subdued to the spirit, prevail to rule over me; against which I ought to strive so long as I remain in this most miserable life. Of what a life is this, where tribulations and miseries cease not, where all things are full of snares and of enemies, for when one tribulation or temptation goes, another comes, yea, while the former conflict is yet raging others come more in number and unexpected.

4. And how can the life of man be loved, seeing that it has so many bitter things, that it is subjected to so many calamities and miseries. How can it be even called life, when it produces so many deaths and plagues? The world is often reproached because it is deceitful and vain, yet notwithstanding it is not easily given up, because the lusts of the flesh have too much rule over it. Some draw us to love, some to hate. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, these draw to love of the world; but the punishments and miseries which righteously follow these things, bring forth hatred of the world and weariness.

5. But, alas! an evil desire conquers a mind given to the world, and thinks it happiness to be under the nettles(3) because it savors not nor perceives the sweetness of God nor the inward gracefulness of virtue. But they who perfectly despise the world and strive to live unto God in holy discipline, these are not ignorant of the divine sweetness promised to all who truly deny themselves and see

clearly how grievously the world errs, and in how many ways it is deceived.

(1) Psalm xxxii. 5. (2) Psalm lix. 16. (3) Job xxx. 7.

CHAPTER XXI

That we must rest in God above all goods and gifts

1. Above all things and in all things you shalt rest alway in the Lord, O my soul, for he himself is the eternal rest of the saints. Grant me, most sweet and loving Jesus, to rest in You above every creature, above all health and beauty, above all glory and honour, above all power and dignity, above all knowledge and skilfulness, above all riches and arts, above all joy and exultation, above all fame and praise, above all sweetness and consolation, above all hope and promise, above all merit and desire, above all gifts and rewards which You canst give and pour forth, above all joy and jubilation which the mind is able to receive and feel; in a word, above Angels and Archangels and all the army of heaven, above all things visible and invisible, and above everything which Thou, O my God, art not.

2. For Thou, O Lord, my God, art best above all things; You only art the Most High, You only the Almighty, You only the All-sufficient, and the Fulness of all things; You only the All-delightsome and the All-comforting; You alone the altogether lovely and altogether loving; You alone the Most Exalted and Most Glorious above all things; in Whom all things are, and were, and ever shall be, altogether and all-perfect. And thus it falls short and is insufficient whatsoever You givest to me without Yourself or whatsoever You revealest or dost promise concerning Yourself whilst You art not seen or fully possessed: since verily my heart cannot truly rest nor be entirely content, except it rest in You, and go beyond all gifts and every creature.

3. O my most beloved Spouse, Jesus Christ, most holy lover of my soul, Ruler of this whole Creation, who shall give me the wings of true liberty, that I may flee to You and find rest? Oh when shall it be given to me to be open to receive You to the full, and to see how sweet You art, O Lord my God? When shall I collect myself altogether in You, that because of Your love I may not feel myself at all, but may know You only above every sense and measure, in measure not known to others. But now I oftentimes groan, and bear my sad estate with sorrow; because many evils befall me in this vale of miseries which continually disturb and fill me with sorrow, and enclound me, continually hinder and fill me with care, allure and entangle me, that I cannot have free access to You, nor enjoy that sweet intercourse which is always near at hand to the blessed spirits. Let my deep sighing come before You, and my manifold desolation on the earth.

4. O Jesus, Light of Eternal Glory, solace of the wandering soul, before You my mouth is without speech, and my silence speaks to You. How long will my Lord delay to come unto me? Let Him come unto me, His poor and humble one, and make me glad. Let Him put forth His hand, and

deliver His holy one from every snare. Come, Oh come; for without You shall be no joyful day or hour, for You art my joy, and without You is my table empty. I am miserable, and in a manner imprisoned and loaded with fetters, until You refresh me by the light of Your presence, and give me liberty, and show Your loving countenance.

5. Let others seek some other thing instead of You, whatsoever it shall please them; but for my part nothing else pleases or shall please, save Thou, my God, my hope, my eternal salvation. I will not hold my peace, nor cease to implore, until Your grace return, and until You speak to me within.

6. "Behold, here I am! Behold, I come to you, for you didst call Me. Your tears and the longing of your soul, your humbleness and contrition of heart have inclined Me, and brought Me to you."

7. And I said Lord, I have called upon You, and I have longed to enjoy You, being ready to reject everything for Your sake. For You didst first move me to seek You. Therefore, blessed be Thou, O Lord, who has wrought this good work upon Your servant, according to the multitude of Your mercy. What then has Your servant to say in Your presence, save to humble himself greatly before You, being alway mindful of his own iniquity and vileness. For there is none like unto You in all marvels of heaven and earth. Excellent are Your works, true are Your judgments, and by Your Providence are all things governed. Therefore praise and glory unto You, O Wisdom of the Father, let my mouth and my soul and all created things praise and bless You together.

CHAPTER XXII

Of the recollection of God's manifold benefits

1. Open, O Lord, my heart in Your law, and teach me to walk in the way of Your commandments. Grant me to understand Your will and to be mindful of Your benefits, both general and special, with great reverence and diligent meditation, that thus I may be able worthily to give You thanks. Yet I know and confess that I cannot render You due praises for the least of Your mercies. I am less than the least of all the good things which You gavest me; and when I consider Your majesty, my spirit fails because of the greatness thereof.

2. All things which we have in the soul and in the body, and whatsoever things we possess, whether outwardly or inwardly, naturally or supernaturally, are Your good gifts, and prove You, from whom we have received them all, to be good, gentle, and kind. Although one receives many things, and another fewer, yet all are Thine, and without You not even the least thing can be possessed. He who has received greater cannot boast that it is of his own merit, nor lift himself up above others, nor contemn those beneath him; for he is greater and the better who ascribes least to himself, and in giving thanks is the humbler and more devout; and he who holds himself to be viler than all, and judges himself to be the more unworthy, is the apter for receiving greater things.

3. But he who has received fewer gifts, ought not to be cast down, nor to take it amiss, nor to envy him who is richer; but rather ought he to look unto You, and to greatly extol Your goodness, for You pourest forth Your gifts so richly, so freely and largely, without respect of persons. All things come of You; therefore in all things shalt you be praised. You knowest what is best to be given to each; and why this man has less, and that more, is not for us but for You to understand, for unto You each man's deservings are fully known.

4. Wherefore, O Lord God, I reckon it even a great benefit, not to have many things, whence praise and glory may appear outwardly, and after the thought of men. For so it is that who considers his own poverty and vileness, ought not only to draw therefrom no grief or sorrow, or sadness of spirit, but rather comfort and cheerfulness; because Thou, Lord, has chosen the poor and humble, and those who are poor in this world, to be Your friends and acquaintance. So give all Thine apostles witness whom You have made princes in all lands. Yet they had their conversation in this world blameless, so humble and meek, without any malice or deceit, that they even rejoiced to suffer rebukes for Your Name's sake,⁽¹⁾ and what things the world hates, they embraced with great joy.

5. Therefore ought nothing so much to rejoice him who loves You and knows Your benefits, as Your

will in him, and the good pleasure of Thine eternal Providence, wherewith he ought to be so contented and comforted, that he would as willingly be the least as any other would be the greatest, as peaceable and contented in the lowest as in the highest place, and as willingly held of small and low account and of no name or reputation as to be more honourable and greater in the world than others. For Your will and the love of Thine honour ought to go before all things, and to please and comfort him more, than all benefits that are given or may be given to himself.

(1) Act v. 41.

CHAPTER XXIII

Of four things which bring great peace

1. "My Son, now will I teach you the way of peace and of true liberty."
2. Do, O my Lord, as You sayest, for this is pleasing unto me to hear.
3. "Strive, My Son, to do another's will rather than thine own. Choose always to have less rather than more. Seek always after the lowest place, and to be subject to all. Wish always and pray that the will of God be fulfilled in you. Behold, such a man as this enters into the inheritance of peace and quietness."
4. O my Lord, this Your short discourse has in itself much of perfectness. It is short in words but full of meaning, and abundant in fruit. For if it were possible that I should fully keep it, disturbance would not so easily arise within me. For as often as I feel myself disquieted and weighed down, I find myself to have gone back from this teaching. But Thou, Who art Almighty, and always lovest progress in the soul, vouchsafe more grace, that I may be enabled to fulfil Your exhortation, and work out my salvation.

A PRAYER AGAINST EVIL THOUGHTS

5. O Lord my God, be not You far from me, my God, haste You to help me,(1) for many thought and great fears have risen up against me, afflicting my soul. How shall I pass through them unhurt? how shall I break through them?
6. "I", saith He, "will go before you, and make the crooked places straight."(2) I will open the prison doors, and reveal to you the secret places.
7. Do, Lord, as You sayest; and let all evil thoughts fly away before Your face. This is my hope and my only comfort, to fly unto You in all tribulation, to hope in You, to call upon You from my heart and patiently wait for Your loving kindness.

A PRAYER FOR ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE MIND

8. Enlighten me, Blessed Jesus, with the brightness of Your inner light, and cast forth all darkness from the habitation of my heart. Restrain my many wandering thoughts, and carry away the

temptations which strive to do me hurt. Fight You mightily for me, and drive forth the evil beasts, so call I alluring lusts, that peace may be within Your walls and plenteousness of praise within Your palaces,(3) even in my pure conscience. Command You the winds and the storms, say unto the sea, "Be still," say unto the stormy wind, "Hold your peace," so shall there be a great calm.

9. Oh send forth Your light and Your truth,(4) that they may shine upon the earth; for I am but earth without form and void until You give me light. Pour forth Your grace from above; water my heart with the dew of heaven; give the waters of devotion to water the face of the earth, and cause it to bring forth good and perfect fruit. Lift up my mind which is oppressed with the weight of sins, and raise my whole desire to heavenly things; that having tasted the sweetness of the happiness which is from above, it may take no pleasure in thinking of things of earth.

10. Draw me and deliver me from every unstable comfort of creatures, for no created thing is able to satisfy my desire and to give me comfort. Join me to Yourself by the inseparable bond of love, for You alone art sufficient to him that loves You, and without You all things are vain toys.

(1) Psalm lxxi. 12. (2) Isaiah xlv. 2. (3) Psalm cxxii. 7.

(4) Psalm xliii. 3.

CHAPTER XXIV

Of avoiding of curious inquiry into the life of another

1. "My Son, be not curious, nor trouble yourself with vain cares. What is that to you? Follow you Me.(1) For what is it to you whether a man be this or that, or say or do thus or thus? You have no need to answer for others, but you must give an answer for yourself. Why therefore dost you entangle yourself? Behold, I know all men, and I behold all things which are done under the sun; and I know how it stands with each one, what he thinks, what he wills, and to what end his thoughts reach. All things therefore are to be committed to Me; watch you yourself in godly peace, and leave him who is unquiet to be unquiet as he will. Whatsoever he shall do or say, shall come unto him, for he cannot deceive Me.

2. "Trouble not yourself about the shadow of a great name, nor about the friendship of many, nor about the love of men towards you. For these things beget distraction and great sorrows of heart. My word should speak freely unto you, and I would reveal secrets, if only you didst diligently look for My appearing, and didst open unto Me the gates of your heart. Be sober and watch unto prayer,(2) and humble yourself in all things."

(1) John xxi. 12. (2) I Peter iv. 7.

CHAPTER XXV

Wherein firm peace of heart and true profit consist

1. "My Son, I have said, Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you.(1) All men desire peace, but all do not care for the things which belong unto true peace. My peace is with the humble and lowly in heart. Your peace shall be in much patience. If you heardest Me, and didst follow My voice, you should enjoy much peace."

2. What then shall I do, Lord?

3. "In everything take heed to yourself what you doest, and what you sayest; and direct all your purpose to this, that you please Me alone, and desire or seek nothing apart from Me. But, moreover, judge nothing rashly concerning the words and deeds of others, nor meddle with matter which are not committed to you; and it may be that you shalt be disturbed little or rarely. Yet never to feel any disquiet, nor to suffer any pain of heart or body, this belongs not to the present life, but is the state of eternal rest. Therefore count not yourself to have found true peace, if you have felt no grief; nor that then all is well if you have no adversary; not that this is perfect if all things fall out according to your desire. Nor then reckon yourself to be anything great, or think that you art specially beloved, if you art in a state of great fervour and sweetness of spirit; for not by these things is the true lover of virtue known, nor in them does the profit and perfection of man consist."

4. In what then, Lord?

5. "In offering yourself with all your heart to the Divine Will, in not seeking the things which are thine own, whether great or small, whether temporal or eternal; so that you remain with the same steady countenance in giving of thanks between prosperity and adversity, weighing all things in an equal balance. If you be so brave and long-suffering in hope that when inward comfort is taken from you, you even prepare your heart for more endurance, and justify not yourself, as though you ought not to suffer these heavy things, but dost justify Me in all things that I appoint, and dost bless My Holy Name, then dost you walk in the true and right way of peace, and shalt have a sure hope that you shalt again behold My face with joy. For if you come to an utter contempt of yourself, know that then you shalt enjoy abundance of peace, as much as is possible where you art but a wayfaring man."

(1) John xiv. 27.

CHAPTER XXVI

Of the exaltation of a free spirit, which humble prayer more
deserves than does frequent reading

1. Lord, this is the work of a perfect man, never to slacken his mind from attention to heavenly things, and among many cares to pass along as it were without care, not after the manner of one indifferent, but rather with the privilege of a free man, cleaving to no creature with inordinate affection.

2. I beseech You, my most merciful Lord God, preserve me from the cares of this life, lest I become too much entangled; from many necessities of the body, lest I be taken captive by pleasure; from all obstacles of the spirit, lest I be broken and cast down with cares. I say not from those things which the vanity of the world goes about after with all eagerness, but from those miseries, which by the universal curse of mortality weigh down and hold back the soul of your servant in punishment, that it cannot enter into liberty of spirit, so often as it would.

3. O my God, sweetness unspeakable, turn into bitterness all my fleshly consolation, which draws me away from the love of eternal things, and wickedly allures toward itself by setting before me some present delight. Let not, O my God, let not flesh and blood prevail over me, let not the world and its short glory deceive me, let not the devil and his craftiness supplant me. Give me courage to resist, patience to endure, constancy to persevere. Grant, in place of all consolations of the world, the most sweet unction of Your Spirit, and in place of carnal love, pour into me the love of Your Name.

4. Behold, food and drink and clothing, and all the other needs appertaining to the support of the body, are burdensome to the devout spirit. Grant that I may use such things with moderation, and that I be not entangled with inordinate affection for them. To cast away all these things is not lawful, because nature must be sustained, but to require superfluities and things which merely minister delight, the holy law forbids; for otherwise the flesh would wax insolent against the spirit. In all these things, I beseech You, let Your hand guide and teach me, that I in no way exceed.

CHAPTER XXVII

That personal love greatly hinders from the highest good

1. "My Son, you must give all for all, and be nothing of thine own. Know you that the love of yourself is more hurtful you than anything in the world. According to the love and inclination which you have, everything more or less cleaves to you. If your love be pure, sincere, well-regulated, you shalt not be in captivity to anything. Do not covet what you may not have; do not have what is able to hinder you, and to rob you of inward liberty. It is wonderful that you committest not yourself to Me from the very bottom of your heart, with all things which you canst desire or have.

2. "Why art you consumed with vain sorrow? Why art you wearied with superfluous cares? Stand you by My good pleasure, and you shalt suffer no loss. If you seekest after this or that, and wilt be here or there, according to thine own advantage or the fulfilling of thine own pleasure, you shalt never be in quiet, nor free from care, because in everything somewhat will be found lacking, and everywhere there will be somebody who opposes you.

3. "Therefore it is not gaining or multiplying of this thing or that which advantages you, but rather the despising it and cutting it by the root out of your heart; which you must not only understand of money and riches, but of the desire after honour and vain praise, things which all pass away with the world. The place avails little if the spirit of devotion is wanting; nor shall that peace stand long which is sought abroad, if the state of your heart is without the true foundation, that is, if it abide not in Me. You may change, but you canst not better yourself; for when occasion arises and is accepted you shalt find what you didst fly from, yea more."

A PRAYER FOR CLEANSING OF THE HEART AND FOR HEAVENLY WISDOM

4. Strengthen me, O God, by the grace of Your Holy Spirit. Give me virtue to be strengthened with might in the inner man, and to free my heart from all fruitless care and trouble, and that I be not drawn away by various desires after any things whatsoever, whether of little value or great, but that I may look upon all as passing away, and myself as passing away with them; because there is no profit under the sun, and all is vanity and vexation of spirit.(1) Oh how wise is he that considers thus!

5. Give me, O Lord, heavenly wisdom, that I may learn to seek You above all things and to find You; to relish You above all things and to love You; and to understand all other things, even as they are,

according to the order of Your wisdom. Grant me prudently to avoid the flatterer, and patiently to bear with him that opposes me; for this is great wisdom, not to be carried by every wind of words, nor to give ear to the wicked flattering Siren; for thus do we go safely on in the way we have begun.

(1) Ecclesiastes ii. 11.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Against the tongues of detractors

1. "My Son, take it not sadly to heart, if any think ill of you, and say of you what you art unwilling to hear. You ought to think worse of yourself, and to believe no man weaker than yourself. If you walkest inwardly, you wilt not weigh flying words above their value. It is no small prudence to keep silence in an evil time and to turn inwardly unto Me, and not to be troubled by human judgment.

