

THE
MEDITATIONS
of
ST. AUGUSTINE,
(354-430)

HIS
TREATISE OF THE LOVE OF GOD, SOLILOQUIES,
AND MANUAL.

TRANSLATED BY
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Lightly modernized, corrected, formatted, and annotated by
William H. Gross www.onthewing.org May 8, 2015

Editor's Preface

Augustine (354-430) was often quoted by later reformers and Puritans, who pointed out that the doctrines of grace they asserted — salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, standing on the authority of Scripture alone, to God's glory alone — were not new. Augustine, as you'll see in his *Meditations*, reveals these same principles. He laid a foundation for the Reformation, a millennia later, which enabled the Church to return to its scriptural roots — *these* roots.

Augustine's best-known works are his *Confessions* (c. 400), and *The City of God* (c. 413-426). I think this deserves to be named with them. It is his devotional. It is a passionate and clear celebration of God's Plan of Salvation, and of the Trinitarian God. It emphasizes our disabled condition in a way that will be surprisingly familiar to any reformed Christian. If you've read Spurgeon's devotional, *Morning and Evening*, you may find the styles very similar.

Being a collection, it's hard to say when Augustine wrote these meditations; but certainly some of it was done towards the end of his life. This edition of *Meditations* was translated from the Latin by George Stanhope in 1701, and printed in 1818. Latin is not the easiest of languages to translate. To convey its poetry, takes a skilled linguist and a gifted writer. Stanhope has taken Augustine's personal meditations, and converted them into a form that transports the reader into the heavenlies. Rarely is a private conversation with God recorded in such a way that the reader may *join* in that worship. I believe Stanhope succeeded in doing that, by preserving for us the splendor of Augustine's words and speculations.

George Stanhope (1660-1728) was Dean of Canterbury and a Royal Chaplain. He was a leading figure in church politics in the early 18th century. He was one of the great preachers of his time, and preached before Queen Anne in St Paul's Cathedral in 1706 and 1710. The challenge in modernizing Stanhope's language of three hundred years ago, was to retain, as he retained, the substance of Augustine's work, while remaining faithful to its poetic character.

Wherever possible, I preserved his wording, along with the rhythm of his prose, even as I updated the vocabulary and syntax. Whether I succeeded or not, is for the reader to judge. What may seem to be run-on sentences, punctuated by semi-colons, colons, and dashes, might have been better formatted into stanzas; but that's not how Stanhope formatted it for his publisher. He italicized verses to distinguish them from Augustine's words, and added verse references. I included additional verse references. I also italicized as needed to aid readability. Some of the sentences were *very* long; the punctuation lets the reader take a breath as he reads.

Now, I can't say if Stanhope substituted the wording of the King James, Douay-Rheims, or Geneva bibles for Augustine's (e.g. "farthing" on p. 271), or if Augustine's wording was itself taken from Jerome's *Vulgate* c. 405. But I don't think it matters: its inherent truth and beauty are of God, not man. I pray that this little book affords you, as it did me, many joyous hours of introspection, meditation, and worship.

William H. Gross
May 25, 2019

Dedication
TO HER
ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE
PRINCESS ANNE OF DENMARK. ¹

May it please your Royal Highness,

THE following Devotions, in their original language, abundantly recommend themselves to the world, not only by their own intrinsic worth, but by the authority of those venerable names among whose works they are published. And since this last advantage is what the English cannot receive from the character of the translator, your Royal Highness will, I hope, have the goodness to pardon his ambition in presuming to supply that defect, by the honour of your Royal Highness's patronage and acceptance. That holy zeal, which they are intended to kindle in others, good men behold with great satisfaction already shining bright in your Royal Highness; so that their proper and utmost efficacy to be attained with regard to you, Madam, is the cherishing and exercising of that devotion and piety with which, I pray God, they may in some degree be serviceable for inspiring common readers.

iv DEDICATION.

May *the Fountain of all goodness* preserve your precious life, and continue your Royal Highness long to us, a bright example and a signal blessing to this and future ages! May he hear and grant the daily petitions of his church, *endue you with his Holy Spirit, enrich you with his heavenly grace, prosper you with all happiness, and bring you to his everlasting kingdom!* These, Madam, I beg leave, with all humility and most profound respect, to assure your Royal Highness, are the sincere, earnest, and constant prayers of,

May it please your Royal Highness,
Your Royal Highness's
Most obedient, and
Most devoted Servant,
GEO. STANHOPE.

April 12, 1701

¹ Princess Anne of Denmark 1683-1702, last of the Stuart Dynasty; became Queen Anne of England 1702-1714.

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Book I.

AUGUSTINE'S MEDITATIONS

CHAP. 1.

A Prayer for Reformation of Life.

INSPIRE my soul, O Lord my God, with a holy desire of you, my chief, my only good, that I may so earnestly desire as diligently to seek you, so successfully seek as to be happy in finding you; make me so sensible of that happiness in finding, as most passionately to love you; so effectually to express that love, as to make some amends for my past wickedness, by hating and forsaking my former evil courses, and entering upon a conversation ² exemplarily pious for the time to come.

Give me, dear God, hearty repentance, a humble and contrite spirit; make my eyes a fountain of tears, and my hands liberal dispensers of alms, and unwearied instruments of good works. You are my King; reign absolute in my heart, subdue and expel from there all rebellious passions; quench all the impure burnings of fleshly lusts, and kindle in it the bright fire of your love.

You are my Redeemer, beat down and drive out the spirit of pride, and impart to me, in much mercy, the treasure of your own unexampled ³ humility and wonderful condescension.

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You are my Saviour, take from me the rage of anger; and arm me, I beseech you, with the shield of patience.

You are my Creator, root out from me all that rancour and malice whereby my nature is corrupted; and implant in me all that sweetness and gentleness of temper, which may render me a man made in your own image, and after the likeness of your own Divine goodness.

You are my most merciful and indulgent Father, O grant your own child those best of gifts: a firm and right faith, a steadfast and well-grounded hope, and a never-failing charity.

O my director and governor, turn away from me, I beseech you, vanity and filthiness of mind, a wandering heart, a scurrilous tongue, a proud look, a gluttonous belly; preserve me from the venom of slander and detraction, from the itch of curiosity, from the thirst of covetousness, ambition and vain-glory; from the deceits of hypocrisy, the secret poison of flattery; from contempt of the poor, and oppression of the helpless; from the canker of envy, the fever of avarice, and the pestilential disease of blasphemy and profaneness.

Prune away my superfluity of naughtiness, and purge me from all manner of injustice, rashness, and obstinacy; from impatience, blindness of heart, and cruelty of disposition.

Incline me to obey that which is good, and to comply with wholesome advice; enable me to bridle my tongue, and to contain my hands from wrong and robbery. Suffer me not to insult the poor, to defame the innocent, to despise my inferiors, to treat my servants with severity and scorn, to fail in due affection towards my friends and relations, or in kindness and compassion towards my neighbours and acquaintances.

11

O my God, you fountain of mercy, I beg you, for the sake of the Son of your love, dispose me to the love and practice of kindness and mercy; that I may have a tender fellow-feeling of my brethren's afflictions; and apply myself cheerfully to rectify their mistakes, to relieve their

² *Conversation*: a course of public and private conduct.

³ *Unexampled*: having no previous example, precedent or parallel.

miseries, to supply their wants, to comfort their sorrows; to assist the oppressed, to right the injured, to sustain the needy, to cherish the dejected, to release those who are indebted to me, to pardon those who have offended me, to love those who hate me; to render good for evil, to despise none, but pay all due respect to every man. Give me grace to imitate those who live well, to avoid and beware of those who do ill; to follow all manner of virtue, and utterly abandon and detect all sorts of vice — make me patient in adversity, and moderate in prosperity. *Set a watch before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips* (Psa 141.3). Wean my affections from things below, and let them be eager and fixed upon heaven and heavenly things.

CHAP. 2.

An Act of Self-accusation, and imploring the Divine Mercy.

YOU, Lord, who have formed me, know the work of your own hands; and yet, because I am your creature, I have been bold to ask many and great mercies — though these are less than, and altogether *unworthy of the least of all your mercies* (Gen 32.10). I acknowledge, O my God, with shame and sorrow, that not only the gifts and graces I have been imploring all this while, are in no degree my due; but that many and grievous sufferings and judgments are what I have justly deserved at your hands. But when my soul feels itself sinking under the weight of this melancholy reflection, the publicans, and harlots, and sinners, (Mat 21.31), those wandering and lost sheep which the good Shepherd sought so carefully (Luk 15.4),

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drew back from the very bribe of the hellish precipice so seasonably, brought home upon his shoulders so joyfully, and laid in his bosom so affectionately — these raise my drooping spirits, and give new life to my hopes. For you, my God, you have made all things by your power, and are wonderful in all your doings; yet you are most wonderful, and exceeding glorious in your works of pity and love. In this sense, too, is that most true, which you speak of yourself by the mouth of your servants. *The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works* (Psa 145.9). And what was said of one particular person, we may most truly apply to your people in general, *my mercy I will not take from him* (Psa 89.24, 28). For you abhor, despise, forsake no man; but only those who, lost to all sense of their own duty and happiness, first despise and forsake you. Hence it is, that not only do you *not* strike when you are angry, but even when you are most justly so, you give good things liberally, upon the request of those wretches who have provoked you to anger. O my God, the horn of my salvation, and my refuge, I am sadly sensible that I am one of those miserable wretches; I have provoked your wrath, and done evil in your sight; and yet you stay your hand. I have sinned, you have suffered: I have offended, and still you bear with me. If I repent, you spare; if I return, you receive me with open arms; indeed, even while I delay, you wait patiently for my coming back to you. You call me to you when I go astray; you invite me while I am deaf to your gracious calls; you stay till I shake off my wicked sloth; and when your prodigal child at last returns, you meet and embrace him most gladly. You instruct my ignorance, comfort my sorrows, keep me from falling, raise me up when I am fallen, give when I ask, are found when I seek you, and open the door when I knock (Mat 7.7).

13

Thus, O God of my salvation, I have nothing to offer in my own excuse; no plea to make when you charge me with folly. There is no refuge for me, but in your goodness and protection; no place to hide me in from your all-seeing eye. You have shown me the right way; you have taught me how I ought to walk in it; you have threatened the torments of hell to frighten me from wickedness; and promised the joys of heaven to encourage my obedience.

And now, O Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, perfect, I beseech you, these gracious designs upon your servant; possess me thoroughly with your fear, that I may not dare to incur your threatenings; and support me with the joy of your salvation, that I may be filled with your

love, and cheerfully run the race that leads to your gracious promises. You, O Lord, are my strength, my God, my refuge and only deliverer: O be pleased to inspire my soul with proper thoughts of you; teach my tongue fit words to call upon you acceptably; and enable my hands, and every member, to do the thing that pleases you. I know full well that there is one way of pacifying your wrath, one offering which your mercy will not reject. *The sacrifices of God are a troubled spirit — a broken and a contrite heart my God will not despise* (Psa 51.17).

Yet even this I cannot give my God, unless he first grants to give it me. And therefore, *O Father of lights, from whom every good thing comes*, enrich me, I beseech you, with this, I ask no other treasure; let this be my introduction into your presence, this my defence against the assaults of spiritual enemies; this my fountain of tears to quench the flames of sin; this my sure retreat from the fury of inordinate passions and desires.

14

Suffer me not, O you strength of my soul's health, suffer me not, I beg, to be one of those "weak Christians, who *for a time believe, and in time of temptation fall away* (Luk 8.13). But cover my head in the day of battle; for you, you only are my hope in the day of trouble, and my safety in the time of danger (Psa 140.7; 27.1).

Thus I come to you, *my light and my salvation*, imploring the blessings of which I stand in need, and declaring the miseries of which I am afraid. But in the midst of this address, I feel a check from within; my conscience stings, and my heart misgives me; love bids me hope, but sense of sin bids me fear; and dread of your displeasure dampens that zeal with which my heart approaches you: when I reflect on my own doings, I cannot but despond; when I look up to your goodness, I am full of hope. The kindness of my God invites and pushes me forward, the wickedness of my own heart dismays and pulls me back. And all my faults appear in such ghastly shapes before my eyes, as almost hinder a holy confidence, but quite beat down the boldness of presumption.

CHAP. 3.

The Sinner's Lamentation for his Prayers not being heard.

THUS is my soul distracted with different passions, when I appear before the Divine Majesty. And how, alas! should it be otherwise? For with what face can that man entreat a favour, who has deserved nothing but hatred and indignation? What rashness is it to ask glory, when only punishment is his due?

15

The malefactor provokes his judge, and instead of satisfying for his offence, he expects to be honoured with crowns and rewards: he lies under sentence of condemnation, and is it not insolent to sue for a bounty to which he has no manner of pretence? A stupid child provokes a most affectionate father, and is it not a yet greater provocation to assume for himself the claim of inheriting, till he has first retracted his undutiful behaviour? This, O my Father, I confess with grief to be my own case: I ask life, and have deserved death; I have been disloyal to my King, and yet have the confidence to fly to him for protection; I have despised my Judge, and armed his angry justice against my guilty self; and yet this same Judge I betake myself to for succour. I have stopped my ears against the commands of a father, and yet I take it upon myself to depend on him for his paternal affection and care.

To you, I come; but, oh! how long do I take before I come? How much precious time do I trifle away in this most important, most necessary affair? My feet, alas! are swift to ruin, but slow in the way that leads to life and safety. I run after sickness, and wounds, and death, and take no care to shun the darts which made those wounds, even when I have felt the smart, and am healed of the sore. I did not prevent those dangers which might have been avoided, and I am at

last awakened into a sense of them, when they have brought me to the very gates of the grave. I have added to my plagues by multiplying my transgressions, and torn open my old wounds by relapsing into my former evil courses; and those maladies which the spiritual physician had cured, the frantic patient has again brought upon himself: the sore which was skinned over, now breaks out afresh, because it was inflamed by that repeated folly which has forfeited the mercy extended before.

16

I know who has declared that *when the righteous man turns away from his righteousness, and commits iniquity, all the righteousness that he has done shall not be mentioned* (Eze 18.24). And if this righteous man, when he falls into sin, loses all the benefit of his former righteousness, what good can be expected for the ineffectual remorse of that sinner who commits evil, and repents of it, and then does the same evil again? To me, this is a mortifying thought— to me, who have so often *returned with the dog to the vomit, and with the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire* (2Pet 2. 22).

How oft I have offended, it is not in my power to remember. But this I own with a heavy heart: that, in general, I have taught men how to sin, and made those wise and skilful in wickedness, who before lived in happy ignorance of it. I have persuaded those who were averse, forced those who resisted me, and readily complied and taken part with those whose inclinations were to do amiss. I have laid snares for those who walked securely; betrayed those into the pit, who desired to be informed in the right way; and that I might dare to be guilty of those things, I have dared to forget and drive out of my mind those good principles and great obligations of gratitude to so good a God, which should have restrained me from them.

But however faulty my own memory may be, yet I have to deal with a just and terrible Judge: *one who seals up my iniquities in a bag, and spies out all my ways. And though you have held your peace, and have been still, and refrained a long time, yet I dread to think the day will come, when you will cry like a travailing woman, and destroy and devour the ungodly at once* (Job 14.17. Psa 139.2. Isa 42.14).

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CHAP. 4. An Act of Fear.

THE Lord, even the most mighty God, shall come, I know you shall appear, and not always keep silence (Psa 50.1, 2, 4). Then shall your glory be seen, then shall your voice be heard, then your terrors felt by all the world; *when a fire shall devour before you, and a horrible tempest be stirred up round about you. When you shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that you may judge your people.* And must our sins, which we now so industriously conceal, must every aggravating circumstance then be laid open before so many thousand millions of witnesses? Must I then be upbraided before so many troops of angels and saints, with not only my evil deeds, but even with the sins of word and thought? Must I then stand helpless and friendless before so many judges? Must I be confounded with the reproaches of so many eminent patterns of piety and virtue, whose examples I refused to follow? Must I stand the shock of so many witnesses, who will testify against me how often their charitable advice has been given to me, to no purpose, and how ineffectual was all the good they did to provoke my imitation! Blessed God! What shall I have to say, or how shall I find an evasion? The very apprehension racks me at this distance; my conscience flies in my face; and I have this dismal prospect continually in view. I see, and daily lament my danger, and every vicious disposition helps to dress up the woeful scheme. My secret imaginations sting me, my covetousness fetters me, pride accuses, envy gnaws and consumes me, lust inflames, intemperance shames me; detraction tortures, ambition supplants, violence and fraud upbraid; anger disorders, gentleness

makes me secure, sloth overcomes, hypocrisy cheats me, flattery makes me effeminate, applause and favour vain, slander full of anguish.

18

These, my great, my only deliverer, these are the fierce nations that make war against me: these the acquaintances I have been brought up with; this the company I have delighted to frequent, and contracted the most accurate familiarity with. Thus the objects of my love condemn me, and to my shame and dishonour. These are the friends I have trusted, the teachers I have learned from, the masters, or rather the tyrants, I have lived in subjection to; the counsellors I have been governed by, the companions I have lived and acted with.

*Woe is me, my God, that I have thus long dwelt in Meshech, and had my habitation among the tents of Kedar.*⁴ (Psa 120.5, 6). For sure, whatever reason David had, I have much greater to lament, that my soul has long dwelt among those who are enemies to peace. But you, O Lord, are still my hope and stay. *In your sight, it is true, no flesh living shall be justified* (Psa 143.2). I therefore do not put any trust in the sons of men: for if you, *Lord, should be extreme to mark what is done amiss*, who among them is there, who *might abide it*? (Psa 130.3). And therefore, unless you prevent the sinner with your mercy and pardon, for what has been done amiss, there cannot be any righteous to be glorified, any qualified for a reward of what has been done well.

Therefore, my God and my salvation, I believe in you, knowing that *your goodness leads to repentance*. How *sweet are those words of yours to my throat! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth, that no man comes to you unless the Father draws him, and that the one who comes to you, you will by no means cast out* (Rom 2.4; Psa 119.103; Joh 6.37, 44).

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Since, then, you have not only instructed me in, but even given me new life by the knowledge of this truth, and thus again made me your own creature, I do with all imaginable earnestness, with all the sincerity and zeal my heart is capable of, beseech you, Almighty Father, together with your most dearly beloved Son, and you, O best beloved Son, with your most sweet Comforter, draw me, that I may run after you, and *be delighted with the aroma of your precious ointments*, (Song 1.3, 4).

CHAP. 5.

An Address to the Father in the Son's Name.

I CALL upon you, my God, indeed, even upon you I call, who declare yourself *near to all those who call upon you in truth* (Psa 145.18). Yes, you yourself are truth, and therefore teach me, for your mercy's sake, to perform this service as I should; for without you I do not know how to please you; and therefore I make it my most humble and earnest request to be taught by truth itself. All wisdom without you is no better than folly; and to know you alone, is the sum and perfection of knowledge. Inform me, therefore, O Divine wisdom, and make me understand your statutes. For I am fully persuaded that he, and he alone, *is blessed whom you nurture and teach in your law* (Psa 94.12).

My desire is to call upon you, and to do it in truth: but what can calling upon truth itself in truth mean, except applying to the Father by the Son? Therefore, holy Father, your word is truth; and the beginning of your word in the gospel has told us that, *in the beginning was the word*, (Joh 1.1). In that word of truth I call upon you, O essential and original Truth, and beg to be directed in, and thoroughly taught, the truth.

20

⁴ That is, dwelt among the pagans of the northern nations, and among the sons of Ishmael.

And what can be more delightful, than to address Him who begot, in the name of his only begotten? than to move the Father to tenderness, by the mention of his own dear Son? than to appease the wrath of a king, by interposing the darling of the family, the heir of all his dominions? These are the powerful methods used by malefactors for release out of prison; by slaves and captives for obtaining freedom; by condemned persons for pardon; indeed, powerful enough to prevail, not only for pardon, but even for favour and advancement too. A king's anger cools instantly if the offenders are such favourites of the prince, as to make use of his name and interest: and servants find it no hard matter to come off without blows, if the children employ their pretty endearments in their behalf. Since, then, these methods are so successful below, why should they not have the same good effect above? I will beg the almighty Father for the sake of his almighty Son, *to bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks to his name* (Psa 142.7). Loose me, Lord, from the bands of my sins, for the sake of your only, your co-eternal Son; and by the intercession of that dear, that Divine image and brightness of your glory, now sitting at your right hand, be reconciled to a poor sinful wretch; and instead of that death with which my wickedness deservedly threatens me, raise and restore me to a life of hope and blessedness.

This is indeed the only advocate I can employ: for where would I flee, or whose interest would I depend upon with the Father, except to go to him who is *the propitiation for our sins*; who also *sits at the right hand of God, making intercession for us*? (1Joh 2.2).

21

This therefore is my mediator with you, heavenly Father; this is my perfect high priest who *need not* be sanctified with other blood, but has made atonement, and stands before you, pure and bright, in virtue of his own blood, with which he was washed for our sakes (Heb 7.25, 27; 9.11, 12). This is that holy and unblemished, that acceptable and perfect sacrifice, offered for a sweet-smelling savour unto God. This is that *Lamb without spot, who was dumb before his shearers*; and though *reviled*, and buffeted, and spit upon, yet *he did not open his mouth* (Isa 53.7; 1Pet 2.23, 24). This that righteous person, who did not sin, but condescended *to bear our sins*, and by his own stripes, to heal our putrefied sores.

CHAP. 6.

The Son's sufferings represented to the Father.

LOOK, therefore, gracious Father, look upon this best and dearest of sons, who has endured the worst and wickedest indignities on my account. Consider, most merciful King of heaven, who it is that suffered; and at the same time think for whom he suffered such bitter things. Is this not, my God, that spotless innocent whom, though your Son, you were pleased not to spare, that he might redeem your servant? Is this not that author and giver of life who was led as a *sheep to the slaughter*, and becoming *obedient even unto death*, was content to die in the most painful and ignominious manner? (Rom 8.32; Gal. 3.13; Isa 53.7; Acts 8.32; Phi 2.8). O You, whose wonderful wisdom contrived the whole mystery of man's redemption! I beseech you, reflect that this is that very person who, though begotten of and resembling you in your almighty power, was yet ordained by you to partake of my weakness.

22

It was your own Divine, which clothed itself with my human nature, and in my flesh ascended the cross, and felt the torments of a most dolorous death. O let this unspeakable instance of condescension and love be ever before your eyes! See that delightful Son extended on the cross; behold his holy hand stained with innocent blood, and pardon those iniquities with which my wicked hands have been polluted. Behold his naked side pierced with a cruel spear, and wash me in that fountain which, by the eyes of faith, I see flowing from that wound. Behold those blessed feet, which never *stood in the way of sinners*, but *walked in the paths of your commandments*,

thrust through with merciless nails; and *uphold my goings in your paths*, and give me grace to hate all evil ways, and to choose the way to truth and righteousness (Psa 1.1; 17.5). I beseech you, O King of saints, may it please you, by this most holy of all your saints, by this powerful Redeemer, to so dispose my heart and actions, that I may be united to him in the same spirit, who did not disdain to be united to me in the same flesh (1Cor 6.17). Observe that head reclined upon his breast, and expiring in the pangs of death; and let this proof of your uncreated Son's humanity, prevail with my most merciful Creator, for compassion upon his own wretched creature's infirmity.

See his pale breast, his purple sides, his bowels parched with thirst, his beautiful eyes languishing in death, his arms grown stiff, his royal face besmeared, his legs extended, his pierced feet drenched with streams of precious blood: look, glorious Father at this dearest child, look upon this body, bruised and broken, and torn; and then in mercy call to mind what I am made of. Let the punishment of God and man, personally united, atone for a man created after his and your likeness. Let the sufferings of the Redeemer be ever in your sight, and in them overlook the offences of your redeemed.

23

This, my God, is he, whom you thought fit to *strike for the transgression of your people*, though he was that *Beloved in whom your soul delighted*; *this is he in whom there was no guile* though *he was content to be reckoned among the transgressors* (Isa 53.8; Mat 3.17; 1Pet 2.22; Isa 53.12; Luk 22.37).

CHAP. 7.

An Acknowledgment that sinful Man was the Cause of Christ's Sufferings.

WHAT had you done, O charming innocence, to bring you as a criminal before your enemies' bar? Or how had you deserved to be treated with such rude and insolent, such unrelenting and triumphant barbarity? What passage of your whole life could they fix an accusation upon, what crime allege to countenance so rigorous a sentence? If none (as none they could), why then your shameful bitter death, or how did you come to be condemned as a vile miscreant? It was I, alas! It was wretched I who gave you all those pains; it was I who deserved the death you endured; and my offences gave those scourges, those nails, that spear, the power of staying and wounding, and killing you. O wonderful process! Mystery of justice! — that the wicked should offend, and the righteous be punished for it! that the guilt and the condemnation should thus be separated! that the servant should contract a debt, and the Lord to whom it was due, make satisfaction! that man should provoke the Divine vengeance, and God should feel the smart of it! How low, O Son of God, did your humility stoop! How fervent was your love! How boundless your compassion!

24

For I have done wickedly, and you are called to account for it. I armed an angry justice against myself, and it is discharged upon your head; mine is the crime, and yours the torture: I have been proud, and you are humbled; I am puffed up, and you have emptied yourself; I have been rebellions, and your obedience has expiated for it. I have been intemperate, and you have hungered and thirsted for it: my ungoverned appetite sinned in the forbidden, and your immense love submitted to hang on the accursed, tree: I eat the fruit, and you feel the pains: I wallow in pleasures, and you are torn with nails: the honey in my mouth is turned to gall in your stomach: the tempting *Eve* rejoices with me, the sorrowful *Mary* suffers and laments with you. Thus is my wickedness and want of love to God; thus is your righteousness and inexpressible love to man, manifested in this marvellous dispensation.

And now, my God and King, *what reward shall I give*, what return can I make, *for all the benefits you have done to me?* (Psa 116.12). Surely it is not in the power of man to find out any

requital answerable to such bounty; for how should the narrowness of a finite mind extend to anything fit to be compared with infinite compassion? How should a poor creature be capable of any recompense suitable to the mercy of an almighty Creator? And yet, my dearest Saviour, so wonderfully is this matter ordered, that even man, even I — weak and worthless though I am — may find something which you are pleased to accept in return; if by your grace my soul be broken and humbled, and *I crucify this flesh with its affections and lusts* (Gal. 5.24). When wrought up to this holy disposition, I then begin to suffer for, and live to you; and in some way pay back what you have endured when dying for me. Thus, by gaining a conquest upon the inward man, I am enabled by you to win the crown by my outward man;

25

and by triumphing over the flesh in spiritual trials, that very flesh has the courage to submit gladly for your sake to bodily persecutions and death. This is the utmost my condition will admit; and this, though but little in itself, yet when proceeding from the same principle of holy love, you are graciously pleased to accept, as the utmost poor mortals can do in acknowledgment of their great Maker. This is the cure of sinful souls; this, blessed Jesus, the sovereign antidote your mercy has provided for us!

I beseech you, therefore, *by your tender mercies which have ever been of old*, pour such balm into my wounds as may dispel the venom of my diseases, and restore me to spiritual health and soundness (Psa 25.6). Let me drink of your heavenly sweetness, and be so ravished with the taste, as ever after to disrelish the sensual delights of the world, to despise its pleasures, and cheerfully encounter the afflictions of this present life; and to so fix my heart on true noble joys, as always to disdain the empty and transitory shadows which flesh and blood is so foolishly fond of, and so fearful of parting with.

Let me not, I beseech you, esteem or delight in anything but you; let all this whole world can give, without you, be counted no better than dross and dung; let me hate most irreconcilably whatever displeases you; and what you love, let me most eagerly desire, and incessantly pursue; let me feel no satisfaction in any joys without you; nor any reluctance in the greatest sufferings for you. Let the mention of your name, always be a refreshment, and the remembrance of your goodness an inexhaustible spring of comfort to my soul. Let tears be my food day and night, so I may attain to your righteousness; and *the law of your mouth always be dearer to me than thousands in gold and silver* (Psa 119.72).