2. "Let not your peace depend upon the word of men; for whether they judge well or ill of you, you art not therefore any other man than yourself. Where is true peace or true glory? Is it not in Me? And he who seeks not to please men, not fears to displease, shall enjoy abundant peace. From inordinate love and vain fear arises all disquietude of heart, and all distraction of the senses."

CHAPTER XXIX

How when tribulation comes we must call upon and bless God

1. Blessed by your name, O Lord, for evermore, who has willed this temptation and trouble to come upon me. I cannot escape it, but have need to flee unto You, that You may succour me and turn it unto me for good. Lord, now am I in tribulation, and it is not well within my heart, but I am sore vexed by the suffering which lies upon me. And now, O dear Father, what shall I say? I am taken among the snares. Save me from this hour, but for this cause came I unto this hour,(1) that You mightest be glorified when I am deeply humbled and am delivered through You. Let it be Your pleasure to deliver me;(2) for what can I do who am poor, and without You whither shall I go? Give patience this time also. Help me, O Lord my God, and I will not fear how much soever I be weighed down.

2. And now amid these things what shall I say? Lord, Your will be done. I have well deserved to be troubled and weighed down. Therefore I ought to bear, would that it be with patience, until the tempest be overpast and comfort return. Yet is Thine omnipotent arm able also to take this temptation away from me, and to lessen its power that I fall not utterly under it, even as many a time past you has helped me, O God, my merciful God. And as much as this deliverance is difficult to me, so much is it easy to You, O right hand of the most Highest.

(1) John xii. 27. (2) Psalm xl. 16.

CHAPTER XXX

Of seeking diving help and the confidence of obtaining grace

1. "My Son, I the Lord am a stronghold in the day of trouble.(1) Come unto Me, when it is not well with you.

"This it is which chiefly hinders heavenly consolation, that you too slowly betakest yourself unto prayer. For before you earnestly seek unto Me, you dost first seek after many means of comfort, and refreshes yourself in outward things; so it comes to pass that all things profit you but little until you learn that it is I who deliver those who trust in Me; neither beside Me is there any strong help, nor profitable counsel, nor enduring remedy. But now, recovering courage after the tempest, grow you strong in the light of My mercies, for I am nigh, saith the Lord, that I may restore all things not only as they were at the first, but also abundantly and one upon another.

2. "For is anything too hard for Me, or shall I be like unto one who saith and does not? Where is your faith? Stand fast and with perseverance. Be long-suffering and strong. Consolation will come unto you in its due season. Wait for Me; yea, wait; I will come and heal you. It is temptation which vexes you, and a vain fear which terrifies you. What does care about future events bring you, save sorrow upon sorrow. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.(2) It is vain and useless to be disturbed or lifted up about future things which perhaps will never come.

3. "But it is the nature of man to be deceived by fancies of this sort, and it is a sign of a mind which is still weak to be so easily drawn away at the suggestion of the enemy. For he cares not whether he deceive and beguile by true means or false; whether he throw you down by the love of the present or fear of the future. Therefore let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Believe in Me, and put your trust in My mercy.(3) When you thinkest yourself far removed from Me, I am often the nearer. When you reckonest that almost all is lost, then often is greater opportunity of gain at hand. All is not lost when something goes contrary to your wishes. You ought not to judge according to present feeling, nor so to take or give way to any grief which befalls you, as if all hope of escape were taken away.

4. "Think not yourself totally abandoned, although for the time I have sent to you some tribulation, or have even withdrawn some cherished consolation; for this is the way to the Kingdom of Heaven. And without doubt it is better for you and for all My other servants, that ye should be proved by adversities, than that ye should have all things as ye would. I know your hidden thoughts: and that it is very needful for your soul's health that sometimes you be left without relish, lest perchance you

be lifted up by prosperity, and desirous to please yourself in that which you art not. What I have given I am able to take away, and to restore again at My good pleasure.

5. "When I shall have given, it is Mine; when I shall have taken away, I have not taken what is thine; for every good gift and every perfect gift(4) is from me. If I shall have sent upon you grief or any vexation, be not angry, nor let your heart be sad; I am able quickly to lift you up and to change every burden into joy. But I am just and greatly to be praised, when I do thus unto you.

6. "If you rightly consider, and look upon it with truth, you ought never to be so sadly cast down because of adversity, but rather shouldst rejoice and give thanks; yea, verily to count it the highest joy that I afflict you with sorrows and spare you not. As My Father has loved Me, so love I you;(5) thus have I spoken unto My beloved disciples: whom I sent forth not unto worldly joys, but to great strivings; not unto honours, but unto contempt; not unto ease, but to labours; not unto rest, but to bring forth much fruit with patience. My son, remember these words."

(1) Nahum i. 7. (2) Matthew vi. 34.

(3) John xiv. 27; Psalm xiii. 5. (4) James i. 17.

(5) John xv. 9.

CHAPTER XXXI

Of the neglect of every creature, that the Creator may be found

1. O Lord, I still need more grace, if I would arrive where neither man nor any other creature may hinder me. For so long as anything keeps me back, I cannot freely fly unto You. He desired eagerly thus to fly, who cried, saying, Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest. What is more peaceful than the single eye? And what more free than he that desires nothing upon earth? Therefore must a man rise above every creature, and perfectly forsake himself, and with abstracted mind to stand and behold that Thou, the Creator of all things, have among Your creatures nothing like unto Yourself. And except a man be freed from all creatures, he will not be able to reach freely after Divine things. Therefore few are found who give themselves to contemplation, because few know how to separate themselves entirely from perishing and created things.

2. For this much grace is necessary, which may lift up the soul and raise it above itself. And except a man be lifted up in the spirit, and freed from all creatures, and altogether united to God, whatsoever he knows, whatsoever even he has, it matters but little. He who esteems anything great save the one only incomprehensible, eternal, good, shall long time be little and lie low. For whatsoever is not God is nothing, and ought to be counted for nothing. Great is the difference between a godly man, illuminated with wisdom, and a scholar learned in knowledge and given to books. Far nobler is that doctrine which flows down from the divine fulness above, than that which is acquired laboriously by human study.

3. Many are found who desire contemplation, but they do not strive to practice those things which are required thereunto. It is also a great impediment, that much is made of symbols and external signs, and too little of thorough mortification. I know not how it is, and by what spirit we are led, and what we who would be deemed spiritual are aiming at, that we give so great labour and so eager solicitude for transitory and worthless things, and scarcely ever gather our senses together to think at all of our inward condition.

4. Ah, me! Forthwith after a little recollection we rush out of doors, and do not subject our actions to a strict examination. Where our affections are set we take no heed, and we weep not that all things belonging to us are so defiled. For because all flesh had corrupted itself upon the earth, the great deluge came. Since therefore our inmost affections are very corrupt, it follows of necessity that our actions also are corrupt, being the index of a deficient inward strength. Out of a pure heart proceeds the fruit of good living.

5. We demand, how much a man has done; but from how much virtue he acted, is not so narrowly considered. We ask if he be strong, rich, handsome, clever, whether he is a good writer, good singer, good workman; but how poor he may be in spirit, how patient and gently, how devout and meditative, on these things many are silent. Nature looks upon the outward appearance of a man, grace turns its thought to the heart. The former frequently judges amiss; the latter trusts in God, that it may not be deceived.

CHAPTER XXXII

Of self-denial and the casting away of all selfishness

1. "My Son, you canst not possess perfect liberty unless you altogether deny yourself. All they are enslaved who are possessors of riches, they who love themselves, the selfish, the curious, the restless; those who ever seek after soft things, and not after the thing of Jesus Christ; those who continually plan and devise that which will not stand. For whatsoever comes not of God shall perish. Hold fast the short and complete saying, 'Renounce all things, and you shalt find all things; give up your lust, and you shalt find rest.' Dwell upon this in your mind, and when you art full of it, you shalt understand all things."

2. O Lord, this is not the work of a day, nor children's play; verily in this short saying is enclosed all the perfection of the religious.

3. "My son, you ought not to be turned aside, not immediately cast down, because you have heard the way of the perfect. Rather ought you to be provoked to higher aims, and at the least to long after the desire thereof. Oh that it were so with you, and that you hadst come to this, that you wert not a love of thine own self, but wert ready always to My nod, and to his whom I have placed over you as your father. Then should you please Me exceedingly, and all your life should go on in joy and peace. You have still many things to renounce, which if you resign not utterly to Me, you shalt not gain what you seekest. I counsel you to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich,⁽¹⁾ that is heavenly wisdom, which despises all base things. Put away from you earthly wisdom, and all pleasure, whether common to men, or thine own.

4. "I tell you that you must buy vile things with those that are costly and great in the esteem of men. For wonderfully vile and small, and almost given up to forgetfulness, does true heavenly wisdom appear, which thinks not high things of itself, nor seeks to be magnified upon the earth; many honour it with their lips, but in heart are far from it; it is indeed the precious pearl, which is hidden from many."

(1) Revelation iii. 18.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Of instability of heart, and of directing the aim towards God

1. "My Son, trust not your feeling, for that which is now will be quickly changed into somewhat else. As long as you livest you art subject to change, howsoever unwilling; so that you art found now joyful, now sad; now at peace, now disquieted; now devout, now indevout; now studious, now careless; now sad, now cheerful. But the wise man, and he who is truly learned in spirit, stands above these changeable things, attentive not to what he may feel in himself, or from what quarter the wind may blow, but that the whole intent of his mind may carry him on to the due and much-desired end. For thus will he be able to remain one and the same and unshaken, the single eye of his desire being steadfastly fixed, through the manifold changes of the world, upon Me.

2. "But according as the eye of intention be the more pure, even so will a man make his way steadfastly through the manifold storms. But in many the eye of pure intention waxes dim; for it quickly rests itself upon anything pleasant which occurs, and rarely is any many found altogether free from the blemish of self-seeking. So the Jews of old came to Bethany, to the house of Martha and Mary, that they might see not Jesus, but Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.(1) Therefore must the eye of the intention be cleansed, that it may be single and right, and above all things which come in its way, may be directed unto Me."

(1) John xii. 9.

CHAPTER XXXIV

That to him who loves God is sweet above all things and in all things

1. Behold, God is mine, and all things are mine! What will I more, and what more happy thing can I desire? O delightful and sweet world! that is, to him that loves the Word, not the world, neither the things that are in the world.(2) My God, my all! To him that understands, that word suffices, and to repeat it often is pleasing to him that loves it. When You art present all things are pleasant; when You art absent, all things are wearisome. You makest the heart to be at rest, givest it deep peace and festal joy. You makest it to think rightly in every matter, and in every matter to give You praise; neither can anything please long without You but if it would be pleasant and of sweet savour, Your grace must be there, and it is Your wisdom which must give unto it a sweet savour.

2. To him who tastes You, what can be distasteful? And to him who tastes You not, what is there which can make him joyous? But the worldly wise, and they who enjoy the flesh, these fail in Your wisdom; for in the wisdom of the world is found utter vanity, and to be carnally minded is death. But they who follow after You through contempt of worldly things, and mortification of the flesh, are found to be truly wise because they are carried from vanity to verity, from the flesh to the spirit. They taste that the Lord is good, and whatsoever good they find in creatures, they count it all unto the praise of the Creator. Unlike, yea, very unlike is the enjoyment of the Creator to enjoyment of the Creature, the enjoyment of eternity and of time, of light uncreated and of light reflected.

3. O Light everlasting, surpassing all created lights, dart down Your ray from on high which shall pierce the inmost depths of my heart. Give purity, joy, clearness, life to my spirit that with all its powers it may cleave unto You with rapture passing man's understanding. O when shall that blessed and longed-for time come when You shalt satisfy me with Your presence, and be unto me All in all? So long as this is delayed, my joy shall not be full. Still, ah me! the old man lives in me: he is not yet all crucified, not yet quite dead; still he lusts fiercely against the spirit, wages inward wars, nor suffers the soul's kingdom to be in peace.

4. But You who rulest the raging of the sea, and stillest the waves thereof when they arise, rise up and help me. Scatter the people that delight in war.(2) Destroy them by Your power. Show forth, I beseech You, Your might, and let Your right hand be glorified, for I have no hope, no refuge, save in You, O Lord my God.

(2) I John ii. 15. (2) Psalm lxxviii. 30.

CHAPTER XXXV

That there is no security against temptation in this life

1. "My Son, you art never secure in this life, but your spiritual armour will always be needful for you as long as you livest. You dwellest among foes, and art attacked on the right hand and on the left. If therefore you use not on all sides the shield of patience, you wilt not remain long unwounded. Above all, if you keep not your heart fixed upon Me with steadfast purpose to bear all things for My sake, you shalt not be able to bear the fierceness of the attack, nor to attain to the victory of the blessed. Therefore must you struggle bravely all your life through, and put forth a strong hand against those things which oppose you. For to him that overcomes is the hidden manna given,(1) but great misery is reserved for the slothful.

2. "If you seek rest in this life, how then wilt you attain unto the rest which is eternal? Set not yourself to attain much rest, but much patience. Seek the true peace, not in earth but in heaven, not in man nor in any created thing, but in God alone. For the love of God you must willingly undergo all things, whether labours or sorrows, temptations, vexations, anxieties, necessities, infirmities, injuries, gainsayings, rebukes, humiliations, confusions, corrections, despisings; these things help unto virtue, these things prove the scholar of Christ; these things fashion the heavenly crown. I will give you an eternal reward for short labour, and infinite glory for transient shame.

3. "Thinkest you that you shalt always have spiritual consolations at your will? My Saints had never such, but instead thereof manifold griefs, and divers temptations, and heavy desolations. But patiently they bore themselves in all, and trusted in God more than in themselves, knowing that the sufferings of this present time are not woryour to be compared with the glory which shall be received in us.(2) Would you have that immediately which many have hardly attained unto after many tears and hard labours? Wait for the Lord, quit yourself like a man and be strong; be not faint-hearted, nor go aside from Me, but constantly devote your body and soul to the glory of God. I will reward you plenteously, I will be with you in trouble."(3)

(1) Revelation ii. 17. (2) Romans viii. 17.

(3) Psalm xci. 15.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Against vain judgments of men

1. "My Son, anchor your soul firmly upon God, and fear not man's judgments, when conscience pronounces you pious and innocent. It is good and blessed thus to suffer; nor will it be grievous to the heart which is humble, and which trusts in God more than in itself. Many men have many opinions, and therefore little trust is to be placed in them. But moreover it is impossible to please all. Although Paul studied to please all men in the Lord, and to become all things to all men,(1) yet nevertheless with him it was a very small thing that he should be judged by man's judgment."(2)

2. He laboured abundantly, as much as in him lay, for the building up and the salvation of others; but he could not avoid being sometimes judged and despised by others. Therefore he committed all to God, who knew all, and by patience and humility defended himself against evil speakers, or foolish and false thinkers, and those who accused him according to their pleasure. Nevertheless, from time to time he replied, lest his silence should become a stumbling-block to those who were weak.

3. "Who art thou, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die? To-day he is, and to-morrow his place is not found. Fear God and you shalt not quail before the terrors of men. What can any man do against you by words or deeds? He hurts himself more than you, nor shall he escape the judgment of God, whosoever he may be. Have you God before thine eyes, and do not contend with fretful words. And if for the present you seem to give way, and to suffer confusion which you have not deserved, be not angry at this, nor by impatience diminish your reward; but rather look up to Me in heaven, for I am able to deliver you from all confusion and hurt, and to render to every man according to his works."

(1) I Corinthians ix. 22. (2) I Corinthians iv. 3.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Of pure and entire resignation of self, for obtaining liberty of heart

1. "My Son, lose yourself and you shalt find Me. Stand still without all choosing and all thought of self, and you shalt ever be a gainer. For more grace shall be added to you, as soon as you resignest yourself, and so long as you dost not turn back to take yourself again."

2. O Lord, how often shall I resign myself, and in what things shall I lose myself?

3. "Always; every hour: in that which is little, and in that which is great. I make no exception, but will that you be found naked in all things. Otherwise how canst you be Mine and I thine, unless you be inwardly and outwardly free from every will of thine own? The sooner you dost this, the better shall it be with you; and the more fully and sincerely, the more you shalt please Me, and the more abundantly shalt you be rewarded.

4. "Some resign themselves, but with certain reservations, for they do not fully trust in God, therefore they think that they have some provision to make for themselves. Some again at first offer everything; but afterwards being pressed by temptation they return to their own devices, and thus make no progress in virtue. They will not attain to the true liberty of a pure heart, nor to the grace of My sweet companionship, unless they first entirely resign themselves and daily offer themselves up as a sacrifice; without this the union which brings forth fruit stands not nor will stand.

5. "Many a time I have said unto you, and now say again, Give yourself up, resign yourself, and you shalt have great inward peace. Give all for all; demand nothing, ask nothing in return; stand simply and with no hesitation in Me, and you shalt possess Me. You shalt have liberty of heart, and the darkness shall not overwhelm you. For this strive thou, pray for it, long after it, that you may be delivered from all possession of yourself, and nakedly follow Jesus who was made naked for you; may die unto yourself and live eternally to Me. Then shall all vain fancies disappear, all evil disturbings, and superfluous cares. Then also shall immoderate fear depart from you, and inordinate love shall die."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Of a good government in external things, and of having recourse to God in dangers

1. "My Son, for this you must diligently make your endeavour, that in every place and outward action or occupation you may be free within, and have power over yourself; and that all things be under you, not you under them; that you be master and ruler of your actions, not a slave or hireling, but rather a free and true Hebrew, entering into the lot and the liberty of the children of God, who stand above the present and look upon the eternal, who with the left eye behold things transitory, and with the right things heavenly; whom temporal things draw not to cleave unto, but who rather draw temporal things to do them good service, even as they were ordained of God to do, and appointed by the Master Workman, who has left nought in His creation without aim or end.