26

Let me aim at nothing so much as to do you service; nor detest and avoid anything in comparison to sinning against you. And for what I have unhappily done of that kind already, I entreat you, my only refuge and hope, to pardon me for your own mercy's sake. Let my ears be ever open to the voice of your law, and suffer not my *heart to incline to any evil thing*, that I never comply with *those who practise wickedness*, nor take shelter in trifling pretences to excuse or indulge myself in doing what I should not (Psa 141.4). And once more, I beg you, by your own unparalleled humility, that *the foot of pride may not come against me, nor the hand of the ungodly cast me down* (Psa 36.11).

CHAP. 8.

The Soul's Application of Christ's Death and Sufferings to herself by Faith.

YOU see, my Lord, my God, I have done my utmost to incline your mercy; I have with a most sincere zeal offered to you the best, the dearest, the most acceptable thing I have. No indeed, I have nothing else— no addition to make, since I place my whole trust in this one, and make a present at once of all I value or depend upon. For I have addressed to you by my only advocate, and your only Son: that *one mediator between God and man*, that glorious intercessor by whom

I assuredly expect acceptance and forgiveness (1Tim 2.5). I have, by my words poured out before you, sent that Word in my behalf to you, which you previously sent down from heaven for my sins; I have paid down the price of that passion which your own Son, I most firmly believe, has undergone for the release of that debt to your justice, which my misdeeds have contracted.

27

I believe that your Godhead, sent thus into the world, took upon him my manhood; that in this state he granted to be bound and buffeted, to be derided and spit upon, to be nailed, and pierced, and crucified. And this nature of mine, after being wrapped in swaddling clothes, and moistened with infant tears; after the toils of youth, the mortifications of fastings and watchings, and long journeys; after being furrowed with scourgings, torn upon the cross, numbered among the dead, and at last honoured with a glorious resurrection — this nature of mine, I say, your Godhead united to it, I most assuredly believe, has now exalted to the joys of heaven, and seated at the right-hand of your Majesty on high. This is my confidence; this is the reconciliation for my sins; this is the atonement you have accepted for them.

Remember then, in much mercy, the quality of your Son, and the condition of your servant redeemed by him. Look upon the Maker, and do not despise the work of his hands. Take the shepherd into your embraces, and do not cast out the stray sheep which he brings home upon his shoulders (Luk 15.5). For this is that careful shepherd who, when his sheep wandered over steep hills, and thorny vales, and desolate wildernesses, sought and brought it back with wondrous skill and pains. And when it was faint and just expiring, he sustained and carried it, tied it fast to himself by the straitest bands of love, lifted it out of the pit of error and confusion, and with many a kind and tender embrace, rejoiced over it, and fetched the poor lost silly creature home to the ninety-nine which lay safe in his own fold.

See then, my God and King, see the good shepherd bringing to you the sheep committed to his charge: he undertook to save man by your appointment, and he has performed the undertaking so as to restore to you, pure and spotless, your once polluted creatures: he brings back in safety that prey which the wolf and robber had carried off by violence.

28

He brings that servant into your presence, whom his own guilty conscience had put to fleeing from your sight, so that the punishment due to his deserts might be remitted through his Lord's satisfaction; and the offender, who had nothing to look for but to be banished forever into hell, might, under the protection of this glorious conqueror, be assured of admittance into his heavenly country. I needed none to help me in offending you; but without help, I could never have appeased you. You, therefore, who alone could be, you my God was my helper; and your beloved Son effected what could not have been effected, had he not taken my nature upon him, in order to cure my infirmities: but thus he became our perfect cure, by rendering the same nature the subject of both the sin and the sacrifice, and drawing the antidote out of the same root from where the poison had sprung. Thus has he made me a fit object of mercy; while sitting at your right hand in my substance, he makes it impossible for you to hate that in me, which you cannot help but love in him. This is my hope, and the joy of my confidence.

If then, as well I may, I seem vile and despicable in your sight, through my own impurities, yet look upon me at least with an eye of pity; when you behold my likeness in the Son of your love, behold the mystery of a human body in him, and remit the guilt of the same human body in me: hide my sins in his wounds, and let my stains be washed in his most precious blood. Flesh provoked you to wrath; let flesh likewise prevail with you for mercy — and as my flesh drew me into sin, so let my Saviour's draw you to compassion.

29

I confess, great are my faults, and the punishments due to them; but greater, infinitely greater, are the merits and sufferings of my dear Redeemer. Between my sins and his righteousness there is no comparison, no proportion at all, either for quality or degree, no more than there is between God and man, between an atom and infinity.

For what is it possible for man to be guilty of, which the Son of God *made man*, must not have compensated for? What pride can be so extravagant that his humility did not exceed and make amends for? What dominion could death have so absolute, that the death of the cross should not utterly overthrow it? If then Almighty God would be pleased to weigh the sins of man in a balance against the goodness of his Saviour, east and west, heaven and hell, are not so far distant from each other. And therefore, O my God, let my manifold offences be pardoned, for the many more pains and sufferings of your dear Son: let his piety atone for my lack of it, his ready obedience for my perverseness, his meekness for my intractable temper — set his humility against my pride, his patience against my discontent, his kindness against my hard-heartedness, the calmness of his soul against my fretfulness and unruly passions, his gentleness against my rage, his universal and unwearied love against my hatred, revenge, and cruelty.

CHAP. 9. **A Prayer to the Holy Ghost.**

AND now, O Holy Spirit, love of God, who proceeds from the Almighty Father and his most blessed Son, powerful advocate, and sweetest comforter, infuse your grace, and descend plentifully into my heart; enlighten the dark corners of this neglected dwelling, and scatter there your cheerful beams!

30

Dwell in that soul which longs to be your temple; water that barren soil, over-run with weeds and briars, and lost for want of cultivating, and make it fruitful with your dew from heaven. Heal the lurking distempers of my inward man; strike me through with the dart of your love, and kindle holy fires in my breast, such as may flame outward in a bright and devout zeal, actuate and enliven the heavy mass, burn up all the dross of sensual affections, and diffusing themselves through every part, possess and purify, and warm my whole spirit, and soul, and body.

Make me *drink of the spiritual pleasures as out of a river* (Psa 36.8); and let their heavenly sweetness so correct my palate, as to leave no desire, no relish for the gross unhealthful fulsomeness of worldly delights (Psa 43.1; 143.10). *Judge me, O Lord, and defend my cause against the ungodly people. Teach me to do the thing that pleases you, for you are my God.* I believe that in whomever you dwell, the Father and the Son likewise come, and inhabit that breast. And oh! happy is that breast, which is honoured with so glorious, so divine a guest, in whose company the Father and the Son always come and take up their abode! O that it may please you to come to me, you kindest comforter of mourning souls, you mighty defence in distresses, and ready help in time of need. O come you purger of all inward pollutions, and healer of spiritual wounds and diseases. Come, you strength of the feeble, and raiser of those who fall (Luk 1.52). Come, you putter *down of the proud*, and *teacher of the meek and humble*. Come, you *father of the fatherless*, and just avenger of desolate widows (Psa 25.9. 68.5). Come, come, you hope of the poor, and refreshment of those who languish and faint. Come, you star and guide of those who sail in this tempestuous sea of the world; come you only haven of the tossed and shipwrecked.

31

Come, you glory and crown of the living, and only safeguard of the dying. Come, Holy Spirit, in much mercy, come, make me fit to receive you, and condescend to my infirmities, that my meanness may not be disdained by your greatness, nor my weakness by your strength: all of

which I beg for the sake of Jesus Christ, my only Saviour, who in the unity of you, O Holy Spirit, lives and reigns with the Father, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

CHAP. 10.
An Act of Humility.

I KNOW, O Lord, and with all humility acknowledge myself an object altogether unworthy of your love; but I am sure you are an object altogether worthy of mine. I am not good enough to serve you, but you have a right to the best service I can pay. Do then impart to me some of that excellence, and that shall supply my own want of worth. Help me to cease from sin according to your will, that I may be capable of doing you service according to my duty. Enable me to so guard and govern myself, to so begin and finish my course, that when the race of life is run, I may sleep in peace, and rest in you. Be with me to the end, that my sleep may be rest indeed, my rest perfect security, and that security a blessed eternity. *Amen.*

CHAP. 11.
A Prayer to the Holy Trinity.

WE praise, and bless, and acknowledge you in both heart and voice — even you, O Father, begotten of none; you, O Son, the only begotten of the Father; you, O Holy Ghost, eternal comforter — to this holy and undivided Trinity, be glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

32

CHAP. 12.
A Confession of God's Omnipotence and Majesty.

O GOD most high, three persons, but one essence, the same majesty and power, Lord God Almighty! The least of all your servants, and meanest member of your mystical body, the church, desires to ascribe to you all honour and praise, the utmost that the little knowledge and power with which you have been pleased to endue him, is capable of. I have no present but myself to offer; and that which is not in itself worthy of your acceptance, I beg you will be pleased to look upon, not according to its own value, but according to your own rich mercy, and that sincerity and unfeigned faith with which I most joyfully consecrate it to your service.

I believe in, and heartily pray to you, great King of heaven and earth; I acknowledge Father, Son, and Holy Ghost — three persons, but one essence, the true, the Almighty God, of one uncompounded, incorporeal, invisible, uncircumscribed being; in whom there is nothing higher or lower, greater or less, but perfect and equal all; great without quantity, good without quality, eternal without time, life without death, strength without weakness, truth without falsehood, omnipresent without space, filling all things and places without extension, passing everywhere without motion, abiding everywhere without confinement, communicating to all your creatures without diminishing your own fulness, governing all things without labour; without beginning, and yet giving beginning to all, making all things mutable, and yet unchangeable yourself;

33

infinite in greatness, unbounded in power, of goodness indefectible, of wisdom incomprehensible, wonderful in your counsels, just in your judgments, unsearchable in your thoughts, true in all your words, holy in all your works, abundant in mercies, longsuffering towards sinners, compassionate to all who repent; always the same, without mixture or defilement, alloy or accidents; eternal, immortal, unchangeable. Your will does not alter, your justice is not biased, your mind is not disturbed with griefs, or pleasures, or passions: with you nothing is forgotten, nothing which was once lost is called to remembrance again; but all things past or future are ever present to your capacious mind: whose duration neither begun in time, nor increases by length of time, nor shall it ever end, but you live before, and in, and after all

ages. Your glory is eternal, your power supreme, your kingdom everlasting, and world without end. *Amen.*

CHAP. 13. **Of the Incarnation of the Divine Word.**

THUS far, O my God, the searcher and seer of hearts, I have professed my faith in your power and majesty (Rom 10.9). Now as my heart believes unto righteousness, so my mouth shall confess unto salvation, that unspeakable goodness expressed to mankind in the latter ages of the world. You, O Father, are the only person, of whom we nowhere read that he was sent. But of your Son, the apostle has instructed us that, When the fulness of time had come, *God sent forth his Son* (Gal. 4.4). By saying God sent him, he means that the person thus sent came into the world when he condescended to be born of the virgin *Mary*, and made his appearance in our flesh, a true and perfect man.

34

But what does this passage of the great evangelist mean, *He was in the world, and the world was made by him?* (Joh 1.10) The sense, surely, is that he was sent here with regard to his humanity, but was really here before and all along, in respect to his divinity. Now, this mission I believe, and thankfully acknowledge to have been the work of the whole Trinity. But, O holy Father, how great was your love, and how tender the almighty Creator's concern for his poor creatures, who *did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up freely for us*, and this is the most astonishing circumstance for us: *while we were yet sinners!* (Rom 8.32; 5.8; Phi 2.8; Col. 2.14). That Son became *obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; he took the handwriting that was against us, and nailed it to that cross of his*; thus crucifying sin and slaying death. He alone was free when in the regions of death and captivity, because he alone had *power to lay down his life, and power to take it up again*, for us (Joh 10.18).

He therefore was the victor *and* the victim; and therefore the victor, *because* the victim. He was the priest and the sacrifice, and for that reason the true High-Priest, because he was the true sacrifice to you our God. Firm are those hopes I entertain, therefore, of having all my diseases healed by him, because they are grounded upon his *sitting at your right hand, and living for ever to make intercession for us* (Heb 7.25). Those diseases, I must own, are many and sore, for the prince of this world has much in me; but I apply to you for health, by the merits of that Redeemer in whom his malice could find nothing.

35

Justify me by him, *who did no sin, neither was any guile found in his mouth* (Joh 14.30; 1Pet 2.22). By that holy and spotless head, convey health and salvation to your weak polluted member. Deliver me, I beseech you, from my sinful habits, my vicious dispositions, my faults of wilfulness, of negligence and ignorance. Fill me with your grace, and help me to excel and resemble you, the perfection of goodness. Keep me steadfast in the way of your commandments, and enable me to grow and persevere in virtue to the end, that I may live and die according to your will.

CHAP. 14. **An Act of Trust in, and Thanksgiving for, Christ and his Sufferings.**

WHAT foundation could a sinful creature, laden with guilt, and quite overwhelmed with frailties, have for hope? (Heb 10.27; Joh 1.14). What could poor I, whose conscience upbraids me with infinite faults and neglects, have looked for but *judgment and fiery indignation*, had not your Word, O God, *been made flesh, and dwelt among us?* But this marvellous dispensation will no more allow me to despair, than my own condition, without it, could have justified my hope.

For who will dare to despair when we, even *while we were enemies, were reconciled by the death of your Son*; and, therefore, without any question, *being reconciled, shall much more be saved by his life?* (Rom 5.10). This is my hope, the rock of my confidence, even the precious blood of your Son which he shed for us and for our salvation. In him I revive, and take courage to approach you, *not having my own righteousness*, or presuming in any degree upon any work of mine, but that *righteousness which is of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ*, even the righteousness of faith in his sacrifice for me (Phi 3.9).

36

For this I give you my most unfeigned thanks, O tender lover of souls, who by your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, have created us again to a new life when we had made ourselves nothing, worse than nothing; and wonderfully delivered and restored us to a spiritual being, when we were sunk and absolutely lost in sin and misery.