2. "And if in any chance of life you stand not in outward appearances, nor judgest things which are seen and heard by the fleshly sense, but straightway in every cause enterest with Moses into the tabernacle to ask counsel of God; you shalt hear a divine response and come forth instructed concerning many things that are and shall be. For always Moses had recourse to the tabernacle for the solving of all doubts and questionings; and fled to the help of prayer to be delivered from the dangers and evil deeds of men. Thus also ought you to fly to the secret chamber of your heart, and earnestly implore the divine succour. For this cause we read that Joshua and the children of Israel were deceived by the Gibeonites, that they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord,(1) but being too ready to listen to fair speeches, were deceived by pretended piety."

(1) Joshua ix. 14.

CHAPTER XXXIX

That man must not be immersed in business

1. "My Son, always commit your cause to Me; I will dispose it aright in due time. Wait for My arrangement of it, and then you shalt find it for your profit."

2. O Lord, right freely I commit all things to You; for my planning can profit but little. Oh that I did not dwell so much on future events, but could offer myself altogether to Your pleasures without delay.

3. "My Son, a man often strives vehemently after somewhat which he desires; but when he has obtained it he begins to be of another mind, because his affections towards it are not lasting, but rather rush on from one thing to another. Therefore it is not really a small thing, when in small things we resist self."

4. The true progress of man lies in self-denial, and a man who denies himself is free and safe. But the old enemy, opposer of all good things, ceases not from temptation; but day and night sets his wicked snares, if haply he may be able to entrap the unwary. Watch and pray, saith the Lord, lest ye enter into temptation.(1)

(1) Matthew xxvi. 41.

CHAPTER XL

That man has no good in himself, and nothing whereof to glory

1. Lord, what is man that You art mindful of him, or the son of man that You visitest him?(2) What has man deserved, that You should bestow your favour upon him? Lord, what cause can I have of complaint, if You forsake me? Or what can I justly allege, if You refuse to hear my petition? Of a truth, this I may truly think and say, Lord, I am nothing, I have nothing that is good of myself, but I fall short in all things, and ever tend unto nothing. And unless I am helped by You and inwardly supported, I become altogether lukewarm and reckless.

2. But Thou, O Lord, art always the same, and endurest for ever, always good, righteous, and holy; doing all things well, righteously, and holily, and disposing all in Your wisdom. But I who am more ready to go forward than backward, never continue in one stay, because changes sevenfold pass over me. Yet it quickly becomes better when it so pleases You, and You puttest forth Your hand to help me; because You alone canst aid without help of man, and canst so strengthen me that my countenance shall be no more changed, but my heart shall be turned to You, and rest in You alone.

3. Wherefore, if I but knew well how to reject all human consolations, whether for the sake of gaining devotion, or because of the necessity by which I was compelled to seek You, seeing there is no man who can comfort me; then could I worthily trust in Your grace, and rejoice in the gift of new consolation.

4. Thanks be to You, from whom all comes, whensoever it goes well with me! But I am vanity and nothing in Your sight, a man inconstant and weak. What then have I whereof to glory, or why do I long to be held in honour? Is it not for nought? This also is utterly vain. Verily vain glory is an evil plague, the greatest of vanities, because it draws us away from the true glory, and robs us of heavenly grace. For whilst a man pleases himself he displeases You; whilst he gapes after the praises of man, he is deprived of true virtues.

5. But true glory and holy rejoicing lies in glorying in You and not in self; in rejoicing in Your Name, not in our own virtue; in not taking delight in any creature, save only for Your sake. Let your Name, not mine be praised; let Your work, not mine be magnified; let Your holy Name be blessed, but to me let nought be given of the praises of men. You art my glory, You art the joy of my heart. In You will I make my boast and be glad all the day long, for myself let me not glory save only in my infirmities.(2)

6. Let the Jews seek the honour which comes from one another; but I will ask for that which comes from God only.(3) Truly all human glory, all temporal honour, all worldly exultation, compared to Your eternal glory, is but vanity and folly. O God my Truth and my Mercy, Blessed Trinity, to You alone be all praise, honour, power, and glory for ever and for ever. Amen.

(2) Psalm viii. 4. (2) 2 Corinthians xii. 5.

(3) John v. 44.

CHAPTER XLI

Of contempt of all temporal honour

1. "My Son, make it no matter of thine, if you see others honoured and exalted, and yourself despised and humbled. Lift up thine heart to Me in heaven, and then the contempt of men upon earth will not make you sad."

2. O Lord, we are in blindness, and are quickly seduced by vanity. If I look rightly within myself, never was injury done unto me by any creature, and therefore I have nought whereof to complain before You. But because I have many times and grievously sinned against You, all creatures do justly take arms against me. Therefore to me confusion and contempt are justly due, but to You praise and honour and glory. And except I dispose myself for this, namely, to be willing that every creature should despise and desert me, and that I should be esteemed altogether as nothing, I cannot be inwardly filled with peace and strength, nor spiritually enlightened, nor fully united to You.

CHAPTER XLII

That our peace is not to be placed in men

1. "My Son, if you set your peace on any person because you have high opinion of him, and art familiar with him, you shalt be unstable and entangled. But if you betake yourself to the ever-living and abiding Truth, the desertion or death of a friend shall not make you sad. In Me ought the love of your friend to subsist, and for My sake is every one to be loved, whosoever he be, who appears to you good, and is very dear to you in this life. Without Me friendship has no strength or endurance, neither is that love true and pure, which I unite not. You ought to be so dead to such affections of beloved friends, that as far as in you lies, you would rather choose to be without any companionship of men. The nearer a man approaches to God, the further he recedes from all earthly solace. The deeper also he descends into himself, and the viler he appears in his own eyes, the higher he ascends towards God.

2. "But he who attributes anything good to himself, hinders the grace of God from coming to him, because the grace of the Holy Ghost ever seeks the humble heart. If you couldst make yourself utterly nothing, and empty yourself of the love of every creature, then should it be My part to overflow unto you with great grace. When you settest thine eyes upon creatures, the face of the Creator is withdrawn from you. Learn in all things to conquer yourself for your Creator's sake, then shalt you be able to attain unto divine knowledge. How small soever anything be, if it be loved and regarded inordinately, it holds us back from the highest good, and corrupts."

CHAPTER XLIII

Against vain and worldly knowledge

1. "My Son, let not the fair and subtle sayings of men move you. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.(1) Give ear to My words, for they kindle the heart and enlighten the mind, they bring contrition, and they supply manifold consolations. Never read you the word that you may appear more learned or wise; but study for the mortification of your sins, for this will be far more profitable for you than the knowledge of many difficult questions.

2. "When you have read and learned many things, you must always return to one first principle. I am He that teaches man knowledge,(2) and I give unto babes clearer knowledge than can be taught by man. He to whom I speak will be quickly wise and shall grow much in the spirit. Woe unto them who inquire into many curious questions from men, and take little heed concerning the way of My service. The time will come when Christ will appear, the Master of masters, the Lord of the Angels, to hear the lessons of all, that is to examine the consciences of each one. And then will He search Jerusalem with candles,(3) and the hidden things of darkness(4) shall be made manifest, and the arguings of tongues shall be silent.

3. "I am He who in an instant list up the humble spirit, to learn more reasonings of the Eternal Truth, than if a man had studied ten years in the schools. I teach without noise of words, without confusion of opinions, without strivings after honour, without clash of arguments. I am He who teach men to despise earthly things, to loathe things present, to seek things heavenly, to enjoy things eternal, to flee honours, to endure offences, to place all hope in Me, to desire nothing apart from Me, and above all things to love Me ardently.

4. "For there was one, who by loving Me from the bottom of his heart, learned divine things, and spake things that were wonderful; he profited more by forsaking all things than by studying subtleties. But to some I speak common things, to others special; to some I appear gently in signs and figures, and again to some I reveal mysteries in much light. The voice of books is one, but it informs not all alike; because I inwardly am the Teacher of truth, the Searcher of the heart, the Discerner of the thoughts, the Mover of actions, distributing to each man, as I judge meet."

(1) I Corinthians iv. 20. (2) Psalm xciv. 10.

(3) Zephaniah i. 12. (4) I Corinthians iv. 5.

CHAPTER XLIV

Of not troubling ourselves about outward things

1. "My Son, in many things it behooves you to be ignorant, and to esteem yourself as one dead upon the earth, and as one to whom the whole world is crucified. Many things also you must pass by with deaf ear, and must rather think upon those things which belong unto your peace. It is more profitable to turn away thine eyes from those things that displease, and to leave each man to his own opinion, than to give yourself to discourses of strife. If you stand well with God and have His judgement in your mind, you wilt verily easily bear to be as one conquered."

2. O Lord, to what have we come? Behold a temporal loss is mourned over; for a trifling gain we labour and hurry; and spiritual loss passes away into forgetfulness, and we rarely recover it. That which profits little or nothing is looked after, and that which is altogether necessary is negligently passed by; because the whole man slides away to outward things, and unless he quickly recovers himself in outward things he willingly lies down.

CHAPTER XLV

That we must not believe everyone, and that we are prone to fall in our words

1. Lord, be you my help in trouble, for vain is the help of man.(1) How often have I failed to find faithfulness, where I thought I possessed it. How many times I have found it where I least expected. Vain therefore is hope in men, but the salvation of the just, O God, is in You. Blessed be thou, O Lord my God, in all things which happen unto us. We are weak and unstable, we are quickly deceived and quite changed.

2. Who is the man who is able to keep himself so warily and circumspectly as not sometimes to come into some snare of perplexity? But he who trusts in You, O Lord, and seeks You with an unfeigned heart, does not so easily slip. And if he fall into any tribulation, howsoever he may be entangled, yet very quickly he shall be delivered through You, or by You shall be comforted, because You wilt not forsake him that trusts in You unto the end. A friend who continues faithful in all the distresses of his friend is rare to be found. Thou, O Lord, You alone art most faithful in all things, and there is none other like unto You.

3. Oh, how truly wise was that holy soul which said, "My mind is steadfastly fixed, and it is grounded in Christ."(2) If thus it were with me, the fear of man should not so easily tempt me, nor the arrows of words move me. Who is sufficient to foresee all things, who to guard beforehand against future ills? If even things which are foreseen sometimes hurt us, what can things which are nor foreseen do, but grievously injure? But wherefore have I not better provided for myself, miserable that I am? Why, too, have I given such heed to others? But we are men, nor are we other than frail men, even though by many we are reckoned and called angels. Whom shall I trust, O Lord, whom shall I trust but You? You art the Truth, and deceivest not, nor canst be deceived. And on the other hand, Every man is a liar,(3) weak, unstable and frail, especially in his words, so that one ought scarcely ever to believe what seems to sound right on the face of it.

4. With what wisdom have you warned us beforehand to beware of men, and that a man's foes are they of his own household,(4) and that we must not believe if one say unto us Lo here, or Lo there.(5) I have been taught by my loss, and O that I may prove more careful and not foolish hereby. "Be cautious," saith some one: "be cautious, keep unto yourself what I tell you." And whilst I am silent and believe that it is hid with me, he himself cannot keep silence concerning it, but straightway betrays me and himself, and goes his way. Protect me, O Lord, from such mischief-making and reckless men; let me not fall into their hands, nor ever do such things myself. Put a true and steadfast word into my mouth, and remove a deceitful tongue far from me. What I would not suffer, I ought

by all means to beware of doing.

5. Oh, how good and peacemaking a thing it is to be silent concerning others, and not carelessly to believe all reports, nor to hand them on further; how good also to lay one's self open to few, to seek ever to have You as the beholder of the heart; not to be carried about with every wind of words, but to desire that all things inward and outward be done according to the good pleasure of Your will! How safe for the preserving of heavenly grace to fly from human approval, and not to long after the things which seem to win admiration abroad, but to follow with all earnestness those things which bring amendment of life and heavenly fervour! How many have been injured by their virtue being made known and too hastily praised. How truly profitable has been grace preserved in silence in this frail life, which, as we are told, is all temptation and warfare.

(1) Psalm lx. 11. (2) St. Agatha (3) Psalm cxvi. 11.
(4) Romans iii. 4. (5) Matthew xxiv. 23.

CHAPTER XLVI

Of having confidence in God when evil words are cast at us

1. "My Son, stand fast and believe in Me. For what are words but words? They fly through the air, but they bruise no stone. If you are guilty, think how you would gladly amend yourself; if you knowest nothing against yourself, consider that you wilt gladly bear this for God's sake. It is little enough that you sometimes have to bear hard words, for you art not yet able to bear hard blows. And wherefore do such trivial matters go to thine heart, except that you art yet carnal, and regardest men more than you ought? For because you fearest to be despised, you art unwilling to be reproved for your faults, and seekest paltry shelters of excuses.

2. "But look better into yourself, and you shalt know that the world is still alive in you, and the vain hope of pleasing men. For when you fleest away from being abased and confounded for your faults, it is plain that you art neither truly humble nor truly dead to the world, and that the world is not crucified to you. But hearken to My word, and you shalt not care for ten thousand words of men. Behold, if all things could be said against you which the utmost malice could invent, what should it hurt you if you wert altogether to let it go, and make no more account of it than of a mote? Could it pluck out a single hair of your head?

3. "But he that has no heart within him, and has not God before his eyes, is easily moved by a word of reproach; but he who trusts in Me, and seeks not to abide by his own judgment, shall be free from the fear of men. For I am the Judge and the Discerner of all secrets; I know how the thing has been done; I know both the injurer and the bearer. From Me went forth that word, by My permission this has happened, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.(1) I shall judge the guilty and the innocent; but beforehand I have willed to try them both by a secret judgment.

4. "The testimony of men often deceives. My judgment is true; it will stand, and it shall not be overturned. It commonly lies hid, and only to few in certain cases is it made known; yet it never errs, nor can err, although it seem not right to the eyes of foolish men. To Me, therefore, must men have recourse in all judgment, and must not lean to they opinion. For there shall no evil happen to the just,(2) whatsoever may be sent to him by God. Even though some unjust charge be brought against him, he will care little; nor, again, will he exult above measure, if through others he be clearly vindicated. For he considers that I am He who try the hearts and reins,(3) who judge not outwardly and according to human appearance; for often in Mine eyes that is found blameworthy which in the judgment of men is held worthy of praise."

5. O Lord God, O Judge, just, strong, and patient, who knowest the frailty and sinfulness of men, be You my strength and my whole confidence; for my own conscience suffices me not. You knowest what I know not; and therefore ought I under all rebuke to humble myself, and to bear it meekly. Therefore mercifully forgive me as often as I have not done this, and grant me the next time the grace of greater endurance. For better unto me is Thine abundant pity for the attainment of Your pardon, than the righteousness which I believe myself to have for defence against my conscience, which lies wait against me. Although I know nothing against myself, yet I am not hereby justified,(4) because if Your mercy were removed away, in Your sight should not man living be justified.(5)

(1) Luke ii. 35. (2) Proverbs xii. 21. (3) Psalm vii. 9.
(4) Corinthians iv. 4. (5) Psalm cxliii. 2.

CHAPTER XLVII

That all troubles are to be endured for the sake of eternal life

1. "My Son, let not the labours which you have undertaken for Me break you down, nor let tribulations cast you down in any wise, but let my promise strengthen and comfort you in every event. I am sufficient to reward you above all measure and extent. Not long shalt you labour here, not always be weighed down with sorrows. Wait yet a little while, and you shalt see a speedy end of thine evils. An hour shall come when all labour and confusion shall cease. Little and short is all that passes away with time.

2. "Do earnestly what you dost; labour faithfully in My vineyard; I will be your reward. Write, read, sing, weep, be silent, pray, endure adversities manfully; eternal life is woryour of all these conflicts, yea, and of greater. Peace shall come in one day which is known to the Lord; which shall be neither day nor night,(1) but light eternal, infinite clearness, steadfast peace, and undisturbed rest. You shalt not say then, Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?(2) nor cry out, Woe is me, for my sojourning is prolonged,(3) because death will be utterly destroyed, and there shall be salvation which can never fail, no more anxiety, happy delight, sweet and noble society.

3. "Oh, if you sawest the unfading crowns of the Saints in heaven, and with what great glory they now rejoice, who aforetime were reckoned by this world contemptibly and as it were unworyour of life, truly you would immediately humble yourself even to the earth, and would desire rather to be in subjection to all, than to have authority over one; nor would you long for pleasant days of this life, but would more rejoice to be afflicted for God's sake, and would esteem it gain to be counted for nought amongst men.

4. "Oh, if these things were sweet to your taste, and moved you to the bottom of thine heart, how shouldst you dare ever once to complain? Are not all laborious things to be endured for the sake of eternal life? It is no small thing, the losing or gaining the Kingdom of God. Lift up therefore your face to heaven. Behold, I and all My Saints with Me, who in this world had a hard conflict, now rejoice, are now comforted, are now secure, are now at peace, and shall remain with Me evermore, in the Kingdom of My Father."

(1) Zechariah xiv. 7. (2) Romans vii. 24. (3) Psalm cxx.

CHAPTER XLVIII

Of the day of eternity and of the straitness of this life

1. Oh most blessed mansion of the City which is above! Oh most clear day of eternity which the night obscures not, but the Supreme Truth ever enlightens! Day always joyful, always secure and never changing its state into those which are contrary. Oh would that this day might shine forth, and that all these temporal things would come to an end. It shines indeed upon the Saints, glowing with unending brightness, but only from afar and through a glass, upon those who are pilgrims on the earth.

2. The citizens of heaven know how glorious that day is; the exiled sons of Eve groan, because this is bitter and wearisome. The days of this life are few and evil, full of sorrows and straits, where man is defiled with many sins, ensnared with many passions, bound fast with many fears, wearied with many cares, distracted with many questionings, entangled with many vanities, compassed about with many errors, worn away with many labours, weighed down with temptations, enervated by pleasures, tormented by poverty.

3. Oh when shall there be an end of these evils? When shall I be delivered from the wretched slavery of my sins? When shall I be mindful, O Lord, of You alone? When shall I rejoice in You to the full? When shall I be in true liberty without any impediment, without any burden on mind or body? When shall there be solid peace, peace immovable and secure, peace within and without, peace firm on every side? Blessed Jesus, when shall I stand to behold You? When shall I gaze upon the glory of Your kingdom? When shalt You be to me all in all? Oh when shall I be with You in Your Kingdom which You have prepared from the foundation of the world for them that love You? I am left destitute, an exile in a hostile land, where are daily wars and grievous misfortunes.

4. Console my exile, mitigate my sorrow, for towards You all my desire longs. For all is to me a burden, whatsoever this world offers for consolation. I yearn to enjoy You intimately, but I cannot attain unto it. I long to cleave to heavenly things, but temporal things and unmortified passions press me down. In my mind I would be above all things, but in my flesh I am unwillingly compelled to be beneath them. So, wretched man that I am, I fight with myself, and am made grievous even unto myself, while the spirit seeks to be above and the flesh to be beneath.

5. Oh how I suffer inwardly, while with the mind I discourse on heavenly things, and presently a crowd of carnal things rushes upon me whilst I pray. My God, be not You far from me, nor depart in wrath from Your servant. Cast forth Your lightning and scatter them; send out Thine arrows,(1)

and let all delusions of my enemy be confounded. Recall my senses unto Yourself, cause me to forget all worldly things; grant me quickly to cast away and despise the imaginations of sin. Succour me, O Eternal Truth, that no vanity man move me. Come unto me, O Heavenly Sweetness, and let all impurity flee from before Your face. Pardon me also, and of Your mercy deal gently with me, whensoever in prayer I think on anything besides You; for truly I confess that I am wont to be continually distracted. For often and often, where in the body I stand or sit, there I myself am not; but rather am I there, whither I am borne by my thoughts. Where my thought is, there am I; and there commonly is my thought where that which I love is. That readily occurs to me, which naturally delights, or pleases through custom.

6. Wherefore Thou, who art the Truth, have plainly said, Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.(2) If I love heaven, I gladly meditate on heavenly things. If I love the world, I rejoice in the delights of the world, and am made sorry by its adversities. If I love the flesh, I am continually imagining the things which belong to the flesh; if I love the spirit, I am delighted by meditating on spiritual things. For whatsoever things I love, on these I readily converse and listen, and carry home with me the images of them. But blessed is that man who for Your sake, O Lord, is willing to part from all creatures; who does violence to his fleshly nature and crucifies the lusts of the flesh by the fervour of his spirit, so that with serene conscience he may offer unto You a pure prayer, and be made woryour to enter into the angelic choirs, having shut out from himself, both outwardly and inwardly, all worldly things.

(1) Psalm lxxi. 12. (2) Matthew vi. 21.

CHAPTER XLIX

Of the desire after eternal life, and how great blessings are promised to those who strive

1. "My Son, when you feel the desire of eternal happiness to be poured into you from above, and longest to depart from the tabernacle of this body, that you may contemplate My glory without shadow of turning, enlarge thine heart, and take in this holy inspiration with all your desire. Give most hearty thanks to the Supreme Goodness, who deals with you so graciously, visits you so lovingly, stirs you up so fervently, raises you so powerfully, lest you sink down through thine own weight, to earthly things. For not by thine own meditating or striving dost you receive this gift, but by the sole gracious condescension of Supreme Grace and Divine regard; to the end that you may make progress in virtue and in more humility, and prepare yourself for future conflicts, and cleave unto Me with all the affection of your heart, and strive to serve Me with fervent will.
2. "My Son, often the fire burns, but the flame ascends not without smoke. So also the desires of some men burn towards heavenly things, and yet they are not free from the temptation of carnal affection. Thus therefore they are not acting with an altogether simple desire for God's glory when they pray to Him so earnestly. Such, too, is oftentimes your desire, when you have imagined it to be so earnest. For that is not pure and perfect which is tainted with thine own self-seeking.
3. "Seek you not what is pleasant and advantageous to yourself, but what is acceptable and honourable unto Me; for if you judgest rightly, you must choose and follow after My appointment rather than thine own desire; yea, rather than anything that can be desired. I know your desire, and I have heard your many groanings. Already you longest to be in the glorious liberty of the children of God; already the eternal home delights you, and the heavenly country full of joy; but the hour is not yet come; there remains still another season, even a season of warfare, a season of labour and probation. You desirest to be filled with the Chief Good, but you canst not attain it immediately. I AM that Good; wait for Me, until the Kingdom of God shall come.
4. "You must still be tried upon earth, and be exercised in many things. Consolation shall from time to time be given you, but abundant satisfying shall not be granted. Be strong therefore, and be you brave both in working and in suffering things which are against your nature. You must put on the new man, and be changed into another man. You must often do what you would not; and you must leave undone what you would do. What pleases others shall have good success, what pleases you shall have no prosperity. What others say shall be listened to; what you sayest shall receive no heed. Others shall ask and receive; you shalt ask and not obtain. Others shall be great in the report of men, but about you shall nothing be spoken. To others this or that shall be entrusted; you shalt be judged

useful for nought.

5. "For this cause nature shall sometimes be filled with sadness; and it is a great thing if you bear it silently. In this and many like things the faithful servant of the Lord is wont to be tried, how far he is able to deny himself and bring himself into subjection in all things. Scarcely is there anything in which you have need to mortify yourself so much as in seeing things which are adverse to your will; especially when things are commanded you to be done which seem to you inexpedient or of little use to you. And because you darest not resist a higher power, being under authority, therefore it seems hard for you to shape your course according to the nod of another, and to forego thine own opinion.

6. "But consider, My Son, the fruit of these labours, the swift end, and the reward exceeding great; and you shalt find it no pain to bear them then, but rather the strongest solace of your patience. For even in exchange for this trifling desire which you have readily forsaken, you shalt always have your will in Heaven. There verily you shalt find all that you would, all that you canst long for. There you shalt have all good within your power without fear of losing it. There your will, ever at one with Mine, shall desire nothing outward, nothing for itself. There no man shall withstand you, none shall complain of you, none shall hinder, nothing shall stand in your path; but all things desired by you shall be present together, and shall refresh your whole affection, and fill it up even to the brim. There I will glory for the scorn suffered here, the garment of praise for sorrow, and for the lowest place a throne in the Kingdom, for ever. There shall appear the fruit of obedience, the labour of repentance shall rejoice, and humble subjection shall be crowned gloriously.

7. "Now therefore bow yourself humbly under the hands of all men; nor let it trouble you who said this or who ordered that; but take special heed that whether your superior, your inferior, or your equal, require anything from you, or even show a desire for it; take it all in good part, and study with a good will to fulfil the desire. Let one seek this, another that; let this man glory in this, and that man in that, and be praised a thousand thousand times, but rejoice you only in the contempt of yourself, and in Mine own good pleasure and glory. This is what you art to long for, even that whether by life or by death God may be ever magnified in you."(1)

(1) Philippians i. 20.

CHAPTER L

How a desolate man ought to commit himself into the hands of God

1. O Lord, Holy Father, be You blessed now and evermore; because as You wilt so it is done, and what You doest is good. Let Your servant rejoice in You, not in himself, nor in any other; because You alone art the true joy, You art my hope and my crown, You art my joy and my honour, O Lord. What has Your servant, which he receives not from You, even without merit of his own? Thine are all things which You have given, and which You have made. I am poor and in misery even from my youth up,(1) and my soul is sorrowful unto tears, sometimes also it is disquieted within itself, because of the sufferings which are coming upon it.

2. I long after the joy of peace; for the peace of Your children do I beseech, for in the light of Your comfort they are fed by You. If You give peace, if You pour into me holy joy, the soul of Your servant shall be full of melody, and devout in Your praise. But if You withdraw Yourself as too often You art wont, he will not be able to run in the way of Your commandments, but rather he will smite his breast and will bow his knees; because it is not with him as yesterday and the day before, when Your candle shined upon his head,(2) and he walked under the shadow of Your wings,(3) from the temptations which beset him.

3. O Father, righteous and ever to be praised, the hour comes when Your servant is to be proved. O beloved Father, it is well that in this hour Your servant suffer somewhat for Your sake. O Father, evermore to be adored, as the hour comes which You foreknewest from everlasting, when for a little while Your servant should outwardly bow down, but always live inwardly with You; when for a little while he should be little regarded, humbled, and fail in the eyes of men; should be wasted with sufferings and weaknesses, to rise again with You in the dawn of the new light, and be glorified in the heavenly places. O Holy Father, you have ordained it so, and so have willed it; and that is done which You Yourself have commanded.

4. For this is Your favour to Your friend, that he should suffer and be troubled in the world for Your love's sake, how often soever, and by whomsoever and whosoever You have suffered it to be done. Without Your counsel and providence, and without cause, nothing comes to pass on the earth. It is good for me, Lord, that I have been in trouble, that I may learn Your statutes,(4) and may cast away all pride of heart and presumption. It is profitable for me that confusion has covered my face, that I may seek to You for consolation rather than unto men. By this also I have learned to dread Thine unsearchable judgment, who afflictest the just with the wicked, but not without equity and justice.

5. Thanks be unto You, because You have not spared my sins, but have beaten me with stripes of love, inflicting pains, and sending troubles upon me without and within. There is none who can console me, of all things which are under heaven, but You only, O Lord my God, You heavenly Physician of souls, who dost scourge and have mercy, who ledest down to hell and bringest up again.(5) Your discipline over me, and Your rod itself shall teach me.

6. Behold, O beloved Father, I am in Your hands, I bow myself under the rod of Your correction. Smite my back and my neck that I may bend my crookedness to Your will. Make me a pious and lowly disciple, as You wert wont to be kind, that I may walk according to every nod of Thine. To You I commend myself and all that I have for correction; better is it to be punished here than hereafter. You knowest all things and each of them; and nothing remains hid from You in man's conscience. Before they are, you knowest that they will be, and You needest not that any man teach You or admonish You concerning the things which are done upon the earth. You knowest what is expedient for my profit, and how greatly trouble serves unto the scrubbing off the rust of sin. Do with me according to Your desired good pleasure, and despise not my life which is full of sin, known to none so entirely and fully as to You alone.

7. Grant me, O Lord, to know that which ought to be known; to love that which ought to be loved; to praise that which pleases You most, to esteem that which is precious in Your sight, to blame that which is vile in Thine eyes. Suffer me not to judge according to the sight of bodily eyes, nor to give sentence according to the hearing of the ears of ignorant men; but to discern in true judgment between visible and spiritual things, and above all things to be ever seeking after the will of Your good pleasure.

8. Oftentimes the senses of men are deceived in judging; the lovers of the world also are deceived in that they love only visible things. What is a man because by man he is reckoned very great? The deceiver deceives the deceiver, the vain man the vain, the blind man the blind, the weak man the weak, when they exalt one another; and in truth they rather put to shame, while they foolishly praise. For as humble St. Francis saith, "What each one is in Thine eyes, so much he is, and no more."

(1) Psalm lxxxviii. 15. (2) Job xxix. 3. (3) Psalm xvii. 8.

(4) Psalm cxix. 71. (5) Job xiii. 2.

CHAPTER LI

That we must give ourselves to humble works when we are unequal to those that are lofty

1. "My Son, you art not always able to continue in very fervent desire after virtues, nor to stand fast in the loftier region of contemplation; but you must of necessity sometimes descend to lower things because of thine original corruption, and bear about the burden of corruptible life, though unwillingly and with weariness. So long as you wearest a mortal body, you shalt feel weariness and heaviness of heart. Therefore you ought to groan often in the flesh because of the burden of the flesh, inasmuch as you canst not give yourself to spiritual studies and divine contemplation unceasingly.

2. "At such a time it is expedient for you to flee to humble and external works, and to renew yourself with good actions; to wait for My coming and heavenly visitation with sure confidence; to bear your exile and drought of mind with patience, until you be visited by Me again, and be freed from all anxieties. For I will cause you to forget your labours, and altogether to enjoy peace. I will spread open before you the pleasant pastures of the Scriptures, that with enlarged heart you may begin to run in the way of My commandments. And you shalt say, 'The sufferings of this present time are not woryour to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.'"(1)

(1) Romans viii. 18.

CHAPTER LII

That a man ought not to reckon himself worthy of consolation, but more worthy of chastisement

1. O Lord, I am not worthy of Your consolation, nor of any spiritual visitation; and therefore You dealest justly with me, when You leavest me poor and desolate. For if I were able to pour forth tears like the sea, still should I not be worthy of Your consolation. Therefore am I nothing worthy save to be scourged and punished, because I have grievously and many a time offended You, and in many things have greatly sinned. Therefore, true account being taken, I am not worthy even of the least of Your consolations. But Thou, gracious and merciful God, who willest not that Your works should perish, to show forth the riches of Your mercy upon the vessels of mercy,(1) vouchsafest even beyond all his own deserving, to comfort Your servant above the measure of mankind. For Your consolations are not like unto the discourings of men.

2. What have I done, O Lord, that You should bestow any heavenly comfort upon me? I remember not that I have done any good, but have been ever prone to sin and slow to amendment. It is true and I cannot deny it. If I should say otherwise, You would rise up against me, and there should be none to defend me. What have I deserved for my sins but hell and everlasting fire? In very truth I confess that I am worthy of all scorn and contempt, nor is it fit that I should be remembered among Your faithful servants. And although I be unwilling to hear this, nevertheless I will for the Truth's sake, accuse myself of my sins, that the more readily I may prevail to be accounted worthy of Your mercy.

3. What shall I say, guilty that I am and filled with confusion? I have no mouth to utter, unless it be this word alone, "I have sinned, Lord, I have sinned; have mercy upon me, forgive me." Let me alone, that I may take comfort a little before I go whence I shall not return even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death.(2) What dost You so much require of a guilty and miserable sinner, as that he be contrite, and humble himself for his sins? In true contrition and humiliation of heart is begotten the hope of pardon, the troubled conscience is reconciled, lost grace is recovered, a man is preserved from the wrath to come, and God and the penitent soul hasten to meet each other with a holy kiss.(3)

4. The humble contrition of sinners is an acceptable sacrifice unto You, O Lord, sending forth a smell sweeter far in Your sight than the incense. This also is that pleasant ointment which You would have poured upon Your sacred feet, for a broken and contrite heart You have never despised.(4) There is the place of refuge from the wrathful countenance of the enemy. There is

amended and washed away whatsoever evil has elsewhere been contracted.

- (1) Romans ix. 23. (2) Job x. 20, 21. (3) Luke xv. 20.
(4) Psalm li. 17.

CHAPTER LIII

That the Grace of God does not join itself to those who mind earthly things

1. "My Son, precious is My grace, and it suffers not itself to be joined with outward things, nor with earthly consolations. Therefore you ought to cast away all things which hinder grace, if you longest to receive the inpouring thereof. Seek a secret place for yourself, love to dwell alone with yourself, desire the conversation of no one; but rather pour out your devout prayer to God, that you may possess a contrite mind and a pure conscience. Count the whole world as nought; seek to be alone with God before all outward things. For you canst not be alone with Me, and at the same time be delighted with transitory things. You ought to be separated from your acquaintances and dear friends, and keep your mind free from all worldly comfort. So the blessed Apostle Peter beseeches, that Christ's faithful ones bear themselves in this world as strangers and pilgrims.(1)

2. "Oh how great a confidence shall there be to the dying man whom no affection to anything detains in the world? But to have a heart so separated from all things, a sickly soul does not yet comprehend, nor does the carnal man know the liberty of the spiritual man. But if indeed he desire to be spiritually minded, he must renounce both those who are far off, and those who are near, and to beware of no man more than himself. If you perfectly conquer yourself, very easily shalt you subdue all things besides. Perfect victory is the triumph over oneself. For whoso keeps himself in subjection, in such manner that the sensual affections obey the reason, and the reason in all things obeys Me, he truly is conqueror of himself, and lord of the world.

3. "If you desire to climb to this height, you ought to start bravely, and to lay the axe to the root, to the end that you may pull up and destroy the hidden inordinate inclination towards yourself, and towards all selfish and earthly good. From this sin, that a man loves himself too inordinately, almost everything hangs which needs to be utterly overcome: when that evil is conquered and put under foot, there shall be great peace and tranquillity continually. But because few strive earnestly to die perfectly to themselves, and do not heartily go forth from themselves, therefore do they remain entangled in themselves, and cannot be raised in spirit above themselves. But he who desires to walk at liberty with Me, must of necessity mortify all his evil and inordinate affections, and must cling to no creature with selfish love."

(1) 1 Peter ii. 11.