All praise be to your fatherly compassion, which from the bottom of my heart I admire and thankfully adore, for that inexpressible love with which your heart yearned over undone man, by which you extended to most unworthy wretches such marvellous grace, sent your only begotten out of your own bosom for our universal benefit, to save poor sinners, who were then the children of wrath and perdition.

All honour and praise be to you for his miraculous incarnation and holy nativity, whereby he took flesh of the substance of his blessed mother, for us, and for our salvation, that as he had been before from all eternity very God of God, so he might in time be very man of man.

Glory and praise be to my God for his passion and painful crucifixion, for his death and resurrection, for his triumphant ascent into heaven, and the sitting of our nature at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Acts 1). For on the fortieth day after his rising from the dead, he went up in the sight of his disciples, far above all heavens, and from this throne, according to his most true promise, showered down the Holy Spirit most plentifully upon the sons of adoption.

All honour and thanksgiving be unto you, O Father forever, for that shedding of his most precious blood by which we are redeemed; and for the sweet pledges and lively memorials of that love, the holy and life-giving sacrament of his body and blood, by which the members of your church are supplied with daily food from heaven, washed and sanctified from their sins, and admitted to be partakers of the Divine nature.

37

Blessed, forever blessed, be that astonishing and unspeakable goodness which so tenderly loved wretches so unworthy of your love, and saved a perishing world by your only, your best-loved Son. For no instance of your mercy can compare with this; no expression of it can be carried higher than that you should *so love the world as to give your only begotten Son, that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life* (Joh 3.16; 17.3). And *this is life everlasting, to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have loved*; to know you by a right faith, and to manifest that knowledge by works suitable to such a faith.

CHAP. 15. **Of God the Father's Love to Mankind.**

O HEART unmeasurable! O love inestimable! You deliver up a Son to ransom a servant; an only, an entirely beloved Son, for a wicked and rebellious servant. God was made man, that undone man might be rescued from the tyranny and power of devils. How infinitely kind was your Son our Lord, how tender of souls, whose pity was content to stoop so low for our salvation, so low, as not only to take our nature of his virgin mother, but in it to shed the blood he took, and endure the scandal and torture of the cross! Behold the merciful and gracious God, coming in

grace and mercy, infinite from his own Divine essence, and such as no being but God, who is love and goodness itself, could be capable of; coming *to seek and to save that which was lost* (Luk 15.4-6; Mat 18.11-13).

38

Behold the careful shepherd looking for his stray sheep, searching till he finds it, and when he has found it, carrying it back to the fold upon his shoulders with most affectionate joy.

O the love! O the mercy! Was ever anything like this heard of? Who can without amazement think of hearts so enlarged? Who can forbear admiring, adoring, exulting with transports of joy, at the infinite goodness of you, my God, and the love with which you loved us? (Rom 8.3). *You sent your own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin, that we might be made your righteousness in him* (2Cor 5.21). For “this is the very paschal Lamb without blemish and without spot, who by his death has destroyed death, and by his rising to life again, has restored to us everlasting life.”

But what, alas! are we able to repay you for such wonderful benefits, such astonishing demonstrations of your concern for us? What praises, what thanksgivings are sufficient? Though you should impart to us all the knowledge and wisdom, all the activity and power of angels which wait continually about your throne, and execute all your pleasure, yet we could not be qualified for any action worthy of so vast a favour. Though every limb were a tongue, yet we could not even thus sound forth your praises as they deserve: for even angels themselves are too weak to comprehend the depth and glories of this mystery, infinite as yourself, and therefore only that could be effected, which can be perfectly known, by your own knowledge alone, infinite as your own goodness. How have we deserved that your Son, and our God, should *take upon himself not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham*; that he should become like us mortals in all things, *sin only excepted* (Heb 2.16);

39

that he should honour this mortality with the glories of his resurrection, with a crown of immortality; that he should exalt it far above all heavens, above all the troops of angels, above cherubim and seraphim, and place it at your own right hand; that angels should praise, that dominions should adore, that all the powers of heaven should fall down, and humble themselves before, and cast their crowns at the feet of this man and God in one person, seated in dignity so far above them all!

This exaltation is my joyful hope; this is my firm and only confidence: that Jesus, that glorious Lord, is a part of every one of us. *We are of his flesh, his blood, and his bones* (Eph 5.30). Now, where a part of me already reigns, there I believe I shall also reign myself; and in the triumphs and glories of his flesh, I plainly see and am assured of the honours done to my own. Though I am a miserable sinner, yet the participation of this grace will not allow me to despond; and if my own vileness excludes me from this bliss, yet my substance, already admitted to it, opens a passage for me there too. For God is not, cannot be, so unnatural, as to forget that manhood with which he himself is clothed, which he put on for my sake, and which he will one day receive to himself for my unspeakable benefit.

No, no, our God is merciful and gracious, tender-hearted, and of great goodness. He loves his own flesh, his own body, and his own heart. That flesh of ours, in which he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, and now sits in heavenly places, cannot help but love us, because this in effect is but to love itself. We have the privilege of our own blood flowing in his veins: we are his body, and his substance. He is our head from where the members are derived, to which they are inseparably united; and by us also, that ordinance of God in the first creation is verified,

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that *He is the bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh*, and we two are no longer two, but one flesh (Gen 2.23; Mat 19.6). Now, the apostle tells us (and if he had not, even nature itself tells us) that *no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but loves and cherishes it* (Eph 5.29-32). And he has justified the application of this principle of nature to our own eternal comfort, and most assured hope, when he adds those most precious words: *This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church*.

CHAP. 16. Of the Two Natures in Christ.

FOR this cause, O Lord my God, my tongue, my heart, my every faculty, shall never cease to magnify your infinite loving-kindness for all the miracles of mercy which you have been pleased to work for the relief of wretched man, by the ministry and mediation of your blessed Son, the great restorer of your lost world. That Son, *who died for our offences, and rose again for our justification; and now lives forever at your right hand, making intercession continually for us* — that Son who joins with you in extending the mercy for which he intercedes, because he is *of* you, and *with* you, the same very and eternal God, which makes him *able forever to save those who come to you by him* (Rom 4.25; Heb 7.25) — that Son, who even as man, though in that respect inferior to your Divine majesty, has all power given to him in heaven and in earth; *that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to, and in your glory, O God the Father* (Mat 28.18; Phi 2.10, 11).

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This is he whom you have ordained to be the judge both of the quick and the dead; for you yourself judge no man, but have committed all judgment to your Son, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Acts 10.42; Joh 5.22; Col. 2.3). Now he is both the witness and the judge; that judge and that witness whose discerning eye no guilty conscience can escape: (Heb 4.12), for all things are naked and open in his sight. Thus he, who himself submitted to a most unrighteous judgment, *shall judge the world in righteousness, and the people with equity* (Acts 17.31; Psa 98.9). I magnify your holy name, O Almighty and most merciful God, and from the bottom of my heart give glory to you, for this wonderful conjunction of the Divine and human nature in one person, such that one might not be God, and another be man; but that one and the same should be God and man, man and God. But notwithstanding, your Divine *Word*, by a most astonishing condescension, suffered himself to be *made flesh*; yet both these natures remained distinct and perfect, and neither was changed into or swallowed up in the other (Joh 1.14). There was no addition of a fourth person to the Trinity by this amazing dispensation; no confusion of substance, but an exact unity so ordered by your excellent wisdom, that the substance taken anew should approach and be joined to God: and that of which it could never be said that it was not, should continue what it always was.

O marvellous mystery! O inexplicable conjunction! O mercy most adorable, ever to be admired, ever to be loved! We were not worthy to be called your servants, and you have made us sons, sons of God; not only sons, but *heirs too, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ* (Rom 8.17).

42

From where is this mighty favour? Who are we, that the King of heaven should thus delight to honour us? Nothing, alas! and even less than nothing. But since, O gracious Father, you have been pleased to do great things for us, I beseech you, by your own unspeakable love, to perfect the good work you have begun; and make us such that your many and gracious promises in Jesus Christ may be accomplished in us, as we were designed to be. Send down your grace and spirit from above, and let this qualify us to receive the fulness of your mercy. Help us to understand and consider with reverence, to contemplate, and with all diligence to walk worthy

of this *mystery of godliness*, this Son of God, *manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached to the gentiles; believed on in the world, received up into glory* (1Tim 3.16).

CHAP. 17.

Of the Thanks due to God for the Redemption of the World,

HOW vainly we are indebted to your bounty, O Lord, whom you have redeemed with so precious a ransom, saved with so noble a gift, honoured with so high a privilege! What fear, what reverence, what love, what thanks, what praise and glory, wretched sinners should pay to a God who has thus pitied, thus loved, thus rescued, thus sanctified, and thus exalted them! The whole of our ability, the whole of our knowledge, our very life and being is all of it your just tribute. But, alas! What ability do any of us have, what can we do, or what indeed are we, which is not yours already? You, therefore, from whom all good things come, impart to us for your own name's sake, of your good treasure, so that of your own good gifts, we may give back again to you; and by your grace be enabled to serve and please you in faithfulness and truth, and to render you due and daily praise for all your works of mercy, yes, even for the very power of rendering you this praise.

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For, alas! We are very sensible that the very power of serving and pleasing you is entirely your gift; since *every good gift and perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning* (Jas 1.17). And in this sense we address to you, O Father almighty, acknowledging your power; O Father of mercy, depending on your goodness; O Lord incomprehensible, adoring your infinite excellences; O maker and restorer of all things by your Son, Jesus Christ, in confidence of your love through that sweetest Saviour, whom you have granted to send out from your own bosom for our common benefit; to take *our* life, that he might give us *his*; to be perfect man, of the substance of his mother, as he is perfect God of the substance of you, his Father; perfect God and perfect man, but still one Christ, begotten from eternity, and born in time, immortal and mortal, creator and creature, strong and weak, victor and vanquished, the nourisher and the nourished, the shepherd and the sheep, dead for a season, and yet ever living with you. In the name, therefore, of this wonderful person, we approach you; and well we may, since he who cannot lie has left this joyful assurance with all who love him: that *whatever they ask the Father in his name, he will not fail to give it to them* (Joh 16.23).

Therefore, by this great, this true, this only perfect high-priest, this bishop of souls who offered himself a spotless and propitiatory sacrifice to your justice; by *this good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep* (Heb 9.14; Joh 10.11);

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by this Mediator and Redeemer, who *sits at your right hand, making intercession for us*, I implore your mercy, O most tender lover of mankind, that you, this Son of yours, and your blessed Spirit, would grant me grace worthily and constantly to magnify your glorious name, with deep remorse and godly sorrow for my sins, with humility and plenty of tears; with profound reverence, with fear and tremblings. And for this I entreat the whole Trinity of persons, who being all united in the same substance, must of necessity be joined in the same act of giving.

But being sadly sensible with this, that the spirit within me, however willing of itself, is yet weakened and weighed down by this corruptible body, I beg that you would stir up and quicken

my stupidity (Wis 9.15),⁵ and so actuate this heavy lump, that I may vigorously attend to, and steadfastly persevere in, the ways of your commandments, and the proper methods of giving you true praise day and night. O *let my spirit wax hot within me*, and in my musings, *let the holy fire burst out* (Psa 39.3). And in regard to this, your own Son has declared that *no man comes to him unless he is drawn of the Father* (Joh 6.44); and again, that *no man comes to the Father but by him*; (Joh 14.6). Draw me, I most humbly pray you, continually to him, that he at last may bring me to *you*; even to those happy mansions where he now sits at your right hand; where there is life and bliss everlasting; where joyful love abounds, and fear is done away; where there is eternal day, and perfect agreement of souls; certain security, and secure quiet; pleasure and exquisite happiness; happy eternity, and eternal blessedness, even the ravishing sight, and the never-ceasing praise of You, the great and glorious God — where you, with that blessed Son, as does that blessed Son with you, live and reign in the unity of the same Divine Spirit, ever one God, world without end. *Amen*.

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CHAP. 18. A Devout Prayer to Christ.

MY hope, my Christ, my God, Saviour and lover of men, you the light and the way, you the life and the health, you the glory and grace of all who love and serve you! Look down from the throne of your majesty, and in the midst of bliss, remember the injuries and sufferings, the scourges, and the cross, the wounds and death, which you endured — and think with favour on your suppliant, for whose sake you were pleased to endure and to do so much.

You are my living and true God; my holy father, my gentle and kind master, my great king, my good shepherd, my only teacher, my most ready and effectual helper, my dearest and most beautiful spouse, my true and living bread, my everlasting high-priest, my guide to my own country, my true light, my right way, my best wisdom, my holy delight, my unspotted purity, my reconciliation and peace, my sure defence; my most desirable portion; my eternal health; my unbounded mercy; my invincible patience; my unblemished sacrifice; my perfect redemption; my assured hope; my universal charity; my resurrection from the dead; my everlasting life; my joy and beatific vision forever. I beg of you that I may walk by you, come to you, rest in you. You are *the way, the truth, and the life, without whom no man comes to the Father* (Joh 14.6). You, even you, are the blessing my soul wants and most earnestly desires, my sweetest, loveliest, only Lord.

46

O brightness of your Father's glory, who from your throne far above the cherubim, sees all the secrets of the great deep! You true, enlivening, unexhausted light, which angels long to be illuminated with, and spend glad ages in beholding! Spring forth into my soul, and scatter the thick darkness there, that the brightness of your love may shine and shed itself through every corner of my benighted heart. Give me yourself, O God, give me your love in return, for you know that I love you; and if it is too little, I desire to love you more ardently. I cannot make such an exact reckoning of my love, as to know how much I fall short of that affection which I ought to have, so that my every action and desire might carry me to your embraces, fly to your arms, and never cease the pursuit of my Lord, till I am hidden in the secret place of your presence. But though I cannot take a precise measure of my defects, and how much better I ought to be, yet this I know, and from my own experience can declare, that all without you — no, all besides you

⁵ **DRM Wis 9.15** For the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presses down the mind that muses on many things.