CHAPTER LIV

Of the diverse motions of Nature and of Grace

1. "My Son, pay diligent heed to the motions of Nature and of Grace, because they move in a very contrary and subtle manner, and are hardly distinguished save by a spiritual and inwardly enlightened man. All men indeed seek good, and make pretence of something good in all that they say or do; and thus under the appearance of good many are deceived.
2. "Nature is deceitful and draws away, ensnares, and deceives many, and always has self for her end; but Grace walks in simplicity and turns away from every appearance of evil, makes no false pretences, and does all entirely for the sake of God, in whom also she finally rests.
3. "Nature is very unwilling to die, and to be pressed down, and to be overcome, and to be in subjection, and to bear the yoke readily; but Grace suffers self-mortification, resists sensuality, seeks to be subdued, longs to be conquered, and wills not to use her own liberty. She loves to be held by discipline, and not to have authority over any, but always to live, to remain, to have her being under God, and for God's sake to be humbly subject to every ordinance of man.
4. "Nature labors for her own advantage, and considers what profit she may gain from another; but Grace considers more, not what may be useful and convenient to self, but what may be profitable to the many.
5. "Nature willingly receives honour and reverence; but Grace faithfully ascribes all honour and glory to God.
6. "Nature fears confusion and contempt, but Grace rejoices to suffer shame for the name of Jesus.
7. "Nature loves ease and bodily quiet; Grace cannot be unemployed, but gladly embraces labour.
8. "Nature seeks to possess things curious and attractive, and abhors those which are rough and cheap; Grace is delighted with things simple and humble, despises not those which are rough, nor refuses to be clothed with old garments.
9. "Nature has regard to things temporal, rejoices in earthly lucre, is made sad by loss, vexed by any little injurious word; but Grace reaches after things eternal, cleaves not to those which are temporal, is not perturbed by losses, nor embittered by any hard words, because she has placed her treasure and

joy in heaven where nought perishes.

10. "Nature is covetous, and receives more willingly than she gives, loves things that are personal and private to herself; while Grace is kind and generous, avoids selfishness, is contented with a little, believes it is more blessed to give than to receive.

11. "Nature inclines you to created things, to thine own flesh, to vanities and dissipation; but Grace draws to God and to virtues, renounces creatures, flees from the world, hates the desires of the flesh, restrains vagaries, blushes to be seen in public.

12. "Nature is glad to receive some outward solace in which the senses may have delight; but Grace seeks to be comforted in God alone, and to have delight in the chief good above all visible things.

13. "Nature does everything for her own gain and profit, can do nothing as a free favour, but hopes to attain something as good or better, or some praise or favour for her benefits; and she loves that her own deeds and gifts should be highly valued; but Grace seeks nothing temporal, nor requires any other gift of reward than God alone; neither longs she for more of temporal necessities than such as may suffice for the attaining of eternal life.

14. "Nature rejoices in many friends and kinsfolk, she boasts of noble place and noble birth, she smiles on the powerful, flatters the rich, applauds those who are like herself; but Grace loves even her enemies, and is not lifted up by the multitude of friends, sets no store upon high place or high birth, unless there be greater virtue therewith; favors the poor man more than the rich, has more sympathy with the innocent than with the powerful; rejoices with the truthful, not with the liar; always exhorts the good to strive after better gifts of grace, and to become by holiness like unto the Son of God.

15. "Nature quickly complains of poverty and of trouble; Grace bears want with constancy.

16. "Nature looks upon all things in reference to herself; strives and argues for self; but Grace brings back all things to God from whom they came at the beginning; ascribes no good to herself nor arrogantly presumes; is not contentious, nor prefers her own opinion to others, but in every sense and understanding submits herself to the Eternal wisdom and the Divine judgment.

17. "Nature is eager to know secrets and to hear new things; she loves to appear abroad, and to make experience of many things through the senses; she desires to be acknowledged and to do those things which win praise and admiration; but Grace cares not to gather up new or curious things, because all this springs from the old corruption, whereas there is nothing new or lasting upon earth. So she

teaches to restrain the senses, to shun vain complacency and ostentation, to hide humbly those things which merit praise and real admiration, and from everything and in all knowledge to seek after useful fruit, and the praise and honour of God. She desires not to receive praise for herself or for her own, but longs that God be blessed in all His gifts, who out of unmingled love bestows all things."

18. This Grace is a supernatural light, and a certain special gift of God, and the proper mark of the elect, and the pledge of eternal salvation; it exalts a man from earthly things to love those that are heavenly; and it makes the carnal man spiritual. So far therefore as Nature is utterly pressed down and overcome, so far is greater Grace bestowed and the inner man is daily created anew by fresh visitations, after the image of God.

CHAPTER LV

Of the corruption of Nature and the efficacy of Divine Grace

1. O Lord my God, who has created me after thine own image and similitude, grant me this grace, which You have shown to be so great and so necessary for salvation, that I may conquer my wicked nature, which draws me to sin and to perdition. For I feel in my flesh the law of sin, contradicting the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the obedience of sensuality in many things; nor can I resist its passions, unless Your most holy grace assist me, fervently poured into my heart.

2. There is need of Your grace, yea, and of a great measure thereof, that my nature may be conquered, which has always been prone to evil from my youth. For being fallen through the first man Adam, and corrupted through sin, the punishment of this stain descended upon all men; so that Nature itself, which was framed good and right by You, is now used to express the vice and infirmity of corrupted Nature; because its motion left unto itself draws men away to evil and to lower things. For the little power which remains is as it were one spark lying hid in the ashes. This is Natural reason itself, encompassed with thick clouds, having yet a discernment of good and evil, a distinction of the true and the false, though it be powerless to fulfill all that it approves, and possess not yet the full light of truth, nor healthfulness of its affections.

3. Hence it is, O my God, that I delight in Your law after the inward man,(1) knowing that Your commandment is holy and just and good; reproofing also all evil, and the sin that is to be avoided: yet with the flesh I serve the law of sin, whilst I obey sensuality rather than reason. Hence it is that to will to do good is present within me, but how to perform it I find not.(2) Hence I oftentimes purpose many good things; but because grace is lacking to help mine infirmities, I fall back before a little resistance and fail. Hence it comes to pass that I recognize the way of perfectness, and see very clearly what things I ought to do; but pressed down by the weight of my own corruption, I rise not to the things which are more perfect.

4. Oh how entirely necessary is Your grace to me, O Lord, for a good beginning, for progress, and for bringing to perfection. For without it I can do nothing, but I can do all things through Your grace which strengthens me.(3) O truly heavenly grace, without which our own merits are nought, and no gifts of Nature at all are to be esteemed. Arts, riches, beauty, strength, wit, eloquence, they all avail nothing before You, O Lord, without Your grace. For the gifts of Nature belong to good and evil alike; but the proper gift of the elect is grace--that is, love-- and they who bear the mark thereof are held worthy of everlasting life. So mighty is this grace, that without it neither the gift of prophecy nor the working of miracles, nor any speculation, howsoever lofty, is of any value at all. But neither

faith, nor hope, nor any other virtue is accepted with You without love and grace.

5. O most blessed grace that makest the poor in spirit rich in virtues, and renderest him who is rich in many things humble in spirit, come Thou, descend upon me, fill me early with Your consolation, lest my soul fail through weariness and drought of mind. I beseech you, O Lord, that I may find grace in Your sight, for Your grace is sufficient for me,(4) when I obtain not those things which Nature longs for. If I be tempted and vexed with many tribulations, I will fear no evil, while Your grace remains with me. This alone is my strength, this brings me counsel and help. It is more powerful than all enemies, and wiser than all the wise men in the world.

6. It is the mistress of truth, the teacher of discipline, the light of the heart, the solace of anxiety, the banisher of sorrow, the deliverer from fear, the nurse of devotion, the drawer forth of tears. What am I without it, save a dry tree, a useless branch, woryour to be cast away! "Let Your grace, therefore, O Lord, always prevent and follow me, and make me continually given to all good works, through Jesus Christ, Your Son. Amen."

(1) Romans vii. 12, 22. 25. (2) Romans vii. 18. (3) Phillippians iv. 13.

(4) 2 Corinthians xii. 9.

CHAPTER LVI

That we ought to deny ourselves, and to imitate Christ by means of the Cross

1. My Son, so far as you art able to go out of yourself so far shalt you be able to enter into Me. As to desire no outward thing works internal peace, so the forsaking of self inwardly joins unto God. I will that you learn perfect self-denial, living in My will without contradiction or complaint. Follow Me: I am the way, the truth, and the life.(1) Without the way you canst not go, without the truth you canst not know, without life you canst not live. I am the Way which you ought to follow; the Truth which you ought to believe; the Life which you ought to hope for. I am the Way unchangeable; the Truth infallible; the Life everlasting. I am the Way altogether straight, the Truth supreme, the true Life, the blessed Life, the uncreated Life. If you remain in My way you shalt know the Truth, and the truth shall make you free,(2) and you shalt lay hold on eternal life.

2. "If you wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.(3) If you wilt know the truth, believe in Me. If you wilt be perfect, sell all that you have. If you wilt be My disciple, deny yourself. If you wouldest possess the blessed life, despise the life which now is. If you wilt be exalted in heaven, humble yourself in the world. If you wilt reign with Me, bear the cross with Me; for only the servants of the cross find the way of blessedness and of true light."

3. O Lord Jesus, forasmuch as Your life was straitened and despised by the world, grant unto me to imitate You in despising the world, for the servant is not greater than his lord, nor the disciple above his master.(4) Let Your servant be exercised in Your life, because there is my salvation and true holiness. Whatsoever I read or hear besides it, it refreshes me not, nor gives me delight.

4. "My son, because you knowest these things and have read them all, blessed shalt you be if you doest them. He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves Me, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him,(5) and I will make him to sit down with Me in My Father's Kingdom.

5. O Lord Jesus, as You have said and promised, even so let it be unto me, and grant me to prove woryour. I have received the cross at Your hand; I have carried it, and will carry it even unto death, as You have laid it upon me. Truly the life of a truly devoted servant is a cross, but it leads to paradise. I have begun; I may not return back nor leave it.

6. Come, my brothers, let us together go forward. Jesus shall be with us. For Jesus' sake have we taken up this cross, for Jesus' sake let us persevere in the cross. He will be our helper, who was our Captain and Forerunner. Behold our King enters in before us, and He will fight for us. Let us follow

bravely, let no man fear terrors; let us be prepared to die bravely in battle, and let us not so stain our honour,(6) as to fly from the cross.

(1) John xiv. 6. (2) John viii. 32. (3) Matthew xix. 17, 21.

(4) Matthew x. 24. (5) John xiv. 21. (6) 1 Mac. ix. 10.

CHAPTER LVII

That a man must not be too much cast down when he falls into some faults

1. "My Son, patience and humility in adversities are more pleasing to Me than much comfort and devotion in prosperity. Why does a little thing spoken against you make you sad? If it had been more, you still ought not to be moved. But now suffer it to go by; it is not the first, it is not new, and it wil not be the last, if you live long. You art brave enough, so long as no adversity meets you. You givest good counsel also, and knowest how to strengthen others with your words; but when tribulations suddenly knocks at thine own door, your counsel and strength fail. Consider your great frailty, which you dost so often experience in trifling matters nevertheless, for your soul's health these things are done when they and such like happen unto you.

2. "Put them away from your heart as well as you canst, and if tribulation has touched you, yet let it not cast you down nor entangle you long. At the least, bear patiently, if you canst not joyfully. And although you be very unwilling to hear it, and feel indignation, yet check yourself, and suffer no unadvised word to come forth from your lips, whereby the little ones may be offended. Soon the storm which has been raised shall be stilled, and inward grief shall be sweetened by returning grace. I yet live, saith the Lord, ready to help you, and to give you more than wonted consolation if you put your trust in Me, and call devoutly upon Me.

3. "Be you more calm of spirit, and gird yourself for greater endurance. All is not frustrated, though you find yourself very often afflicted or grievously tempted. You art man, not God; you art flesh, not an angel. How shouldst you be able to remain alway in the same state of virtue, when an angel in heaven fell, and the first man in paradise? I am He who lifts up the mourners to deliverance, and those who know their own infirmity I raise up to my own nature."

4. O Lord, blessed be Your word, sweeter to my mouth than honey and the honeycomb. What should I do in my so great tribulations and anxieties, unless You did comfort me with Your holy words? If only I may attain unto the haven of salvation, what matter is it what things or how many I suffer? Give me a good end, give me a happy passage out of this world. Remember me, O my God, and lead me by the right way unto Your Kingdom. Amen.

CHAPTER LVIII

Of deeper matters, and God's hidden judgments which are not to be inquired into

1. "My Son, beware you dispute not of high matters and of the hidden judgments of God; why this man is thus left, and that man is taken into so great favour; why also this man is so greatly afflicted, and that so highly exalted. These things pass all man's power of judging, neither may any reasoning or disputation have power to search out the divine judgments. When therefore the enemy suggests these things to you, or when any curious people ask such questions, answer with that word of the Prophet, Just art Thou, O Lord, and true is Your judgment,(1) and with this, The judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.(2) My judgments are to be feared, not to be disputed on, because they are incomprehensible to human understanding.

2. "And be not given to inquire or dispute about the merits of the Saints, which is holier than another, or which is the greater in the Kingdom of Heaven. Such questions often beget useless strifes and contentions: they also nourish pride and vain glory, whence envyings and dissensions arise, while one man arrogantly endeavors to exalt one Saint and another another. But to wish to know and search out such things brings no fruit, but it rather displeases the Saints; for I am not the God of confusion but of peace;(3) which peace consists more in true humility than in self-exaltation.

3. "Some are drawn by zeal of love to greater affection to these Saints or those; but this is human affection rather than divine. I am He Who made all the Saints: I gave them grace, I brought them glory; I know the merits of every one; I prevented them with the blessings of My goodness.(4) I foreknew my beloved ones from everlasting, I chose them out of the world;(5) they did not choose Me. I called them by My grace, drew them by My mercy, led them on through sundry temptations. I poured mighty consolations upon them, I gave them perseverance, I crowned their patience.

4. "I acknowledge the first and the last; I embrace all with inestimable love. I am to be praised in all My Saints; I am to be blessed above all things, and to be honoured in every one whom I have so gloriously exalted and predestined, without any preceding merits of their own. He therefore that shall despise one of the least of these My people, honors not the great; because I made both small and great.(6) And he who speaks against any of My Saints speaks against Me, and against all others in the Kingdom of Heaven."

They are all one through the bond of charity; they think the same thing, will the same thing, and all are united in love to one another.

5. "But yet (which is far better) they love Me above themselves and their own merits. For being caught up above themselves, and drawn beyond self-love, they go all straightforward to the love of Me, and they rest in Me in perfect enjoyment. There is nothing which can turn them away or press them down; for being full of Eternal Truth, they burn with the fire of inextinguishable charity. Therefore let all carnal and natural men hold their peace concerning the state of the Saints, for they know nothing save to love their own personal enjoyment. They take away and add according to their own inclination, not as it pleases the Eternal Truth.

6. "In many men this is ignorance, chiefly is it so in those who, being little enlightened, rarely learn to love any one with perfect spiritual love. They are still much drawn by natural affection and human friendship to these or to those: and as they reckon of themselves in lower matters, so also do they frame imaginations of things heavenly. But there is an immeasurable difference between those things which they imperfectly imagine, and these things which enlightened men behold through supernatural revelation.

7. "Take heed, therefore, My son, that you treat not curiously those things which surpass your knowledge, but rather make this your business and give attention to it, namely, that you seek to be found, even though it be the least, in the Kingdom of God. And even if any one should know who were holier than others, or who were held greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven; what should that knowledge profit him, unless through this knowledge he should humble himself before Me, and should rise up to give greater praise unto My name? He who considers how great are his own sins, how small his virtues, and how far he is removed from the perfection of the Saints, does far more acceptably in the sight of God, than he who disputes about their greatness or littleness.

8. "They are altogether well content, if men would learn to be content, and to refrain from vain babbling. They glory not of their own merits, seeing they ascribe no good unto themselves, but all unto Me, seeing that I of my infinite charity have given them all things. They are filled with so great love of the Divinity, and with such overflowing joy, that no glory is lacking to them, neither can any felicity be lacking. All the Saints, the higher they are exalted in glory, the humbler are they in themselves, and the nearer and dearer are they unto Me. And so you have it written that they cast their crowns before God and fell on their faces before the Lamb, and worshipped Him that lives for ever and ever.(7)

9. "Many ask who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, who know not whether they shall be woryour to be counted among the least. It is a great thing to be even the least in Heaven, where all are great, because all shall be called, and shall be, the sons of God. A little one shall become a thousand, but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. For when the disciples asked who should be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, they received no other answer than this,

Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. But whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same shall be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.(8)

10. Woe unto them who disdain to humble themselves willingly with the little children; for the low gate of the kingdom of Heaven will not suffer them to enter in. Woe also to them who are rich, who have their consolation here;(9) because whilst the poor enter into the kingdom of God, they shall stand lamenting without. Rejoice ye humble, and exult ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God if only ye walk in the truth.

- (1) Psalm cxix. 137. (2) Psalm xix. 9.
(3) Corinthians xiv. 33. (4) Psalm xxi. 3. (5) John xv. 19.
(6) Wisd. vi. 8. (7) Revelation iv. 10; v. 14.
(8) Matthew xviii. 3. (9) Phillipians ii. 21.