— avails me nothing; all about, all within is desolation and misery; whatever the foolish world calls plenty is nothing; and all but my God is poverty, and the very extremity of want.

For you alone are that God, who cannot admit of either diminution or increase; to you to live and to be happy is the same thing, who are happiness itself. But your creature, with whom these things may be separated, and who may either not live or live and be unhappy, ought to ascribe the whole benefit of both life and happiness to your sole gift and favour. Hence it is that we stand in continual need of you, but you have none of us: for if we had no being at all, that would not lessen in any degree that happiness which is inseparable from your being! — no, indeed your *very* being.

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It is therefore absolutely necessary for us to cling steadfastly to the Lord our God, that by your continual assistance we may be enabled to live *soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world* (Tit. 2.12). For this load of flesh and frailty cumbers and drags us down, but the gifts of your spirit are a happy counterpoise to this heavy clog. By these we feel the sluggish mass warmed and put into motion; we rise and mount upwards in heart and mind; *we sing songs of degrees*, and inflamed with your Divine fire, we burn with holy zeal and soar aloft successfully.

But where is it that these flights would carry us to? Even to the *Peace of Jerusalem*. According to that of the psalmist, *I was glad when they said to me, We will go into the house of the Lord* (Psa 122.1). There his goodness has prepared a place for us, that the sum of all our wishes and desires should be to set up our rest there forever (2Cor 5.6). For, in that regard we *are absent* from the Lord during the time of our sojourning in this tabernacle of the body, *we have* (it is manifest) *no continuing city here, but are seeking one to come* (Heb 13.14). We lodge in a movable tent, and are travellers and strangers in a foreign land; but we are free denizens of heaven, and our home and all our privileges and properties are there (Phi 3.20). I will therefore move under the conduct of your grace; I will retire into the closet of my heart, and entertain my soul with songs of love to you, my King and my God; with tender sighs and groanings which cannot be uttered; in the house of my pilgrimage, which the contemplation of your righteousness shall soften, while it is made the subject of my joy and praise.

And can I think upon *Jerusalem* without stretching forward all the desires of my soul to that region of bliss? *Jerusalem*, the country, the common mother of us all? and you, my God, who reign there in glory;

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the light of that holy city, the father and defender, the governor and the shepherd; the chaste, but exquisite delights that abound there; the substantial joy, and all the unspeakable felicities united in you, who are the true, the supreme, the only felicity of your people. O let me not, I beseech you, turn back, or go out of the way, but proceed continually in my affections, till you at last bring my whole spirit, and soul, and body into the peaceful mansions where my heart is already fixed (Rom 8.23). I already taste the first fruits of the Spirit; impart to me the whole lump, and satiate my soul with the joys which I now anticipate. Collect my scattered thoughts, and take off the blemishes and deformities of my present frailties, till you have wrought me up to a resemblance of your beauty, and established me forever in the glories of your blessed presence, O God of my mercy.

CHAP. 19.

The Souls of the Righteous are the House of God.

THIS house of yours, my God, is not built of earthly, nor of any such heavenly but corporeal matter, as the orbs above are formed of; but it is spiritual and eternal, without flaw or decay. For you have *set it fast for ever and ever, and founded it upon a decree which shall not be broken*

(Psa 148.6). You have given it a duration equal to your own, and it shall have no end, though it had a beginning. For *wisdom was created in the beginning* (Pro. 8.22): not that essential Wisdom who is co-eternal with the Father, *by whom all things were made* (Joh 1.3); but that which is created only spiritual substance, the rational and intellectual mind, which is light by contemplation of light, and in a qualified sense, *styled* wisdom, though it is finite and created.

49

But as there is a mighty difference between original Light, and that which is derived from, and caused by the reflection of it, so there is between you, the perfect uncreated Wisdom, and that which is your creature, and your image. Thus also we distinguish between the righteousness which justifies (the righteousness of God), and that which is attributed to the persons justified by it — in that last sense, the apostle says we are made *the righteousness of God*, in you his Son, our Lord (2Cor 5.21).

The ground of that distinction lies in this: that the first of all these creatures was wisdom, that rational power of which your city consists, which is *above*, and *free*, the chaste *mother of us all* forever in the heavens, even in that heaven of heavens which continually praises God, and is to him the heaven of heavens indeed. And though we can assign no point in time antecedent to this noble workmanship of yours, which had its being before time itself, yet you, the eternal Creator, are before it, and from you it derives its eternity and its beginning. It is therefore of you in such a manner as to be a substance distinct from you. It is qualified to behold your face always, and never to be deprived of that blessed vision. In this respect, it undergoes no change; and yet it is liable to change — for this light may grow dim and cold if not fed and kept bright by the fire of fervent love which, when well cherished, conveys into it a heat and lustre clearer and warmer than the noon-day sun.

By this most holy love, it is so closely united to you, the true, the eternal God, that though it is not of the same eternity from the beginning, yet no length of future time, no change of fortune or affairs, shall ever dissolve or loosen it;

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but it shall rest and be employed forever in the ravishing contemplation of your Divine excellences. For you, O God, are bountiful to all who love you; and will reveal yourself to those who seek you, in measures as large as their capacities allow, or at least as their necessities require. This keeps your servants steady to you and to themselves. This preserves the soul in the same happy state, while its eyes are ever intent, its affections ever fixed upon you; while it beholds and loves and delights in that God who is true light and pure love. O blessed noble creature, the first and best of all the works of God! but *then* most blessed, when dwelling upon your Master's blessed perfections; *then* happy beyond all expression, when entertaining that Divine inhabitant, and illustrated with the enlivening beams of that glorious Spring of Light from on high!

What can I suppose deserves that magnificent name, *The heaven of heavens*? What can be esteemed the highest and most beloved habitation of God, more than this spiritual house; the purity and zeal of a mind *at unity in itself*, always transported with the pleasure of beholding the Divine glory; always enamoured with God, without admitting any rival and partner in its love. This is the rock on which blessed spirits are built! these the heavenly satisfactions in heavenly places; this the foretaste of future joys, and the assurance of every wayfaring soul — that though it sojourns at present in a strange land, and at a great distance from you, yet if it thirsts and pants after you, if its godly tears are its food day and night, if dwelling thus above hereafter all the days of its life is its constant wish and endeavour, then its longing shall one day be satisfied with the pleasures of your house, and all its pious mournings turned into joy.

51

Let our souls raise themselves, then, from this bliss and duration of their own, to form such ideas of yours as their present condition can receive. For whatever notions we must have of this blessedness, and of how vast your eternity is, when even this created house of yours,⁶ when keeping at home with you, though it does not partake of the same unbounded eternity, yet by its union with its glorious Maker and inhabitant, it stands as proof against all chance of time. And persevering by your gracious influences, it is *firm* — notwithstanding the possibility of change which it is subject to. It is secured by Your presence, and by its own constant affection, and by those liberal communications of your grace, which it drinks in and feasts upon continually. It looks at nothing beyond you, as a future addition to its happiness; and it is afflicted with no troublesome remembrances of anything past, which would embitter or lessen the present. But it is entirely blessed with the enjoyment of that God who has in mercy made it like himself, and knit it to himself with the strongest cement of inviolable love, and such a fulness of satisfaction, as neither suffers nor desires a change.

CHAP. 20. The Pious Soul's longing for Heaven.

LORD! *How have I loved the habitation of your house, and the place where your honour dwells!* O glorious seat! the residence and the workmanship of the great, the mighty God. Let me continue, let me increase in this love of you more and more. Let this weary pilgrimage be spent in advancing daily towards you; and may the gasping of my soul after You sanctify and comfort the labours of each day, and refresh my waking thoughts by night.

52

Let *my heart* be always where *my treasure* is already (Mat 6.30). And in this dry and desolate wilderness, may I feel no other trust than that of arriving at my heavenly Canaan, and partaking in the society and the joys of that *happy people who have the Lord for their God* (Psa 144.15). O may that God who made both me and you possess me in you! Not that I dare presume to hope for your beauty and bliss on account of any deserts of my own; yet, the humblest sense of my own unworthiness will not sink me into despair of it, when I reflect upon the blood of him who died to purchase this mansion for me. Let but his merits be applied to me; let his intercessions assist my lack of worth, and then I am safe; for those merits cannot be overbalanced by my sins, nor *were* or *can* those prayers ever be offered up to God in vain.

For my own part, I confess with shame and sorrow, that *I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost* — drawn out my wanderings and my miseries to a great length, (Psa 119.176), and am cast out of the sight of my God into the blindness and darkness of a spiritual banishment. In this forlorn estate, I sadly bewail the wretchedness of my captivity, and sing mournful songs when I remember you, *O Jerusalem*. As yet I am at an uncomfortable distance, and at best, my feet stand only in the outer courts of *Zion*. The beauties of the sanctuary are behind the veil, and kept hidden from my longing eyes: but I am full of hope that the builder of this sanctuary, and the gracious shepherd of souls, will carry me in upon his shoulders, that I may there rejoice with that gladness unspeakable, which all those happy saints feel who are already admitted into the presence of their God and Saviour: the Saviour who has opened this royal palace to all believers, by *abolishing the enmity in his flesh, and reconciling all things in heaven and earth by his own blood* (Eph 2.14-16; Col. 1.20).

53

For he is our peace, who has made both one, and broken down the middle wall of partition (Eph 2.14), promising to give us the same degree of happiness in his own due time, which is

⁶ **1Cor 6:19** Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

already enjoyed by, and in you. For thus he has declared that *those who are worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, shall be equal to the angels* (Luk 20.35, 36). *O Jerusalem*, the eternal habitation of the eternal God! May you be the second darling of my soul, and may only He be preferred before you in my affection, who shed his blood to make me worthy of You. Be the joy and comfort of my languishing mind, my great support in hardships and distresses; may the remembrance of you be ever sweet, and the mention of your name a holy charm to drive away all sorrow from my soul.

CHAP. 21.

The Miseries of the Present Life.

WELL may I seek for some relief from these contemplations of a future state, since this which I am now in, yields me no diversion, no satisfaction at all — but it is a painful and wearisome, a foul and tedious journey; a wretched, decaying, and uncertain life; a life of labour and (which is worse) a life of sin, and pride, and folly; full of miseries and errors, and death rather than life, since in it we die daily by the constant decays and alterations of our bodies, and the sundry kinds of death to which we stand exposed every moment.

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And can we in any propriety of speech call this *living*? Does that empty thing deserve the name of life, which is blotted with tumors, macerated with pains, burnt up with fevers, blasted by an infected air, fattened with eating, brought down with fasting; enervated with mirth, consumed with melancholy, shortened with care, stupefied with security; inflated with riches, dejected by poverty; made gay by youth, bowed down with age, broken with infirmities, and destroyed with griefs? No indeed; as if all these evils were too little, the conclusion of them all is the tyranny of death, which puts a speedy period to what we falsely call the joys of life, and abolishes them and wears out all the footsteps and remembrances of them so utterly, that it is from that time on, as if they had never been at all.

And yet, it is prodigious to consider how this strange mixture — for which we fumble to find a name, this living death, or dying life, though in every part embittered by these and infinite other miseries — how it imposes, I say, upon most of mankind, and cheats them with lying promises of imaginary happiness. No, though the cheat is so gross that the blindest of its admirers cannot help but discover it; and the potion is so nauseous that the most stupid cannot help but loath and be sick of it — yet still infinite are the fools who drink large draughts of its cup, and are intoxicated with the bewitching liquor. But happy are those few, those very few, who wisely keep their distance, and will not trust themselves in its treacherous embraces; who despise its vain superficial joys, and will have nothing to do with its flattering allurements, for fear that at last it proves their fate to have the deceiver and the deceived perish together.

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CHAP. 22.

The Happiness of that Life prepared for those who love God.

BUT, oh! that life which God has laid up a store for those who love him! that life indeed! that happy, secure, serene, and most amiable life, that pure and holy life — that life which fears no death, which feels no sorrow, which knows no sin, which languishes under no pain, is distracted with no care, is ruffled with no passion, lies at the mercy of no accidents — that incorruptible life, that unchangeable life, which has everything that can attract our affections, and command our esteem. There will be no enemies to assault us, no envy to undermine us, no temptation to seduce us, no fears to confound us, but perfect love and harmony of souls; a day that never declines, a light that never goes out. There we shall see God face to face, and *when we awake in his likeness, our souls shall be satisfied with it* (Psa 17.15).

O let me indulge this delightful thought, and run over all the beauties and blisses with an unwearied desire! For the more I consider, the more passionately fond I grow of you, and feel no pleasure comparable to the sweet reflections upon, and impatient thirstings after you. *Here will I dwell*, for I have unspeakable *delight in this* (Psa 132.14) Upon this will I fix my eyes, my heart, my studies; to this will I direct all my desires, and conform all my dispositions. Let me hear of this subject continually; let it be my theme to write on, my entertainment in conversation. I will spend my private hours in reading of its bliss and glories.

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I will meditate frequently upon what I have read of it; that thus at least I may find some refreshment, some loose from the miseries, and toils, and incumbrances, of a troublesome perishing life — and at last I will recline my weary head, and lay me down to sleep with joy, when I know that sleep shall be shaken off again, and the blessedness of this life, *truly* so called, immediately commence upon my waking.

This makes me walk with such delight in the pleasant gardens of the holy scripture; here I am diligent to gather the sweet flowers of God's word and promises: I devour them by reading; I chew the cud upon them by frequent recollection; I lay them up in my memory as a most valuable treasure; and by tasting and feeding upon these delicious descriptions of another world, I take off a great part of the bitterness, and nauseousness of this world.