CHAPTER LIX

That all hope and trust is to be fixed in God alone

1. O Lord, what is my trust which I have in this life, or what is my greatest comfort of all the things which are seen under Heaven? Is it not Thou, O Lord my God, whose mercies are without number? Where has it been well with me without You? Or when could it be evil whilst You wert near? I had rather be poor for Your sake, than rich without You. I choose rather to be a pilgrim upon the earth with You than without You to possess heaven. Where You art, there is heaven; and where You art not, behold there death and hell. You art all my desire, and therefore must I groan and cry and earnestly pray after You. In short I can confide fully in none to give me ready help in necessities, save in You alone, O my God. You art my hope, You art my trust, You art my Comforter, and most faithful in all things.

2. All men seek their own;(10) You settest forward only my salvation and my profit, and turnest all things unto my good. Even though You dost expose me to divers temptations and adversities, You ordainest all this unto my advantage, for You are wont to prove Your beloved ones in a thousand ways. In which proving You ought no less to be loved and praised, than if You wert filling me full of heavenly consolations.

3. In You, therefore, O Lord God, I put all my hope and my refuge, on You I lay all my tribulation and anguish; because I find all to be weak and unstable whatsoever I behold out of You. For many friends shall not profit, nor strong helpers be able to succour, nor prudent counsellors to give a useful answer, nor the books of the learned to console, nor any precious substance to deliver, nor any secret and beautiful place to give shelter, if You Yourself do not assist, help, comfort, instruct, keep in safety.

4. For all things which seem to belong to the attainment of peace and felicity are nothing when You art absent, and bring no felicity at all in reality. Therefore art You the end of all good, and the fulness of Life, and the soul of eloquence; and to hope in You above all things is the strongest solace of Your servants. Mine eyes look unto You,(2) in You is my trust, O my God, Father of mercies.

5. Bless and sanctify my soul with heavenly blessing that it may become Your holy habitation, and the seat of Your eternal glory; and let nothing be found in the Temple of Your divinity which may offend the eyes of Your majesty. According to the greatness of Your goodness and the multitude of Your mercies look upon me, and hear the prayer of Your poor servant, far exiled from You in the land of the shadow of death. Protect and preserve the soul of Your least servant amid so many

dangers of corruptible life, and by Your grace accompanying me, direct it by the way of peace unto its home of perpetual life. Amen.

(10) Luke vi. (2) Psalm cxli. 8.

THE FOURTH BOOK
OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

A devout exhortation to the Holy Communion

The Voice of Christ

Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you(1), saith the Lord. The bread that I will give is My flesh which I give for the life of the world.(2) Take, eat: this is My Body, which is given for you; this do in remembrance of Me.(3) He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood dwells in Me and I in him. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.(4)

(1) Matthew xi. 28 (2) John vi. 51.

(3) Matthew xxi. 26; Luke xxii. 19. (4) John vi. 57, 63.

CHAPTER I

With how great reverence Christ must be received

The Voice of the Disciple

1. These are Your words, O Christ, Eternal Truth; though not uttered at one time nor written together in one place of Scripture. Because therefore they are Your words and true, I must gratefully and faithfully receive them all. They are Thine, and You have uttered them; and they are mine also, because You did speak them for my salvation. Gladly I receive them from Your mouth, that they may be more deeply implanted in my heart. Words of such great grace arouse me, for they are full of sweetness and love; but my own sins terrify me, and my impure conscience drives me away from receiving so great mysteries. The sweetness of Your words encourages me, but the multitude of my faults presses me down.

2. You commandest that I draw near to You with firm confidence, if I would have part with You, and that I receive the food of immortality, if I desire to obtain eternal life and glory. Come unto Me, sayest Thou, all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. Oh, sweet and lovely word in the ear of the sinner, that Thou, O Lord my God, dost invite the poor and needy to the Communion of Your most holy body and blood. But who am I, O Lord, that I should presume to approach unto You? Behold the heaven of heavens cannot contain You, and yet You sayest, Come ye all unto Me.

3. What means this most gracious condescension, this most lovely invitation? How shall I dare to come, who know no good thing of myself, whence I might be able to presume? How shall I bring You within my house, seeing that I so often have sinned in Your most loving sight? Angels and Archangels stand in awe of You, and You sayest, Come unto Me! Except Thou, Lord, hadst said it, who should believe it true? And except You hadst commanded, who should attempt to draw near?

4. Behold, Noah, that just man, laboured for a hundred years in building the ark, that he might be saved with the few; and I, how shall I be able in one hour to prepare myself to receive the Builder of the world with reverence? Moses, Your servant, Your great and especial friend, made an ark of incorruptible wood, which also he covered with purest gold, that he might lay up in it the tables of the law, and I, a corruptible creature, shall I dare thus easily to receive You, the Maker of the Law, and the Giver of life? Solomon, the wisest of the kings of Israel, was seven years building his magnificent temple to the praise of Your Name, and for eight days celebrated the feast of its dedication, offered a thousand peace offerings, and solemnly brought up the Ark of the Covenant to the place prepared for it, with the sound of trumpets and great joy, and I, unhappy and poorest of

mankind, how shall I bring You into my house, who scarce know how to spend half an hour in devotion? And oh that it were even one half hour worthily spent!

5. O my God, how earnestly these holy men strove to please You! And alas! how little and trifling is that which I do! how short a time do I spend, when I am disposing myself to Communion. Rarely altogether collected, most rarely cleansed from all distraction. And surely in the saving presence of Your Godhead no unmeet thought ought to intrude, nor should any creature take possession of me, because it is not an Angel but the Lord of Angels, that I am about to receive as my Guest.

6. Yet there is a vast difference between the Ark of the Covenant with its relics, and Your most pure Body with its ineffable virtues, between those sacrifices of the law, which were figures of things to come, and the true sacrifice of Your Body, the completion of all the ancient sacrifices.

7. Wherefore then do I not yearn more ardently after Your adorable presence? Why do I not prepare myself with great solicitude to receive Your holy things, when those holy Patriarchs and Prophets of old, kings also and princes, with the whole people, manifested so great affection of devotion towards Your Divine Service?

8. The most devout king David danced with all his might before the Ark of God, calling to mind the benefits granted to his forefathers in days past; he fashioned musical instruments of various sorts, put forth Psalms, and appointed them to be sung with joy, played also himself oftentimes on the harp, being inspired with the grace of the Holy Ghost; he taught the people of Israel to praise God with the whole heart, and with unity of voice to bless and praise Him every day. If so great devotion was then exercised, and celebration of divine praise was carried on before the Ark of the Testimony, how great reverence and devotion ought now to be shown by me and all Christian people at the ministering of the Sacrament, at receiving the most precious Body and Blood of Christ.

9. Many run to diverse places to visit the memorials of departed Saints, and rejoice to hear of their deeds and to look upon the beautiful buildings of their shrines. And behold, You art present here with me, O my God, Saint of Saints, Creator of men and Lord of the Angels. Often in looking at those memorials men are moved by curiosity and novelty, and very little fruit of amendment is borne away, especially when there is so much careless trifling and so little true contrition. But here in the Sacrament of the Altar, You art present altogether, My God, the Man Christ Jesus, where also abundant fruit of eternal life is given to every one soever that receives You worthily and devoutly. But to this no levity draws, no curiosity, nor sensuality, only steadfast faith, devout hope, and sincere charity.

10. O God, invisible Creator of the world, how wondrously dost You work with us, how sweetly and

graciously You dealest with Thine elect, to whom You offerest Yourself to be received in this Sacrament! For this surpasses all understanding, this specially draws the hearts of the devout and enkindles their affections. For even your true faithful ones themselves, who order their whole life to amendment, oftentimes gain from this most excellent Sacrament great grace of devotion and love of virtue.

11. Oh admirable and hidden grace of the Sacrament, which only Christ's faithful ones know, but the faithful and those who serve sin cannot experience! In this Sacrament is conferred spiritual grace, and lost virtue is regained in the soul, and the beauty which was disfigured by sin returns again. So great sometimes is this grace that out of the fullness of devotion given, not only the mind but also the weak body feels that more strength is supplied unto it.

12. But greatly must we mourn and lament over our lukewarmness and negligence, that we are not drawn by greater affection to become partakers of Christ, in whom all the hope and merit of those that are to be saved consist. For He Himself is our sanctification and redemption.(1) He is the consolation of pilgrims and the eternal fruition of the Saints. Therefore it is grievously to be lamented that many so little consider this health-giving mystery, which makes heaven glad and preserves the whole world. Alas for the blindness and hardness of man's heart, that he considers not more this unspeakable gift, and even slips down through the daily use, into carelessness.

13. For if this most holy Sacrament were celebrated in one place only, and were consecrated only by one priest in the whole world, with what great desire thinkest thou, would men be affected towards that place and towards such a priest of God, that they might behold the divine mysteries celebrated? But now are many men made priests and in many places the Sacrament is celebrated, that the grace and love of God towards men might the more appear, the more widely the Holy Communion is spread abroad over all the world. Thanks be unto You, O good Jesus, Eternal Shepherd, who has vouchsafed to refresh us, poor and exiled ones, with Your precious Body and Blood, and to invite us to partake these holy mysteries by the invitation from Thine own mouth, saying, Come unto Me, ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.

(1) 1 Corinthians i. 30.

CHAPTER II

That the greatness and charity of God is shown to men in the Sacrament

The Voice of the Disciple

1. Trusting in Your goodness and great mercy, O Lord, I draw near, the sick to the Healer, the hungry and thirsting to the Fountain of life, the poverty-stricken to the King of heaven, the servant to the Lord, the creature to the Creator, the desolate to my own gentle Comforter. But whence is this unto me, that You come unto me? Who am I that You should offer me Yourself? How does a sinner dare to appear before You? And how dost you vouchsafe to come to the sinner? You knowest Your servant, and You knowest that he has in him no good thing for which You should grant him this grace. I confess therefore mine own vileness, I acknowledge Your goodness, I praise Your tenderness, and I give You thanks for Thine exceeding great love. For You doest this for Thine own sake, not for my merits, that Your goodness may be more manifest unto me, Your charity more abundantly poured out upon me, and Your humility more perfectly commended unto me. Therefore because this pleases You and You have commanded that thus it shall be, Your condescension pleases me also; and oh that mine iniquity hinder it not.

2. O most sweet and tender Jesus, what reverence, what giving of thanks is due to You with perpetual praise for the receiving of Your sacred Body and Blood, the dignity whereof no man is found able to express. But what shall I think upon in this Communion in approaching my Lord, whom I am not able worthily to honour, and nevertheless whom I long devoutly to receive? What shall be better and more healthful meditation for me, than utter humiliation of myself before You, and exaltation of Thine infinite goodness towards me? I praise You, O my God, and exalt You for evermore. I despise myself, and cast myself down before You into the deep of my vileness.

3. Behold, You art the Saint of saints and I the refuse of sinners; behold, You stoopest unto me who am not worthy to look upon You; behold, You come unto me, You willest to be with me, You invitest me to Your feast. You willest to give me the heavenly food and bread of angels to eat; none other, in truth, than Yourself, The living bread, which did descend from heaven; and givest life to the world.(1)

4. Behold, whence this love proceeds! what manner of condescension shines forth herein. What great giving of thanks and praise is due unto You for these benefits! Oh how salutary and profitable Your purpose when You did ordain this! How sweet and pleasant the feast when You did give Yourself for food! Oh how admirable is your working, O Lord, how mighty Your power, how unspeakable

Your truth! For You did speak the word, and all things were made; and this is done which You have commanded.

5. A thing wonderful, and woryour of faith, and surpassing all the understanding of man, that Thou, O Lord my God, very God and very man, givest Yourself altogether to us in a little bread and wine, and art so our inexhaustible food. Thou, O Lord of all, who has need of nothing, has willed to dwell in us through Your Sacrament. Preserve my heart and my body undefiled, that with a joyful and pure conscience I may be able very often to [celebrate, and](2) receive to my perpetual health. Your mysteries, which You have consecrated and instituted both for Thine own honour, and for a perpetual memorial.

6. Rejoice, O my soul, and give thanks unto God for so great a gift and precious consolation, left unto you in this vale of tears. For so oft as you callest this mystery to mind and receivest the body of Christ, so often dost you celebrate the work of your redemption, and art made partaker of all the merits of Christ. For the charity of Christ never grows less, and the greatness of His propitiation is never exhausted. Therefore, by continual renewal of your spirit, you ought to dispose yourself hereunto and to weigh the great mystery of salvation with attentive consideration. So great, new, and joyful ought it to appear to you when you come to communion, as if on this self-same day Christ for the first time were descending into the Virgin's womb and becoming man, or hanging on the cross, suffering and dying for the salvation of mankind.

(1) John vi. 51.

(2) The words in brackets are only suitable for a priest.

CHAPTER III

That it is profitable to Communicate often

The Voice of the Disciple

1. Behold I come unto You, O Lord, that I may be blessed through Your gift, and be made joyful in Your holy feast which Thou, O God, of Your goodness have prepared for the poor.(1) Behold in You is all that I can and ought to desire, You art my salvation and redemption, my hope and strength, my honour and glory. Therefore rejoice the soul of Your servant this day, for unto You, O Lord Jesus, do I lift up my soul.(2) I long now to receive You devoutly and reverently, I desire to bring You into my house, so that with Zacchaeus I may be counted woryour to be blessed by You and numbered among the children of Abraham. My soul has an earnest desire for Your Body, my heart longs to be united with You.

2. Give me Yourself and it suffices, for besides You no consolation avails. Without You I cannot be, and without Your visitation I have no power to live. And therefore I must needs draw nigh unto You often, and receive You for the healing of my soul, lest haply I faint by the way if I be deprived of heavenly food. For so Thou, most merciful Jesus, preaching to the people and healing many sick, did say, I will not send them away fasting to their own homes, lest they faint by the way.(3) Deal therefore now to me in like manner, for You left Yourself for the consolation of the faithful in the Sacrament. For You art the sweet refreshment of the soul, and he who shall eat You worthily shall be partaker and inheritor of the eternal glory. Necessary indeed it is for me, who so often slide backwards and sin, so quickly wax cold and faint, to renew, cleanse, enkindle myself by frequent prayers and penitences and receiving of Your sacred Body and Blood lest haply by too long abstinence, I fall short of my holy resolutions.

3. For the imaginations of man's heart are evil from his youth,(4) and except divine medicine succour him, man slides away continually unto the worse. The Holy Communion therefore draws us back from evil, and strengthens us for good. For if I now be so negligent and lukewarm when I communicate [or celebrate], how should it be with me, if I receive not this medicine, and sought not so great a help? [And though I am not every day fit nor well prepared to celebrate, I will nevertheless give diligent heed at due season, to receive the divine mysteries, and to become partaker of so great grace]. For this is the one principal consolation of the faithful soul, so long as it is absent from You in mortal body, that being continually mindful of its God, it receives its Beloved with devout spirit.

4. Oh wonderful condescension of Your pity surrounding us, that Thou, O Lord God, Creator and Quickener of all spirits, deignest to come unto a soul so poor and weak, and to appease its hunger with Your whole Diety and Humanity. Oh happy mind and blessed soul, to which is granted devoutly to receive You its Lord God, and in so receiving You to be filled with all spiritual joy! Oh how great a Lord does it entertain, how beloved a Guest does it bring in, how delightful a Companion does it receive, how faithful a Friend does it welcome, how beautiful and exalted a Spouse, above every other Beloved, does it embrace, One to be loved above all things that can be desired! O my most sweet Beloved, let heaven and earth and all the glory of them, be silent in Your presence; seeing whatsoever praise and beauty they have it is of Your gracious bounty; and they shall never reach unto the loveliness of Your Name, Whose Wisdom is infinite.(5)

- (1) Psalm lxviii. 10. (2) Psalm lxxxvi. 4.
(3) Matthew xv. 32. (4) Genesis viii. 21.
(5) Psalm cxlvii. 5.

CHAPTER IV

That many good gifts are bestowed upon those who Communicate devoutly

The Voice of the Disciple

1. O Lord my God, prevent You Your servant with the blessings of Your sweetness, that I may be enabled to draw near worthily and devoutly to Your glorious Sacrament. Awaken my heart towards You, and deliver me from heavy slumber. Visit me with Your salvation that I may in spirit taste Your sweetness, which plentifully lies hid in this Sacrament as in a fountain. Lighten also mine eyes to behold this so great mystery, and strengthen me that I may believe it with undoubting faith. For it is Your word, not human power; it is Your holy institution, not the invention of man. For no man is found fit in himself to receive and to understand these things, which transcend even the wisdom of the Angels. What portion then shall I, unworshipful sinner, who am but dust and ashes, be able to search into and comprehend of so deep a Sacrament?

2. O Lord, in the simplicity of my heart, in good and firm faith, and according to Your will, I draw nigh unto You with hope and reverence, and truly believe that You art here present in the Sacrament, God and man. You willest therefore that I receive You and unite myself to You in charity. Wherefore I beseech Your mercy, and implore You to give me Your special grace, to this end, that I may be wholly dissolved and overflow with love towards You, and no more suffer any other consolation to enter into me. For this most high and most glorious Sacrament is the health of the soul and the body, the medicine of all spiritual sickness, whereby I am healed of my sins, my passions are bridled, temptations are conquered or weakened, more grace is poured into me, virtue begun is increased, faith is made firm, hope is strengthened, and charity is enkindled and enlarged.

3. For in this Sacrament You have bestowed many good things and still bestowest them continually on Thine elect who communicate devoutly, O my God, Lifter up of my soul, Repairer of human infirmity, and Giver of all inward consolation. For You pourest into them much consolation against all sorts of tribulation, and out of the deep of their own misery You liftest them up to the hope of Your protection, and with ever new grace, dost inwardly refresh and enlighten them; so that they who felt themselves to be anxious and without affection before Communion, afterwards being refreshed with heavenly food and drink, find themselves changed for the better. And even in such wise You dealest severally with Thine elect, that they may truly acknowledge and clearly make proof that they have nothing whatsoever of their own, and what goodness and grace come to them from You; because being in themselves cold, hard of heart, indevout, through You they become fervent, zealous, and devout. For who is there coming humbly to the fountain of sweetness, carries not away

thence at the least some little of that sweetness? Or who standing by a large fire, feels not from thence a little of its heat? And You art ever a full and overflowing fountain, a fire continually burning, and never going out.

4. Wherefore if it is not suffered to me to draw from the fulness of the fountain, nor to drink unto satisfying, yet will I set my lips to the mouth of the heavenly conduit, that at least I may receive a small drop to quench my thirst, that I dry not up within my heart. And if I am not yet able to be altogether heavenly and so enkindled as the Cherubim and Seraphim, yet will I endeavour to give myself unto devotion, and to prepare my heart, that I may gain if it be but a little flame of the divine fire, through the humble receiving of the life-giving Sacrament. But whatsoever is wanting unto me, O merciful Jesus, Most Holy Saviour, do You of Your kindness and grace supply, who has vouchsafed to call all unto You saying, Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you.

5. I indeed labour in the sweat of my face, I am tormented with sorrow of heart, I am burdened with sins, I am disquieted with temptations, I am entangled and oppressed with many passions, and there is none to help me, there is none to deliver and ease me, but Thou, O Lord God, my Saviour, to whom I commit myself and all things that are mine, that You may preserve me and lead me unto life eternal.

Receive me unto the praise and glory of Your name, who has prepared Your Body and Blood to be my meat and drink. Grant, O Lord God my Saviour, that with coming often to Your mysteries the zeal of my devotion may increase.

CHAPTER V

Of the dignity of this Sacrament, and of the office of the priest

The Voice of the Beloved

1. If you hadst angelic purity and the holiness of holy John the Baptist, you wouldest not be woryour to receive or to minister to this Sacrament. For this is not deserved by merit of man that a man should consecrate and minister the Sacrament of Christ, and take for food the bread of Angels. Vast is the mystery, and great is the dignity of the priests, to whom is given what is not granted to Angels. For priests only, rightly ordained in the church, have the power of consecrating and celebrating the Body of Christ. The priest indeed is the minister of God, using the Word of God by God's command and institution; nevertheless God is there the principal Author and invisible Worker, that to whom all that He wills is subject, and all He commands is obedient.

2. Therefore you must believe God Almighty in this most excellent Sacrament, more than thine own sense or any visible sign at all. And therefore with fear and reverence is this work to be approached. Take heed therefore and see what it is of which the ministry is committed to you by the laying on of the Bishop's hand. Behold you art made a priest and consecrated to celebrate. See now that you do it before God faithfully and devoutly at due time, and shew yourself without blame. You have not lightened your burden, but art now bound with a straiter bond of discipline, and art pledged to a higher degree of holiness. A priest ought to be adorned with all virtues and to afford to others an example of good life. His conversation must not be with the popular and common ways of men, but with Angels in Heaven or with perfect men on earth.

3. A priest clad in holy garments takes Christ's place that he may pray unto God with all supplication and humility for himself and for the whole people. He must always remember the Passion of Christ. He must diligently look upon Christ's footsteps and fervently endeavour himself to follow them. He must bear meekly for God whatsoever ills are brought upon him by others. He must mourn for his own sins, and for the sins committed by others, and may not grow careless of prayer and holy oblation, until he prevail to obtain grace and mercy. When the priest celebrates, he honors God, gives joy to the Angels, builds up the Church, helps the living, has communion with the departed, and makes himself a partaker of all good things.

CHAPTER VI

An inquiry concerning preparation for Communion

The Voice of the Disciple

1. When I consider Your dignity, O Lord, and mine own vileness, I tremble very exceedingly, and am confounded within myself. For if I approach not, I fly from life; and if I intrude myself unworthily, I run into Your displeasure. What then shall I do, O my God, You helper and Counsellor in necessities.

2. Teach You me the right way; propound unto me some short exercise befitting Holy Communion. For it is profitable to know how I ought to prepare my heart devoutly and reverently for You, to the intent that I may receive Your Sacrament to my soul's health [or it may be also for the celebrating this so great and divine mystery].

CHAPTER VII

Of the examination of conscience, and purpose of amendment

The Voice of the Beloved

1. Above all things the priest of God must draw nigh, with all humility of heart and supplicating reverence, with full faith and pious desire for the honour of God, to celebrate, minister, and receive this Sacrament. Diligently examine your conscience and with all your might with true contrition and humble confession cleanse and purify it, so that you may feel no burden, nor know anything which brings you remorse and impedes your free approach. Have displeasure against all your sins in general, and specially sorrow and mourn because of your daily transgressions. And if you have time, confess unto God in the secret of thine heart, all miseries of thine own passion.

2. Lament grievously and be sorry, because you art still so carnal and worldly, so unmortified from your passions, so full of the motion of concupiscence, so unguarded in thine outward senses, so often entangled in many vain fancies, so much inclined to outward things, so negligent of internal; so ready to laughter and dissoluteness, so unready to weeping and contrition; so prone to ease and indulgence of the flesh, so dull to zeal and fervour; so curious to hear novelties and behold beauties, so loth to embrace things humble and despised; so desirous to have many things, so grudging in giving, so close in keeping; so inconsiderate in speaking, so reluctant to keep silence; so disorderly in manners, so inconsiderate in actions; so eager after food, so deaf towards the Word of God; so eager after rest, so slow to labour; so watchful after tales, so sleepy towards holy watchings; so eager for the end of them, so wandering in attention to them; so negligent is observing the hours of prayer, so lukewarm in celebrating, so unfruitful in communicating; so quickly distracted, so seldom quite collected with yourself; so quickly moved to anger, so ready for displeasure at others; so prone to judging, so severe at reproving; so joyful in prosperity, so weak in adversity; so often making many good resolutions and bringing them to so little effect.

3. When you have confessed and bewailed these and your other shortcomings, with sorrow and sore displeasure at thine own infirmity, make then a firm resolution of continual amendment of life and of progress in all that is good. Then moreover with full resignation and entire will offer yourself to the honour of My name on the altar of thine heart as a perpetual whole burnt-offering, even by faithfully presenting your body and soul unto Me, to the end that you may so be accounted woryour to draw near to offer this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God, and to receive the Sacrament of My Body and Blood to your soul's health. For there is no oblation worthier, no satisfaction greater for the destroying of sin, than that a man offer himself to God, purely and entirely with the oblation

of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Communion. If a man shall have done what in him lies, and shall repent him truly, then how often soever he shall draw nigh unto Me for pardon and grace, As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted, and live. All his transgressions that he has committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him.(1)

(1) Ezekiel xviii. 22, 23.

CHAPTER VIII

Of the oblation of Christ upon the cross, and of resignation of self

The Voice of the Beloved

1. As I of my own will offered myself unto God the Father on the Cross for your sins with outstretched hands and naked body, so that nothing remained in Me that did not become altogether a sacrifice for the Divine propitiation; so also ought you every day to offer yourself willingly unto Me for a pure and holy oblation with all your strength and affections, even to the utmost of thine heart. What more do I require of you than you study to resign yourself altogether to Me? Whatsoever you givest besides yourself, I nothing care for, for I ask not your gift, but you.

2. As it would not be sufficient for you if you hadst all things except Me, even so whatsoever you shalt give Me, if you give Me not yourself, it cannot please Me. Offer yourself to Me, and give yourself altogether for God, so shall your offering be accepted. Behold I offered Myself altogether to the Father for you, I give also My whole body and blood for food, that you mightest remain altogether Mine and I thine. But if you stand in yourself, and offer not yourself freely to My will, your offering is not perfect, neither shall the union betwixt us be complete. Therefore ought the freewill offering of yourself into the hands of God to go before all your works, if you wilt attain liberty and grace. For this is the cause that so few are inwardly enlightened and made free, that they know not how to deny themselves entirely. My word stands sure, Except a man forsake all, he cannot be My disciple.(1) You therefore, if you wilt be My disciple, offer yourself to Me with all your affections.

(1) Luke xiv. 32.

CHAPTER IX

That we ought to offer ourselves and all that is ours to God, and to pray for all

The Voice of the Disciple

1. Lord, all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine.(2) I desire to offer myself up unto you as a freewill offering, and to continue Thine for ever. Lord, in the uprightness of mine heart I willingly offer(3) myself to You to-day to be Your servant for ever, in humble submission and for a sacrifice of perpetual praise. Receive me with this holy Communion of Your precious Body, which I celebrate before You this day in the presence of the Angels invisibly surrounding, that it may be for the salvation of me and of all Your people.

2. Lord, I lay before You at this celebration all my sins and offences which I have committed before You and Your holy Angels, for the day whereon I was first able to sin even unto this hour; that You may consume and burn them every one with the fire of Your charity, and may do away all the stains of my sins, and cleanse my conscience from all offence, and restore me to Your favour which by sinning I have lost, fully forgiving me all, and mercifully admitting me to the kiss of peace.

3. What can I do concerning my sins, save humbly to confess and lament them and unceasingly beseech Your propitiation? I beseech You, be propitious unto me and hear me, when I stand before You, O my God. All me sins displease me grievously: I will never more commit them; but I grieve for them and will grieve so long as I live, steadfastly purposing to repent me truly, and to make restitution as far as I can. Forgive, O God, forgive me my sins for Your holy Name's sake; save my soul, which You have redeemed with Your precious blood. Behold I commit myself to your mercy, I resign myself to Your hands. Deal with me according to Your loving-kindness, not according to my wickedness and iniquity.

4. I offer also unto You all my goodness, though it is exceedingly little and imperfect, that You may mend and sanctify it, that You may make it well pleasing and acceptable in Your sight, and ever draw it on towards perfection; and furthermore bring me safely, slothful and useless poor creature that I am, to a happy and blessed end.

5. Moreover I offer unto You all pious desires of the devout, necessities of parents, friends, brothers, sisters, and all who are dear to me, and of those who have done good to me, or to others for Your love; and those who have desired and besought my prayers for themselves and all belonging to them; that all may feel themselves assisted by Your grace, enriched by consolation, protected from dangers,

freed from pains; and that being delivered from all evils they may joyfully give You exceeding thanks.

6. I offer also to You prayers and Sacramental intercessions for those specially who have injured me in aught, made me sad, or spoken evil concerning me, or have caused me any loss or displeasure; for all those also whom I have at any time made sad, disturbed, burdened, and scandalized, by words or deeds, knowingly or ignorantly; that to all of us alike, You may equally pardon ours sins and mutual offences. Take away, O Lord, from our hearts all suspicion, indignation, anger, and contention, and whatsoever is able to injure charity and diminish brotherly love. Have mercy, have mercy, Lord, on those who entreat Your mercy; give grace to the needy; and make us such that we may be woryour to enjoy Your grace, and go forward to the life eternal. Amen.

(2) 1 Chronicles xxix. 11. (3) 1 Chronicles xxix. 17.

CHAPTER X

That Holy Communion is not lightly to be omitted

The Voice of the Beloved

1. You must frequently betake you to the Fountain of grace and divine mercy, to the Fountain of goodness and all purity; to the end that you may obtain the healing of your passions and vices, and may be made stronger and more watchful against all temptations and wiles of the devil. The enemy, knowing what profit and exceeding strong remedy lies in the Holy Communion, strives by all means and occasions to draw back and hinder the faithful and devout, so far as he can.

2. For when some set about to prepare themselves for Holy Communion, they suffer from the more evil suggestions of Satan. The very evil spirit himself (as is written in Job), comes among the sons of God that he may trouble them by his accustomed evil dealing, or make them over timid and perplexed; to the intent that he may diminish their affections, or take away their faith by his attacks, if haply he may prevail upon them to give up Holy Communion altogether, or to come thereto with lukewarm hearts. But his wiles and delusions must not be heeded, howsoever wicked and terrible they be; but all his delusion must be cast back upon his head. The wretch must be despised and laughed to scorn: neither must Holy Communion be omitted because of his insults and the inward troubles which he stirs up.

3. Often also too much carefulness or some anxiety or other touching confession hinders from obtaining devotion. Do you according to the counsel of wise men, and lay aside anxiety and scruple, because it hinders the grace of God and destroys devotion of mind. Because of some little vexation or trouble do not you neglect Holy Communion, but rather hasten to confess it, and forgive freely all offences committed against you. And if you have offended any man, humbly beg for pardon, and God shall freely forgive you.

4. What profits it to put off for long time the confession of your sins, or to defer Holy Communion? Cleanse yourself forthwith, spit out the poison with all speed, hasten to take the remedy, and you shalt feel yourself better than if you did long defer it. If to-day you defer it on one account, to-morrow perchance some greater obstacle will come, and so you may be long time hindered from Communion and become more unfit. As soon as you canst, shake yourself from your present heaviness and sloth, for it profits nothing to be long anxious, to go long on your way with heaviness of heart, and because of daily little obstacles to sever yourself from divine things; nay it is exceeding hurtful to defer your Communion long, for this commonly brings on great torpor. Alas! there are

some, lukewarm and undisciplined, who willingly find excuses for delaying repentance, and desire to defer Holy Communion, lest they should be bound to keep stricter watch upon themselves.

5. Alas! how little charity, what flagging devotion, have they who so lightly put off Holy Communion. How happy is he, how acceptable to God, who so lives, that any day he could be ready and well inclined to communicate, if it were in his power, and might be done without the notice of others. If a man sometimes abstains for the sake of humility or some sound cause, he is to be commended for his reverence. But if drowsiness have taken hold of him, he ought to rouse himself and to do what in him lies; and the Lord will help his desire for the good will which he has, which God specially approves.

6. But when he is hindered by sufficient cause, yet will he ever have a good will and pious intention to communicate; and so he shall not be lacking in the fruit of the Sacrament. For any devout man is able every day and every hour to draw near to spiritual communion with Christ to his soul's health and without hindrance. Nevertheless on certain days and at the appointed time he ought to receive the Body and Blood of his Redeemer with affectionate reverence, and rather to seek after the praise and honour of God, than his own comfort. For so often does he communicate mystically, and is invisibly refreshed, as he devoutly called to mind the mystery of Christ's incarnation and His Passions, and is inflamed with the love of Him.

7. He who only prepares himself when a festival is at hand or custom compels, will too often be unprepared. Blessed is he who offers himself to God for a whole burnt-offering, so often as he celebrates or communicates! Be not too slow nor too hurried in your celebrating, but preserve the good received custom of those with whom you livest. You ought not to produce weariness and annoyance in others, but to observe the received custom, according to the institution of the elders; and to minister to the profit of others rather than to thine own devotion or feeling.

CHAPTER XI

That the Body and Blood of Christ and the Holy Scriptures are most necessary to a faithful soul

The Voice of the Disciple

1. O most sweet Lord Jesus, how great is the blessedness of the devout soul that feeds with You in Your banquet, where there is set before it no other food than Yourself its only Beloved, more to be desired than all the desires of the heart? And to me it would verily be sweet to pour forth my tears in Your presence from the very bottom of my heart, and with the pious Magdalene to water Your feet with my tears. But where is this devotion? Where the abundant flowing of holy tears? Surely in Your presence and in the presence of the holy Angels my whole heart ought to burn and to weep for joy; for I have You in the Sacrament verily present, although hidden under other form.

2. For in Thine own Divine brightness, mine eyes could not endure to behold You, neither could the whole world stand before the splendour of the glory of Your Majesty. In this therefore You have consideration unto my weakness, that You hidest Yourself under the Sacrament. I verily possess and adore Him whom the Angels adore in heaven; I yet for a while by faith, but they by sight and without a veil. It is good for me to be content with the light of true faith, and to walk therein until the day of eternal brightness dawn, and the shadows of figures flee away.(1) But when that which is perfect is come, the using of Sacraments shall cease, because the Blessed in heavenly glory have no need of Sacramental remedy. For they rejoice unceasingly in the presence of God, beholding His glory face to face, and being changed from glory to glory(2) of the infinite God, they taste the Word of God made flesh, as He was in the beginning and remains for everlasting.

3. When I think on these wondrous things, even spiritual comfort whatsoever it be becomes sore weariness to me; for so long as I see not openly my Lord in His own Glory, I count for nothing all which I behold and hear in the world. Thou, O God, art my witness that nothing is able to comfort me, no creature is able to give me rest, save Thou, O my God, whom I desire to contemplate everlastingly. But this is not possible, so long as I remain in this mortal state. Therefore ought I to set myself unto great patience, and submit myself unto You in every desire. For even Your Saints, O Lord, who now rejoice with You in the kingdom of heaven, waited for the coming of Your glory whilst they lived here, in faith and great glory. What they believed, that believe I; what they hoped for, I hope; whither they have attained to, thither through Your grace hope I to come. I will walk meanwhile in faith, strengthened by the examples of the Saints. I will have also holy books for comfort and for a mirror of life, and above them all Your most holy Body and Blood shall be for me a special remedy and refuge.