O happy state! O truly glorious kingdom — without succession, without confusion! Where time is no longer measured by the revolutions of days and nights, summers and winters; but eternity is continued through one endless day, one ever-blooming spring. Where those who have been victorious in their spiritual warfare, join in consort with the blessed angels, and sing the *Songs of Zion* without ceasing. There a never-fading crown adorns every head, and exquisite joy overflows every heart. O that my sins were blotted out, my pardon sealed! O when will it please God to give me leave to lay down this load and lumber of flesh, and admit me without spot or corruption into the true rest, the transporting delights of that blissful place! that I may *walk about* the beauteous *walls of the city of God, view all her palaces* (Psa 48.8), and receive a crown at the hand of my merciful Judge — when will I in that holy choir, behold the majestic presence of my Maker, and make as one with the *spirits of just men made perfect*? (Heb 12.23)

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When shall I see my dear Redeemer face to face, and approach that unspeakably bright, and as yet inaccessible light, which flows from the sun of righteousness? When, O when, shall I be freed from the bondage of the fear of death, and possess the uninterrupted joy of an endless incorruptible state, conferred upon me by the bounty of my God?

CHAP. 23.

The Happiness of holy Soul's at their Departure out of this World.

HAPPY the soul which, refined from this dross of earth, and gotten loose from its incumbrance of a body, soars up to heaven, and takes its dwelling there, secure from any future assaults and triumphant over death. Then it feasts upon the beauteous face of that dear Lord whom it served, and loved, and longed to enjoy, in that glory and glad immortality to which it has at last arrived. A glory and gladness which no length of time will wear out, no envious adversary can take away. This is the spouse, which *the daughter saw and blessed, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her. Who is this that comes up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved? Who is she that goes up as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?* (Song 6.9, 10; 8.5) With what eager joy does she fly to the arms of her Lord, when with a joyful astonishment, she hears the voice of his most affectionate call: *Rise up my lady, my fair one, and come away! For lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The*

flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig-tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.

58

Arise, My love, my fair one, and come away. O my dove, you are in the cliffs of the rocks in the secret places of the stairs; let me see your countenance, let me hear your voice, for sweet is your voice, and your countenance is lovely (Song 2.10-14). Come, my chosen, my fair one, my dove, my spouse, and I will receive you into my throne, for I have longed for your beauty. Come and rejoice before me with the angels, to whom I have promised to make you a companion. Come after long toils and many dangers, and *enter into the joy of your Lord, a joy which no man takes from you* (Mat 25.23; Joh 16.22).

CHAP. 24.

A Prayer for Succour in Trouble and Danger.

BLESSED are all your saints, my God and king, who have travelled over the tempestuous sea of mortality, and have at last made the desired port of peace and felicity; fearless of future hazards, and full of perpetual joy. You, my Saviour, condescended to try and be tossed upon this sea. O cast a gracious eye upon us who are still in our dangerous voyage. You are possessed of never-fading glory; but in the midst of your own happiness, do not forget those who are beset with a vast variety of miseries. You have chosen us to yourself; and what we are or hope to be, is all your gift. You have promised to make us immortal with and by yourself, and to bestow upon us the everlasting felicity of your presence. O remember and succour us in our distress, and think of those who lie exposed to the rough storms of troubles and temptations.

You are the beautiful gate of heaven, *the door* at which the sheep must enter (Joh10.9). But alas! we lie grovelling here below, and our *soul clings to the dust* (Psa 119.25).

59

Stretch forth your hand, and raise us up; strengthen our weakness, that we may do valiantly in this spiritual war, who of ourselves are not able to stand against the mighty force that comes against us. Help us against our enemies' power; help us against our own negligence and cowardice, and defend us from the treachery of our own unfaithful hearts. We are exceeding frail, exceeding weak and despicable, slaves to intemperance and lust, and indisposed to every virtuous and gallant undertaking. And yet, helpless wretches as we are, when enlisted under your banner, and borne up by your cross, we are buoyed up by your faith, and commit ourselves boldly to this *great and wide sea, in which there are innumerable creeping things, both small and great beasts, where that Leviathan, that serpent, is ready to devour* (Psa 104.25, 26); in which there are rocks and quicksand, and other dangers without number, on which the careless and the unbelieving run their vessels, and suffer shipwreck daily.

Intercede for me, therefore, most gracious Saviour, that by your powerful mediation and all-sufficient merits, I may be able to bring this vessel and its lading safe to shore; and be conducted to *the haven where every pious soul would be*, the haven of peace and salvation, of uninterrupted rest, and never-ending joy.

CHAP. 25.

The pious Soul's Desire of Heaven.

O HEAVENLY *Jerusalem!* Our common mother, the holy city of God, you beautiful spouse of Christ, my soul has loved you exceedingly, and all my faculties are ravished with your charms. O what graces, what glory, what noble state appears in every part of you!

60

Most exquisite is your form, and you alone are beauty without blemish. Rejoice and dance for joy, O daughter of my king, for your Lord himself, fairer than all the sons of men, has *pleasure in your beauty* (Psa 45.11).

But what is your beloved more than another beloved, O you fairest among women? My beloved is white and ruddy, the best among ten thousand (Song 5.9, 10). *As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, as his fruit was sweet to my taste* (Song 2.3).

By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loves, I sought him and found him (Song 3.1). I hold him fast, and will not let him go, till he brings me into his house, into the secret places of his tabernacles. O glorious metropolis! There shall you give the children your breast, and so fill me with the plentiful communication of your pleasures, that I shall never hunger again, nor thirst anymore.

O how happy will my soul perceive itself when it is admitted to see your glory, your beauty; to view the gates, the walls, the streets, the stately buildings, the splendor of your inhabitants, and the triumphant pomp of your king enthroned in the midst of you! For your walls are of precious stones, and your gates of pearl, and your streets of pure gold, continually resounding with loud *Hallelujahs*. Your houses are founded upon hewn square stone, carried up with sapphire, covered in with gold, and no unclean person can enter into you, no manner of pollution can abide within your borders.

Sweet and charming are your delights, O holy mother of us all. Subject to none of those vicissitudes and interruptions which abate our pleasures here below. No successional of night and day, no intervals of darkness, no difference of seasons in their several courses.

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Nor is the light derived from the same artificial helps or natural luminaries as ours; no lamps or candles, no shining of the moon or stars, but the God of God, and light of light, even the sun of righteousness shines in you; and it is the white immaculate Lamb who enlightens you with the full lustre of his majesty and beauty (Rev 21.23). Your light and glory, and all your happiness, is the incessant contemplation of this divine king; for this King of kings is in the midst of you, and all his host are ministering around about him continually.

There, are the melodious choirs of angels; there the sweet fellowship and company of the heavenly inhabitants; there the joyful pomp of all those triumphant souls who from their sore trials and travels through this valley of tears, at last return victorious to their native country. There the goodly fellowship of prophets whose eyes God opened to take a prospect of far distant mysteries. There the twelve leaders of the Christian armies, the blessed apostles; there the noble army of the martyrs; there the convention of confessors; there the holy men and women, who in the days of their flesh were mortified to the pleasures of sin and the world; there the virgins and youths, whose blooming virtues put out early fruits, and ripened into piety far exceeding the proportion of their years. There the sheep and lambs, who have escaped the ravaging wolf, and all the snares laid for their destruction. These all rejoice in their proper mansions; and though each differs from others in degrees of glory, yet all agree in bliss and joy, diffused to all in common; and the happiness of every one is esteemed each man's own.

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For there charity reigns in its utmost perfection, because there God is all in all — whom they continually behold, and beholding, they continually admire, and praise and love, and love and praise without intermission, without end, without weariness, or distraction of thought. This is their constant, their delightful employments. And O how happy I shall be, how exquisitely, how incessantly happy if, when this body crumbles into dust, I am entertained with that celestial

harmony, and hear the hymns of praise to their eternal king, which troops of angels, and saints innumerable, are ever singing in full consort! How happy to bear a part with them myself, and pay the same tribute to my God and Saviour, the author and the captain of my salvation! To behold his face in glory, and be made partaker of those gracious promises, of which he has given me the comfortable hope, when saying to his Father, *I will, that those whom you have given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold the glory which I had with you before the world was* (Joh 17.5, 24). And again, supporting his disciples against the tribulations they encounter here below, *If any man loves me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall my servant be also* (Joh 12.26). And in another place, *He that loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him* (Joh 14.21).

CHAP. 26. **An Act of Praise.**

BLESS the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits... O praise the Lord, all you works of his, in all places of his dominion; praise the Lord, O my soul (Psa 103.1, 2, 22).

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Let us magnify that great God whom angels praise, whom dominions adore, whom powers fall down and tremble before; whose excellent glory cherubim and seraphim proclaim with loud incessant voices. Let us then bear a part too in this heavenly song, and *together with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, laud and magnify that glorious name*; Let us tune our voices up with theirs; and though we cannot reach their pitch, yet we will exert the utmost of our skill and power in this tribute to the same common Lord; and will say with them, as poor mortals are able, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts; heaven and earth are full of your glory; glory be to you, O Lord most high* (Isa 6.3).

For these are the happy spirits who offer a sacrifice of pure praise before the throne of God continually, who are ever wrapt ⁷ in the contemplations of his perfections; and see them, not like us, *through a glass darkly*, but near at hand, and face to face (1Cor 13.12). What tongue can express, what thought conceive, the admirable beauty, the exact order, the numberless multitude of this heavenly host? The inexhaustible source of joy springing from the beatific vision; the fervent love which ministers delight without torment; the ever-growing desire, which rises with their satisfactions, and the grateful satisfactions which crown that desire; A desire always eager, and never uneasy, always full, and never cloyed: The blessedness derived down to them, by their inseparable union to the fountain of all bliss; the light communicated to them from the original light; the happy change into an immutable nature, by seeing the immutable God as he is, and being transformed into the likeness of him they see! (1Joh 3.2).

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But how, alas! should we hope to comprehend the divinity and bliss of angels so far above us, when we feel ourselves unable to find out the nature and perfections of this very soul within us? What sort of being must this be, who inspires a lump of dead flesh with life and activity, and yet, when most desirous so to do, cannot confine its thoughts to holy exercises? What a mixture of power and impotence is here? How great, and yet, how poor and little is that principle which dives into the secrets of the most high, searches the deep things of God, and expands itself to celestial objects at the same time that it is forced to employ its talent in the invention of useful arts, and to serve the necessities of a mortal life? What sort of creature is this, who knows so much of other things, and so little of itself? So ingenious in matters abroad, so perfectly in the dark to what is done at home? Specious, but very disputable notions have indeed been advanced

⁷ A poetic word, joining “wrapped” with “rapt” (as in enraptured).

concerning the origin of our soul. But all we know of it amounts at last to this: That it is an intellectual spirit, created by the almighty power of its Divine maker, endued with such an immortality as He was pleased to qualify it for — enlivening and sustaining a body subject to change, corruption, and death, and liable to all the unequal affections of fear and joy, and every turbulent passion — that in turns, exalts and depresses, enlarges or contracts its powers.

And what an amazing thing this is now! The more we attend to it, the more we find ourselves lost in wonder. When we read, or speak, or write of God, the great Creator of the universe, we can deliver ourselves clearly and distinctly, though at the same time his perfections are too vast for our words to express, or our minds to comprehend — the subject, not of an adequate conception, but of an awful astonishment.

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But when we descend lower, and treat angels, and created spirits, of souls united to bodies, and beings of the same level with, or in a condition inferior to our own — we are not able to support our ideas with proofs so incontestable; and we find it impracticable to satisfy ourselves or others in the enquiries concerning them. Why then should we, to so very little purpose, hover uncertainly about these lower regions, and spend our time and pains in groping in the dark? No, let our minds rather enlarge their thoughts, and take a nobler range. Let them leave all created objects behind, and run, and mount, and fly aloft — and taking faith to the assistance of reason, fix their eyes with the utmost intenseness that our nature will bear, upon the Creator, the universal cause. Yes, I will make a ladder like that of *Jacob* (Gen 28.12), reaching from earth to heaven, and as by rounds, go up from my body to my soul; and from my own soul to that eternal Spirit who made it — who sustains it, preserves it, and is always with me, about me, above me — thus skipping over all the intermediate stages of being, and re-uniting my own soul to Him from whom it came, and in whose image it was created.

Whatever bodily eyes can discern, whatever leaves impressions upon my imaginative faculty, shall be resolutely set out of the way, as a hindrance to that more abstracted contemplation which my mind is desirous to indulge. A pure and simple act of the understanding, is that which must carry me up, and boldly soar at once to the creator of angels, and souls, and all things. And happy is that soul which, refusing to be detained by low and viler objects, directs its flight to the noblest and most exalted; and like the eagle, builds its nest in the top of the rocks, and keeps its eye steady upon the sun of righteousness. For no beauty is so charming, no pleasure so transporting, as that with which our eyes and mind are feasted, when our greedy sight and eager affections are determined to our God and Saviour, as to their only proper centre —

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when, by a wondrous mystical, but true and spiritual act of vision, we see Him who is invisible; and behold a light far different from this which cheers our senses; and taste a pleasure infinitely sweeter than any this world and its joys can afford. For this is a short and artificial pleasure; this is a dim and feeble light, confined to a narrow space, always in motion from us, and in a few hours, put out by constant returns of darkness. These are enjoyments which the great Creator has distributed alike to brutes — indeed, to the vilest of insects — in common with mankind. And therefore, let us thirst and aspire after those things which are truly Divine. For what even swine and worms share with us, cannot deserve the name of *light* and *pleasure*; but compared to those which are more refined, they are to be esteemed no better than pain and night.

CHAP. 27.

How God may be seen, and possessed by Man.

THIS supreme and immutable Being, this glorious sun that never sets, this true, unclouded, and eternal light, the light of angels and men, cannot indeed be seen with mortal eyes, nor must we

hope in this life to approach it — that blessing is reserved for glorified saints in heaven; and in this, the excellence of their reward and happiness chiefly consists. Yet, even now, we are not shut out from all perception of it. For to believe in, to meditate upon, to understand, and to ardently thirst after God — to make Him the sole object of our thoughts and desires — this is in some sense to see, and to possess Him. And since our capacity extends thus far at present, let us exert those little powers we have.

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Let our voices be lifted up on high, and our souls make God their study; and let us, to the best of our ability, entertain him with his own praises. For it is *very fit, right, and our bound duty*, that the creature should publish the goodness of the Creator, since He created us for the illustration of his happiness — not that He stands in need of any glory we can give him, nor can we add to what he has already (Psa 47.7).

For he is power incomprehensible, possessing all things, and self-sufficient. Great is our Lord, and great is his power; yes, and His wisdom is infinite. *Great is our Lord and marvellous, and worthy to be praised* (Psa 145.3). Let *this*, then, be the object of our love; *this* the subject of our song; *this* the ground of our labour and studies. And let our mind, and tongue, and hands be continually exercised in desiring, speaking, singing, and writing of him. Let the delights of this heavenly rhetoric be our daily food and feast — so that, filled with this Divine nourishment, we may cry out with the most earnest contention of heart and voice, with joy and gladness and most fervent zeal, and proclaim the excellences of our God in the following manner:

CHAP. 28. How God may be Praised.

MOST great, most gracious, most mighty, most just, most merciful, omnipresent and incomprehensible Lord God! You are invisible and yet see all things; unchangeable yet change all things; immortal, uncircumscribed, without bound, without end, unspeakable, unsearchable, unmoved, yet giving motion to all things; fearful and glorious; to be honoured, revered, and adored with the most profound humility; never new, never old; yet making all things new, and consuming their gayest pride with age, though they do not regard it.

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Always in action, and yet always at rest; sustaining all things, and yet feeling no burden; feeling all things, and yet included in nothing; creating, protecting, nourishing, maintaining, improving all things. You seek, and yet you lack nothing; you love without passion, are jealous without disturbance; you repent without remorse; are angry without perturbation; change your works, but not your resolution; you receive what you had never lost; are never poor, and yet rejoice in the gaining of sinners; are not covetous, and yet expect *your own with interest* (Mat 25.27), and are pleased to account yourself a debtor to those who do good for your sake.

But, alas! who can do such things? Who is possessed of any good which is not yours already? You pay debts, and yet owe nothing; you forgive debts, and are no loser by your mercy; you give life and being to all, are everywhere, and all in all; you may be felt and perceived, but not seen; you are distant from no place, and yet far from the ungodly! For where you are not by your grace and favour, you are still present by your observation and vengeance. You communicate yourself to all, but not to all equally. To some things you impart being, but not life, or sense, or understanding. To some again, you impart being and life, but not sense and understanding. To some again, you impart being, and life, and sense, but not understanding. To some, lastly, your bounty extends so far as to bestow *all* these. And though you are always the same, perfectly consistent with yourself, yet nothing is more different than that vast variety of gifts and dispensations in which your different influences are shed abroad on different sorts of creatures.

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We are in continual pursuit of you, and though you do not move away from us, yet we cannot apprehend you. You possess all things, compass all, surmount all, uphold all; yet you do not so uphold all, as to have anything above you; nor do you so fill all, as to have anything without you; but at once you fill and contain, sustain and surmount all.

You teach the hearts of the faithful without the formality of words, and speak to them without the noise of articulate sounds. Your *wisdom reaches from one end to the other mightily, and sweetly she orders all things* (Wis 8.1). You are neither enlarged by any addition of space, nor changed by any revolution of time. You inhabit the light, which no man can approach; being indivisible, because you are strictly and simply one, having no parts, you fill all things with the whole of yourself.

Finite minds cannot distinctly conceive, nor artful expressions declare, nor whole volumes and libraries explain the depths and intricacies of this mystery. For what can describe that greatness which is above all quantity, and that transcendent goodness which is above all quality? This is perfect goodness indeed; and therefore none is truly good but you alone, with whom to *intend* is to finish, and to *will* is to be able to perform.

You made all things out of nothing, merely because it was your good pleasure to do so. You possess all things, not because you need any: you govern all without care or toil, and nothing in heaven above, or in earth, no not in hell beneath, has power to countermand, or in any degree to disturb your regular management, or break the beauteous order of your universe.

You are not the author of any evil: this is what even that power which can do all things, *cannot* do; for being able to do this would argue a defect, and not a perfection of power.

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Nor can you repent of anything you have done, because your wisdom always does the best; nor can you be disordered with any tumultuous passions, for these are the tempests and commotions of weak minds; nor could the danger or ruin of the whole world be any detriment to you, for that would have a happiness dependent on your own creatures; nor can you approve or commend any wicked action, for that would be a blemish to your holiness, and would make you cease to be God.

You never lie, because you are eternal truth: by your bounty alone we are created; by your justice we are punished for our offences; and by your clemency we are delivered from vengeance and destruction. No material being, whether earthly or heavenly body, no active principle (not even that of fire) which can affect our senses, ought to be worshipped for you; for you alone have self-existence, and never change from what you are. Hence your name is *Jehovah*, denoting that *you are always the same, and your years shall not fail* (Exo 3.14. Psa 102.27). Your church has taught me these and many other necessary and saving truths; I acknowledge it is your special favour to have been made a member of it. For here I learned that you are the one, the true God, without body, parts, or passions: and that no part of your substance is capable of change or corruption, compounded or made. This makes it evident that no bodily eye can discern you, and that no mortal can see you in your proper essence. Hence it is also plain that from the same cause which enables angels to behold you now, we also after this life will be enabled to behold you. But even those glorious and intellectual spirits cannot see you as you are in all points; for your mysterious unity of essence in Trinity of persons, just as it has nothing like itself, so it is fitly comprehended by nothing but itself.

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CHAP. 29.

Of the Plurality of Persons in the Unity of the Divine Essence.

YOU, my God, are but one with regard to your nature, but the persons to whom this nature is communicated are several. And thus, in different respects you are capable and incapable of becoming the object of number, and measure, and weight. We do not acknowledge any beginning of that goodness of which your essence consists, but believe all things whatsoever to be from and by, and in this; and that there is no other good thing, except so far as it participates in, and receives its goodness from you. Your Divine essence is, and ever was without matter, but not without form — the perfect, most beautiful, and true original form — which like your seal, you seal upon everything; and still, without addition or diminution to yourself, you diversify your own works in a wonderful manner, and make them differ from you, and from each other, according to the different characters impressed upon them by their Maker's hand. For whatever is made, is made by you alone.

O Lord omnipotent, you great Three-in-One whose almighty power possesses, governs, and fills all things; yet so as that the greatest does not have more, nor the least less, but so as to be all in all, and all to be in you. As it is written, *Where shall I go from your spirit, and where shall I flee from your presence? If I climb up to heaven you are there; if I go down to hell, you are there also; If I take the wings of the mornings and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me* (Psa 139.7-10).

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Thus you are present with everything, and everything with you: not by any local extension, but by your virtue and power, and communication of yourself. Now, since your nature is simply and inseparably one, we must not so conceive of the Trinity, as if the persons in it could be really separated from one another. This is indeed distinguished into three, and each person has a different name and title; but still no name belongs to any one of them, which does not at the same time refer to the rest, according to the different properties and mutual relations of each to the other. The Father includes the notion of a Son; the Son that of a Father; The Holy Spirit, Father and Son both. And all those titles used to express the power, essence, and perfections, and whatever is included in the name of God, belongs to every person equally. There is not therefore anything which may be truly affirmed of the Father as God, that may not with equal truth be affirmed of the Son, or Holy Ghost, as God. We say that the Father is God by nature; so we say likewise that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God by nature; and yet they are not three Gods by nature, but Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one and the self-same God.

So that our understanding embraces but one undivided essence; though, for our more distinct conception of this essence, we distinguish the several subsistences in it, by calling them different persons. But still, this plurality of *persons* does not infer a plurality of *beings*. This is manifest from this: that the name of each person has a necessary respect to the other two. If I mention the Father, I include the Son; if the Son, I include the Father; if the Spirit, I must unavoidably be understood to refer to someone whose spirit this is, and so I imply both Father and Son.

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This is the true faith; this is the result of sound doctrine, such as Almighty God has taught in his Church, and by her ministry educated me in the belief and full persuasion of it.

CHAP. 30.

A Prayer to the ever-blessed Trinity.

I call upon my God in this faith which I not only profess with all possible sincerity, but thankfully acknowledge to be Your gracious gift for the benefit and salvation of my soul. And I have good reason to be thankful for this gift, since the believing soul lives by faith, and by hope

embraces at present, that which it shall one day see in you. To you therefore I come, with a mind thus enlightened, full of chaste and holy desires, happily brought out of the dark night of ignorance, to the knowledge of your Divine truth; and delivered from the seducing charms of a treacherous and calamitous world, to taste the sweets of that love which places all its hopes and joys in you: even you, O blessed and glorious Trinity in unity. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, my God, my Lord, my Comforter! Love, mercy, and communion of grace!

O You who beget! O You who are begotten! O You who begets us again to a new life! Source of light, light of light, distributer of light; the spring, the stream, the watering, the one *of* whom, the one *by* whom, the one *in* whom are all things! You are life in yourself — life in yourself derived from life in Himself, the Lord and giver of life; one originally, one of one, one from the other two; truth the Father, truth the Son, truth the Holy Ghost! For in all three is but one essence, one power, one goodness, one blessedness, from and by, and in whom whatever else is blessed, receives its blessedness.

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CHAP. 31. God the True Life.

O GOD, the true life *of*, and *by*, and *in* whom all things live, the common source of all good! Our faith in you excites, our hope exalts, our love unites us. You command us to seek you, and are ready to be found; you bid us knock, and open when we do so (Mat 7.7). To turn from you, is to fall into ruin and death. To turn to you, is to rise to life and glory. To abide in you, is to stand fast and secure from danger. No man loses you, who does not suffer himself to be deceived; no man seeks you, who does not submit to instruction and reproof; no man finds you, who does not seek after you with a clean heart and purified affections. To know you is life, to serve you is freedom, to enjoy you is a kingdom, to praise you is the joy and happiness of the soul. I praise, and bless, and adore you, with heart, and voice, and every faculty; *I worship you, I glorify you, I give thanks to you for your great glory*, for your great goodness, for your innumerable and inestimable mercies — holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.

I humbly beseech you, O blessed Trinity, to come to me, to abide with me, to reign in me, to make this heart of mine a holy temple, a fit habitation for your majesty. I entreat the Father by the Son, the Son by the Father, the Holy Ghost by the Father and the Son, that all those vicious dispositions may be removed far from me, which might give offence to those eyes which cannot behold iniquity; and that all those virtues may be implanted, and grow, and flourish, and abound in kind, in which the God of unity delights (Hab 1.13).

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O you Maker and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible! Keep me, I beseech you, the work of your own hands, who trusts in your mercy alone for safety and protection. Guard me with the power of your grace, here and in all places, now and at all times, within and without, before and behind, above and below. Let your holy angels pitch their tents round about me, and so possess themselves of all the passes to my heart, that the treacherous enemy of souls may have no place left open by which to make his approach.

You are the guardian and defender of all who depend on you; without whose watchful care none can be safe; without whose mighty power none is a match for the dangers and temptations which beset him every moment. *You are God, and there is none beside you*, in heaven above, or in earth beneath: *You are great and do wondrous things* (Isa 45.5; Psalms 77.14). Who can recount, who can conceive them? Honour and praise are yours; angels and spirits, and all the creation join in setting forth your glory, and paying the constant humble homage due from creatures to

their Creator, from servants to their Lord, from subjects and soldiers to their victorious Leader and universal King.

CHAP. 32. The Praises of Angels and Men.

TO you the pure and lowly in heart, to you the souls of the righteous, to you the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, to you the numerous orders of intellectual spirits, sing hymns of joy perpetually; fall down before your throne, cast their crowns at your feet, and with profoundest reverence, adore the brightness of your majesty.

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Not only these, but man — a valuable part of the creation, since formed in your resemblance and placed chief in honour of all things here below (Heb 2.7) — he joins in praises too, though not able to discharge the duty with the same noble and exalted zeal as the bright hosts of heaven. Indeed, even I, the last and least of men, laden with sin and frailty, yet desire to *magnify you worthily*, and to *love you perfectly*. Help me, my God, my life, my strength, assist the desires you cannot but approve, and make me capable of glorifying you. Shed abroad your light in my heart; put your word in my mouth, that my *heart may be filled with your praise, and my tongue may sing of your glory and honour all the day long*.

But, regarding that *praise is not lovely in the mouth of a sinner*, and I, alas! *am a man of unclean lips*, purge me, I beseech you, from all manner of impurity; *touch my heart and tongue with a coal from your altar* (Isa 6.5, 6); wash away my filth, and purify all my dross, so I will be fit to offer you the sacrifice of praise. And when I do so, be graciously pleased to accept the little I can give; according to the inclination and sincerity of my heart, accept *the sacrifice of my lips*. *Let my prayer be set forth in your presence, and let the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice* (Hos 14.2; Psa 141.2). Let the continual, and the most delightful remembrance of you diffuse a constant joy through my whole soul, and transport it with a most ardent love of invisible blessings, that my affections may rise from earth to heaven, from temporal objects to eternal, and from the dark confused view of the creature, to the astonishing and beatific vision of the Creator.

O eternal truth, and true love, and beloved eternity! My soul pants after you day and night; all my hopes and thoughts are fixed on you, and all are determined to enjoy you (Psa 42.1).

77

He that knows you, knows truth and eternity; for you are seated on high, above all (Psa 113.5), whom, when this life of dimness is dispersed, and the veil of mortal flesh drawn aside, we see you *as you are* (1Joh 3.2). At present, the language with which others accost me is, *Where is your God?* And the question I often put to you is, *Where are you now, my God?* I now and then take a breath and seem to live, when I *pour out my heart before you in the voice of joy and thanksgiving* (Psa 42.4). But even in the midst of mirth, a damp comes over my spirits, because my soul falls back again from these pleasing exercises; and even when most desirous to mount up above the highest heavens, it feels itself dragged down into a dark and great deep, or rather, it finds itself no better than a dark and great deep. In this abyss, indeed, I sometimes perceive some glimmerings of light from that faith which you have kindled to shine in the darkness. This sometimes rouses me in *David's strain*, *Why are you so heavy, O my soul, and why are you so disquieted within me?* Still put your trust in God: *His word is a lantern to my feet, and a light to my paths* (Psa 43.5; 119.105). Still trust in God till the night wears off, and the wrath of God, of which we were once *children* (Eph 2.3), is over-past, and the overflowings of ungodliness are carried clean away. We must be content to carry the remains of these miseries about us, while burdened with a body that is dead in regard to sin, till such time as the shades and thick clouds

are dispelled by the dawn of the day of life. *Put your trust in God, and await his pleasure*: for in the morning I shall stand before Him, and behold his glory, and be filled with his praise. Even His, who will *quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit who dwells in us*. His, who will make us *light*, that we may be *children of the day*, and no longer *of the night, nor of darkness*.