4. For two things do I feel to be exceedingly necessary to me in this life, without which this miserable life would be intolerable to me; being detained in the prison of this body, I confess that I need two things, even food and light. You have therefore given to me who am so weak, Your sacred Body and Blood, for the refreshing of my soul and body, and have set Your Word for a lantern to my feet.(3) Without these two I could not properly live; for the Word of God is the light of my soul, and Your Sacrament the bread of life. These may also be called the two tables, placed on this side and on that, in the treasury of Your holy Church. One table is that of the Sacred Altar, bearing the holy bread, that is the precious Body and Blood of Christ, the other is the table of the Divine Law, containing holy doctrine, teaching the true faith, and leading steadfastly onwards even to that which is within the veil, where the Holy of Holies is.

5. Thanks be unto You, O Lord Jesus, Light of Light everlasting, for that table of holy doctrine which You has furnished to us by Your servants the Prophets and Apostles and other teachers. Thanks be to You, O Creator and Redeemer of men, who to make known Your love to the whole world has prepared a great supper, in which You have set forth for good not the typical lamb, but Thine own most Holy Body and Blood; making all Your faithful ones joyful with this holy banquet and giving them to drink the cup of salvation, wherein are all the delights of Paradise, and the holy Angels do feed with us, and with yet happier sweetness.

6. Oh how great and honourable is the office of the priests, to whom it is given to consecrate the Sacrament of the Lord of majesty with holy words, to bless it with the lips, to hold it in their hands, to receive it with their own mouth, and to administer it to others! Oh how clean ought those hands to be, how pure the mouth, how holy the body, how unspotted the heart of the priest, to whom so often the Author of purity entered in! From the mouth of the priest ought naught to proceed but what is holy, what is honest and profitable, because he so often receives the Sacrament of Christ.

7. His eyes ought to be single and pure, seeing they are wont to look upon the Body of Christ; the hands should be pure and lifted up towards heaven, which are wont to hold within them the Creator of heaven and earth. To priests is it specially said in the Law, Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.(4)

8. Assist us with Your grace, O Almighty God, that we who have taken upon us the priestly office, may be able to converse worthily and devoutly with You in all purity and good conscience. And if we are not able to have our conversation in such innocency of life as we ought, yet grant unto us worthily to lament the sins which we have committed, and in the spirit of humility and full purpose of a good will, to serve You more earnestly for the future.

(1) Cant. ii. 17. (2) 2 Corinthians iii. 18.

(3) Psalm cxix. 105. (4) Leviticus xix. 2.

CHAPTER XII

That he who is about to Communicate with Christ ought to prepare himself with great diligence

The Voice of the Beloved

1. I am the Lover of purity, and Giver of sanctity. I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of My rest. Prepare for Me the larger upper room furnished, and I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.(1) If you wilt that I come unto you and abide with you, purge out the old leaven,(2) and cleanse the habitation of your heart. Shut out the whole world, and all the throng of sins; sit as a sparrow alone upon the house-top,(3) and think upon your transgressions with bitterness of your soul. For everyone that loves prepares the best and fairest place for his beloved, because hereby the affection of him that entertains his beloved is known.

2. Yet know you that you canst not make sufficient preparation out of the merit of any action of thine, even though you should prepare yourself for a whole year, and hadst nothing else in your mind. But out of My tenderness and grace alone art you permitted to draw night unto My table; as though a beggar were called to a rich man's dinner, and had no other recompense to offer him for the benefits done unto him, but to humble himself and to give him thanks. Do therefore as much as lies in you, and do it diligently, not of custom, nor of necessity, but with fear, reverence, and affection, receive the Body of your beloved Lord God, who vouchsafeth to come unto you. I am He who has called you; I command it to be done; I will supply what is lacking to you; come and receive Me.

3. When I give the grace of devotion, give thanks unto your God; it is not because you art woryour, but because I had mercy on you. If you have not devotion, but rather feel yourself dry, be instant in prayer, cease not to groan and knock; cease not until you prevail to obtain some crumb or drop of saving grace. You have need of Me, I have no need of you. Nor dost you come to sanctify Me, but I come to sanctify you and make you better. You come that you may be sanctified by Me, and be united to Me; that you may receive fresh grace, and be kindled anew to amendment of life. See that you neglect not this grace, but prepare your heart with all diligence, and receive your Beloved unto you.

4. But you ought not only to prepare yourself for devotion before Communion, you must also keep yourself with all diligence therein after receiving the Sacrament; nor is less watchfulness needed afterwards, than devout preparation beforehand: for good watchfulness afterwards becomes in turn the best preparation for the gaining more grace. For hereby is a man made entirely indisposed to good, if he immediately return from Communion to give himself up to outward consolations.

Beware of much speaking; remain in a secret place, and hold communion with your God; for you have Him whom the whole world cannot take away from you. I am He to whom you ought wholly to give yourself; so that now you may live not wholly in yourself, but in Me, free from all anxiety.

(1) Mark xiv. 14, 15. (2) 1 Corinthians v. 7.

(3) Psalms cii. 7.

CHAPTER XIII

That the devout soul ought with the whole heart to yearn after union with Christ in the Sacrament

The Voice of the Disciple

1. Who shall grant unto me, O Lord, that I may find You alone, and open all my heart unto You, and enjoy You as much as my soul desires; and that no man may henceforth look upon me, nor any creature move me or have respect unto me, but You alone speak unto me and I unto You, even as beloved is wont to speak unto beloved, and friend to feast with friend? For this do I pray, this do I long for, that I may be wholly united unto You, and may withdraw my heart from all created things, and by means of Holy Communion and frequent celebration may learn more and more to relish heavenly and eternal things. Ah, Lord God, when shall I be entirely united and lost in You, and altogether forgetful of myself? You in me, and I in You;(1) even so grant that we may in like manner continue together in one.

2. Verily You art my Beloved, the choicest among ten thousand,(2) in whom my soul delights to dwell all the days of her life. Verily You art my Peacemaker, in Whom is perfect peace and true rest, apart from Whom is labour and sorrow and infinite misery. Verily You art a God that hidest Yourself, and Your counsel is not with the wicked, but Your Word is with the humble and simple. O how sweet, O Lord is Your spirit, who that You mightest manifest Your sweetness towards Your children, dost vouchsafe to refresh them with the bread which is full of sweetness, which comes down from heaven. Verily there is no other nation so great, which has its gods drawing nigh to them, as Thou, our God art present unto all Your faithful ones,(3) unto whom for their daily solace, and for lifting up their heart unto heaven, You givest Yourself for their food and delight.

3. For what other nation is there so renowned as the Christian people? Or what creature is so beloved under heaven as the devout soul to which God enters in, that he may feed it with His glorious flesh? O unspeakable grace! O wonderful condescension! O immeasurable love specially bestowed upon men! But what reward shall I give unto the Lord for this grace, for charity so mighty? There is nothing which I am able to present more acceptable than to give my heart altogether unto God, and to join it inwardly to Him. Then all my inward parts shall rejoice, when my soul shall be perfectly united unto God. Then shall He say unto me, "If you wilt be with Me, I will be with you." And I will answer Him, "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to abide with me, I will gladly be with You; this is my whole desire, even that my heart be united unto You."

(1) John xv. 4. (2) Cant. v. 10. (3) Deuteronomy iv. 7.

CHAPTER XIV

Of the fervent desire of certain devout persons to receive the Body and Blood of Christ

The Voice of the Disciple

1. O how great is the abundance of Your sweetness, O Lord, which You have laid up for them that fear You. When I call to mind some devout persons who draw nigh to Your Sacrament, O Lord, with the deepest devotion and affection, then very often I am confounded in myself and blush for shame, that I approach Thine altar and table of Holy Communion so carelessly and coldly, that I remain so dry and without affection, that I am not wholly kindled with love before You, my God, nor so vehemently drawn and affected as many devout persons have been, who out of the very earnest desire of the Communion, and tender affection of heart, could not refrain from weeping, but as it were with mouth of heart and body alike panted inwardly after You, O God, O Fountain of Life, having no power to appease or satiate their hunger, save by receiving Your Body with all joyfulness and spiritual eagerness.

2. O truly ardent faith of those, becoming a very proof of Your Sacred Presence! For they verily know their Lord in the breaking of the bread, whose heart so ardently burns within them(1) when Jesus walks with them by the way. Ah me! far from me for the most part is such love and devotion as this, such vehement love and ardour. Be merciful unto me, O Jesus, good, sweet, and kind, and grant unto Your poor suppliant to feel sometimes, in Holy Communion, though it be but a little, the cordial affection of Your love, that my faith may grow stronger, my hope in Your goodness increase, and my charity, once kindled within me by the tasting of the heavenly manna, may never fail.

3. But Your mercy is able even to grant me the grace which I long for, and to visit me most tenderly with the spirit of fervour when the day of Your good pleasure shall come. For, although I burn not with desire so vehement as theirs who are specially devout towards You, yet, through Your grace, I have a desire after that greatly inflamed desire, praying and desiring to be made partaker with all those who so fervently love You, and to be numbered among their holy company.

(1) Luke xxiv. 32.

CHAPTER XV

That the grace of devotion is acquired by humility and self-denial

The Voice of the Beloved

1. You ought to seek earnestly the grace of devotion, to ask it fervently, to wait for it patiently and faithfully, to receive it gratefully, to preserve it humbly, to work with it diligently, and to leave to God the time and manner of heavenly visitation until it come. Chiefly ought you to humble yourself when you feel inwardly little or no devotion, yet not to be too much cast down, nor to grieve out of measure. God oftentimes gives in one short moment what He has long time denied; He sometimes gives at the end what at the beginning of prayer He has deferred to give.

2. If grace were always given immediately, and were at hand at the wish, it would be hardly bearable to weak man. Wherefore the grace of devotion is to be waited for with a good hope and with humble patience. Yet impute it to yourself and to your sins when it is not given, or when it is mysteriously taken away. It is sometimes a small thing which hinders and hides grace; (if indeed that ought to be called small and not rather great, which hinders so great a good); but if you remove this, be it small or great, and perfectly overcome it, you wilt have what you have asked.

3. For immediately that you have given yourself unto God with all thine heart, and have sought neither this nor that according to thine own will and pleasure, but have altogether settled yourself in Him, you shalt find yourself united and at peace; because nothing shall give you so sweet relish and delight, as the good pleasure of the Divine will. Whosoever therefore shall have lifted up his will unto God with singleness of heart, and shall have delivered himself from every inordinate love or dislike of any created thing, he will be the most fit for receiving grace, and worthy of the gift of devotion. For where the Lord finds empty vessels,(1) there gives He His blessing. And the more perfectly a man forsakes things which cannot profit, and the more he dies to himself, the more quickly does grace come, the more plentifully does it enter in, and the higher does it lift up the free heart.

4. Then shall he see, and flow together, and wonder, and his heart shall be enlarged within him,(2) because the hand of the Lord is with him, and he has put himself wholly in His hand, even for ever. Lo, thus shall the man be blessed, that seeks God with all his heart, and receives not his soul in vain. This man in receiving the Holy Eucharist obtains the great grace of Divine Union; because he has not regard to his own devotion and comfort, but, above all devotion and comfort, to the glory and honour of God.

(1) 2 Kings iv. (2) Isaiah lx. 5.

CHAPTER XVI

That we ought to lay open our necessities to Christ and to require His Grace

The Voice of the Disciple

1. O most sweet and loving Lord, whom now I devoutly desire to receive, You knowest my infirmity and the necessity which I suffer, in what evils and vices I lie; how often I am weighed down, tempted, disturbed, and defiled. I come unto You for remedy, I beseech of You consolation and support. I speak unto You who knowest all things, to whom all my secrets are open, and who alone art able perfectly to comfort and help me. You knowest what good thing I most stand in need of, and how poor I am in virtues.

2. Behold, I stand poor and naked before You, requiring grace, and imploring mercy. Refresh the hungry suppliant, kindle my coldness with the fire of Your love, illuminate my blindness with the brightness of Your presence. Turn you all earthly things into bitterness for me, all grievous and contrary things into patience, all things worthless and created into contempt and oblivion. Lift up my heart unto You in Heaven, and suffer me not to wander over the earth. Be You alone sweet unto me from this day forward for ever, because You alone art my meat and drink, my love and joy, my sweetness and my whole good.

3. Oh that You wouldest altogether by Your presence, kindle, consume, and transform me into Yourself; that I may be made one spirit with You, by the grace of inward union, and the melting of earnest love! Suffer me not to go away from You hungry and dry; but deal mercifully with me, as oftentimes You have dealt wondrously with Your saints. What marvel if I should be wholly kindled from You, and in myself should utterly fail, since You art fire always burning and never failing, love purifying the heart and enlightening the understanding.

CHAPTER XVII

Of fervent love and vehement desire of receiving Christ

The Voice of the Disciple

1. With the deepest devotion and fervent love, with all affection and fervour of heart I long to receive You, O Lord, even as many Saints and devout persons have desired You in communicating, who were altogether well pleasing to You by their sanctity of life, and dwelt in all ardent devotion. O my God, Eternal Love, my whole Good, Happiness without measure, I long to receive You with the most vehement desire and becoming reverence which any Saint ever had or could have.

2. And although I be unworthy to have all those feelings of devotion, yet do I offer You the whole affection of my heart, even as though I alone had all those most grateful inflamed desires. Yea, also, whatsoever things a pious mind is able to conceive and long for, all these with the deepest veneration and inward fervour do I offer and present unto You. I desire to reserve nothing unto myself, but freely and entirely to offer myself and all that I have unto You for a sacrifice. O Lord my God, my Creator and Redeemer! with such affection, reverence, praise, and honour, with such gratitude, worthiness, and love, with such faith, hope, and purity do I desire to receive You this day, as Your most blessed Mother, the glorious Virgin Mary, received and desired You, when she humbly and devoutly answered the Angel who brought unto her the glad tidings of the mystery of the Incarnation. Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be unto me according to your word.(1)

3. And as Your blessed forerunner, the most excellent of Saints, John Baptist, being full of joy in Your presence, leapt while yet in the womb of his mother, for joy in the Holy Ghost; and afterwards discerning Jesus walking amongst men, humbled himself exceedingly, and said, with devout affection, The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice;(2) even so I wish to be inflamed with great and holy desires, and to present myself unto You with my whole heart. Whence also, on behalf of myself and of all commended to me in prayer, I offer and present unto You the jubilation of all devout hearts, their ardent affection, their mental ecstasies, and supernatural illuminations and heavenly visions, with all the virtues and praises celebrated and to be celebrated by every creature in heaven and earth; to the end that by all You may worthily be praised and glorified for ever.

4. Receive my prayers, O Lord my God, and my desires of giving You infinite praise and unbounded benediction, which, according to the multitude of Thine unspeakable greatness, are most justly due unto You. These do I give You, and desire to give every day and every moment; and with

beseechings and affectionate desires I call upon all celestial spirits and all Your faithful people to join with me in rendering You thanks and praises.

5. Let all peoples, nations and tongues praise You, and magnify Your holy and sweet-sounding Name, with highest jubilations and ardent devotion. And let all who reverently and devoutly celebrate Your most high Sacrament, and receive it with full assurance of faith, be accounted woryour to find grace and mercy with You, and intercede with all supplication for me a sinner; and when they shall have attained unto their wished-for devotion and joyous union with You, and shall depart full of comfort and wondrously refreshed from Your holy, heavenly table, let them vouchsafe to be mindful of me, for I am poor and needy.

(1) Luke i. 38. (2) John iii. 29.

CHAPTER XVIII

That a man should not be a curious searcher of the sacrament,
but a humble imitator of Christ, submitting his sense to holy faith

The Voice of the Beloved

1. You must take heed of curious and useless searching into this most profound Sacrament, if you wilt not be plunged into the abyss of doubt. He that is a searcher of Majesty shall be oppressed by the glory thereof.(1) God is able to do more than man can understand. A pious and humble search after truth is to be allowed, when it is always ready to be taught, and striving to walk after the wholesome opinions of the fathers.

2. Blessed is the simplicity which leaves alone the difficult paths of questionings, and follows the plain and firm steps of God's commandments. Many have lost devotion whilst they sought to search into deeper things. Faith is required of you, and a sincere life, not loftiness of intellect, nor deepness in the mysteries of God. If you understandest not nor comprehendest the things which are beneath you, how shalt you comprehend those which are above you? Submit yourself to God, and humble your sense to faith, and the light of knowledge shall be given to you, as shall be profitable and necessary unto you.

3. There are some who are grievously tempted concerning faith and the Sacrament; but this is not to be imputed to themselves but rather to the enemy. Care not then for this, dispute not with thine own thoughts, nor make answer to the doubts which are cast into you by the devil; but believe the words of God, believe His Saints and Prophets, and the wicked enemy shall flee from you. Often it profits much, that the servant of God endures such things. For the enemy tempts not unbelievers and sinners, because he already has secure possession of them; but he tempts and harasses the faithful and devout by various means.

4. Go forward therefore with simple and undoubting faith, and draw nigh unto the Sacrament with supplicating reverence. And whatsoever you art not enabled to understand, that commit without anxiety to Almighty God. God deceives you not; he is deceived who believes too much in himself. God walks with the simple, reveals Himself to the humble, gives understanding to babes, opens the sense to pure minds, and hides grace from the curious and proud. Human reason is weak and may be deceived; but true faith cannot be deceived.

5. All reason and natural investigation ought to follow faith, not to precede, nor to break it. For faith

and love do here especially take the highest place, and work in hidden ways in this most holy and exceeding excellent Sacrament. God who is eternal and incomprehensible, and of infinite power, does great and inscrutable things in heaven and in earth, and His wonderful works are past finding out. If the works of God were of such sort that they might easily be comprehended by human reason, they should no longer be called wonderful or unspeakable.

(1) Proverbs xxv. 27 (Vulg.).