78

For *we were at one time darkness, but now we are light in the Lord*; but we are such, as yet, by faith only, and not by sight and fruition. For we are *saved through hope; but hope that is seen, is not hope* (Rom 8.11; 1The 5.5; Eph 5.8; Rom 8.24).

The numerous progeny of angels and celestial spirits do indeed glorify your name after a manner very different from ours. They have no need to study the holy Scriptures, and learn from there the glories of your essence. They see the blessed Trinity face to face, and read in you the counsels of your eternal will and wisdom; they read, and choose, and love all your good pleasure; and what they read, they never lose the remembrance of. Nor shall this book ever be shut to them, because you are ever present with them, the same to all eternity, exhibiting yourself continually to their understandings. O blessed spirits, who are thus enabled to offer you the tribute of their praise without any mixture of infirmity, without any interruption, without the alloy of anxious care, and sorrow, who drink of *your pleasures as out of a river*, and exult with the sweet transports of joy unspeakable. For both their praise and their joy flow from the same source; and those who always see you, cannot help but always praise, and always rejoice in you.

But we poor feeble mortals, weighed down with a body of corruption, placed at a vast distance from the bright beams of your countenance, and distracted with a variety of worldly cares and events, are not in a condition to glorify you worthily. Our prospect is but dark and very remote, and the little we are able to do is by the help of faith, and not by sight. But those celestial spirits wait around your throne, and act by sight, and not by faith.

79

This gives them a capacity of knowing, and loving, and praising, above what the present state of flesh and blood will admit, even what the most exalted devotee upon earth will attain to. But notwithstanding the different manner and value of their more perfect, and our feebler praises, still you are the same God, the common Father and creator of angels and men. The sacrifice is the same offered in heaven and in earth, and centres all in you at last, from whatever quarter it comes. Nor do our weakest essays, when compared with their noblest performances, discourage us from hoping that we will one day, by your bounteous mercy, be received up to the same blissful mansions, made members of the heavenly choir, and in their company see, and adore, and praise your glorious name forever. In the meanwhile, Lord, grant me your assistance, that while I sojourn in this mortal body, I may do all for which my present circumstances are qualified; that my heart may be sensibly affected with your goodness, my tongue continually speak of your honour, and *all my bones say, Lord, who is like you?* (Psa 35.10).

You are that God Almighty, three in person, but one in substance, the Father begotten of none, the Son only begotten of the Father, the Holy Ghost proceeding from, and yet ever remaining in, the Father and Son both, whom we admire and adore, as Trinity in unity, and unity in Trinity. When we were nothing, your power gave us being; when we were lost by sin, and worse than nothing, your inestimable mercy contrived a wonderful method of restoring us to a new, spiritual, and better life. O, do not suffer us to be insensible and unthankful under so gracious a dispensation! Help us to walk worthy of your manifold, your unspeakable mercies; and increase in us daily your graces; strengthen our faith, exalt our hope, and inflame and enlarge our charity.

80

Enable us by the powerful influence of your blessed Spirit, to continue steadfast in the belief of your truth, and to plentifully bring forth the fruits agreeable to that belief — so that, by a true faith, and a suitable practice, your mercy may at last bring us to the attainment of everlasting salvation; that we may *be with you where you are*, and *see you as you are*, and adore the brightness of your majesty, and join our hearts and voices with those whom you have already admitted to that glorious sight, in hymns of joy and praise. Saying with all the company of heaven, Glory to the Father whose wisdom created us; glory to the Son, whose love redeemed us; glory to the Holy Spirit, whose graces sanctified us; glory to the almighty and undivided Trinity, whose works are inseparable, and dominion without end. To you belongs praise, and thanksgiving, and honour, and blessing. And therefore, all honour, and power, and thanks, and praise be unto you our God, for ever and ever,

CHAP. 33.

A Prayer for Zeal in the Service and Praise of God.

PARDON, O gracious Lord, pardon and pity, most tender Father, my wretched ignorance and manifold imperfections. Do not reject my forwardness as rash and over-bold, because I, who am but a servant (O that I were but a good, and not a careless and unprofitable, and therefore a wicked and most unworthy servant, Luk 17.10) presume to praise and adore the great and terrible God. And when I do so, I do not feel my heart touched with that deep contrition, nor my eyes overflowing with tears, nor my soul humbled with that awful reverence and godly fear, which best become my vileness and your majesty.

81

For sure, if angels themselves fall down and tremble before you, it is but fitting that so sinful a creature as I, should approach you with dread and sorrow; with sad apprehensions of the justice I have provoked to anger, and constant lamentations of my own guilt and unworthiness; that I should exceedingly fear and quake, and never come into your presence except with a pale dejected countenance, with weeping eyes and shivering limbs. I am sensible that I *ought* to do this, and I *wish* to do this, yet I do *not* — because I cannot do what I sincerely wish I could do; and I wonder greatly that I cannot bring myself to do it. But who is able to do this without the assistance of your grace? For, just as our salvation itself is entirely your gift, so every pious disposition which tends to qualify us for it, is of your great and free mercy.

O wretched man! whose heart is so hard, so stupid, as not to be broken with the terrors of the great God, when he appears before you and takes it upon himself to publish your praise! O flinty creature, more impenetrable than the nether millstone, whose eyes do not melt into floods of tears when the least of all the servants expostulates with his Master — man with God, the creature with his Creator, dust and ashes with Him who made me out of nothing! Behold, O Lord, I lay myself open before you, and do not spare to tell all the world the mean and guilty reflections with which my thoughts upbraid me when I am alone. I only beg that you, who are rich in mercy, will impart mercy to me out of your abundance. And from the treasures of your goodness, let me receive something which may be graciously accepted by you. For we can only serve you from your own; and if at any time you are pleased with our endeavours, those very endeavours are of the ability which you yourself first granted to give us.

82

Therefore, from whom every good gift comes, strike this rock, that the waters of holy sorrow may flow out abundantly. And when this sinful soul attempts to pay its tribute of praises and thanksgiving, let it be done with that becoming mixture of humility and remorse, of profound reverence and inward purity, and holy joy, with which those who love you perfectly, and praise you worthily, feel their hearts affected; such as may entitle me to all those spiritual comforts described in Scripture, when it is said, *O taste and see how gracious the Lord is. Blessed is the*

man who trusts in him. Blessed is the people that can rejoice in you. Blessed is the man whose strength is in you, in whose heart are your ways, who passing through the valley of weeping make it a well, and go from strength to strength, till they appear in Zion. And blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. And again. Blessed, Lord, are those who dwell in your house, they will always be praising you (Psa 34.8; 84.5-7; Mat 5.8).

CHAP. 34. **An Act of Devotion and Love of God.**

O BLESSED Jesus, my sacrifice and ransom, the delight and desire of my soul, God of God! mercifully assist the prayers of your humble servant. On you I call, to you I cry with a loud voice, and from the very bottom of my heart. Your presence I invite into my soul, O enter there and fit it for yourself, that it may not offend you *by spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but be holy and without blemish* (Eph 5.27). For sure, only a clean dwelling can be acceptable to the purity of so Divine an inhabitant.

83

Therefore sanctify me, a vessel made by your own hand; and make me fit for your own use: purge out all the remains of wickedness; fill me with your grace, and keep me ever in that fulness, that I may be built up a holy temple, a habitation such as my God will not disdain here and forever. O sweetest, kindest, dearest, most powerful, most precious, loveliest and most beautiful Saviour! more delicious than honey, whiter than snow, of more value than gold and precious stones, and dearer to me than all the riches, and honours, and pleasures this world can afford!

But what does all I have said amount to, my God, my only hope, my unspeakable mercy? What have I said, my sweet repose, my sure refuge, in all this? Alas! I say as much as I can, though in no degree what I should, upon so glorious a subject. O that I were capable of expressing your excellences in as perfect and becoming a manner as the melodious choirs of angels do in their perpetual consorts of praise! How gladly would I then spend all my breath, and even warble out my soul in songs of thanksgiving? With what ardent, what indefatigable devotion would I proclaim your glories in the midst of your congregations! But if I cannot do so much as becomes me, is that a reason why I should do nothing? No, I will exert my utmost powers, and speak my best, though I can never speak enough. For woe to those who are silent on this occasion, since those who are willing, *You render able* — making even the dumb to speak, and *perfecting praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings* (Psa 8.2). Woe, then, to those who do not employ their tongues to your honour, since even the greatest masters of eloquence, who use them most and best, are yet dumb in effect, and say nothing to any purpose, when they do not employ their tongues to your honour.

84

Who can set forth your greatness as it deserves, O inexpressible power and wisdom of the Father! But regarding that no words are to be found sufficient to declare the omnipotent and omnipresent *Word*, I will at least contrive the best I can, and go to the greatest length mortality is qualified for, till you receive me to your own self, and enable me to express my praises in terms suitable to your dignity and my duty. In the meanwhile, it is my earnest request that you would measure my present feeble essays, not by what I say, but what I desire to say. For it is the most vehement wish and longing of my soul, to give such praises as I know become so great a Majesty to receive, and due homage for a creature to give. And you, my God, who know the secrets of all hearts, and are conscious to every motion of my soul, can bear me witness that heaven and earth, and all that is in them, are of small consideration with me in comparison to you. Whatever else may challenge a place in my affection, ceases to be of any regard at all, and indeed ought to be hated, when put in the balance with my God (Luk 14.26). This is the real

sense of my soul: I love my God with such unrivalled, such a fervent passion; and yet I am also sensible that this is less than Your due; and therefore I desire above all things to love you still more and more.

O grant that I may daily grow and continue forever steadfast in your love, that I may pay you all the affection I wish I could, all I owe and *should* pay; that you may be my only aim and end, the only object of my thoughts. Let my days be spent in meditating upon you incessantly; and my dreams present no other idea to my imagination: let my spirit confer with you upon my bed, and remember you alone when waking in the night (Psa 63.6).

85

Let the light of your countenance shine through every corner of my heart, that under your government and conduct I may proceed from *strength to strength, till at length I see the God of gods in Zion*; (Psa 84.7) and whom I now can only take an imperfect glimpse of through a dark and broken glass, *may then behold face to face, and know even as I am known* (1Cor 13.12; Mat 5.8). And since this is a blessing promised in a peculiar manner to the *pure in heart*, I entreat you, by all that goodness and compassion, which has delivered us from death eternal, let your most powerful holy union soften this tough, hard, rocky heart of mine, and render it susceptible to tender and good impressions, that the fire of compunction and holy zeal may be cherished there continually, and render it a daily living sacrifice to you.

Grant me the grace of a humble and contrite spirit, that I may come into your presence washed clean with tears of godly sorrow. And let my affections be so inseparably united to you, that I may have no carnal desires left, but be utterly cold and dead to this world. Let me not so much as remember transitory things, for the vehemence of that fear and love I bear to God; that these momentary trifles may no longer be matters of grief, or joy, or concern to me; nor any flattering prosperity have power to bias or corrupt my heart; nor any terror of adversity shake my constancy. And because the love of You is strong as death itself, let this, I beseech you, entirely possess and swallow up my soul; let that sweet and holy fire consume all the dross of worldly affections, that I may cling to you alone, and make it my constant food and drink to do your will (Joh 4.34), and know no refreshments but such as flow from delightful remembrances of you.

86

Send down, O Lord, send down into my heart your precious aromas, that I may be ravished with the fragrance of my heavenly spouse. Let the delightful relish of your sweetness excite in me holy and eager desires, and be in me *a well of living water springing up to everlasting life* (Joh 4.14). Your greatness, O my God, is immeasurable, and therefore the love of you ought to be so too: for surely no bounds ought to determine the gratitude and praise of those whom you have granted to redeem with your own most precious blood. O tender lover of souls! O merciful Lord! O righteous Judge! to whom your *Father has committed all judgment*. You see and have declared how fitting it is, that the *children of this world should not in their generation be wiser than the children of light* (Luk 16.8); that the sons of night and darkness should be our pattern; and that it is just matter of reproach to us, if they love and pursue perishing riches, and fleeting pleasures and advantage, with a more intense desire and more unwearied endeavours, than your own servants seek and love the source and sum of their true happiness: even you, their God, who made them when they were not, and redeemed them when otherwise it was better for them not to have been at all.

And if one man loves another man so fervently, if a spouse is so fond of her beloved, as not to bear the absence of a friend so dear, without the utmost impatience, and even inconsolable grief, then what affection, what zeal, what ardent desire of constant union, should that soul express, whom you have betrothed and married to yourself by faithfulness and manifold mercies? How should we be conversing with, and enjoying the great God, the most amiable husband, who has

loved us and saved us in so astonishing a manner, and for our sakes done so many, so great, so kind, so wonderful things!

87

For though the objects here below have indeed some delights peculiar to themselves, which attract our hearts, and kindle affections and desires proportioned to them — yet they do not affect us in the same manner as you our God, and the blessed objects above. The righteous man rejoices in you, because the love of you is a calm and sweet contemplation. For every breast thus disposed, is filled with an equal, secure and serene pleasure. But the love of the *world* and the *flesh* is ruffled with anxious fears and violent emotions: it utterly destroys the peace of the soul where it takes possession, and distracts them with cares and suspicions, with jealousy and passions, and a thousand uneasy apprehensions.

You are therefore most justly the joy and delight of good men, because you are the only heaven where they are at rest; and with you alone is that life which brings quietness and assurance, settled and sincere pleasure. He that enters into you, enters into the joy of his Lord, where fears of future evils have no place. Fixed in this most happy station, and secure from change or danger, he can speak comfort to his soul in these words of the psalmist, *This shall be my rest forever; here I dwell, for I have a delight in it* (Psa 132.14). And again, *The Lord is my shepherd, therefore I can lack nothing: he shall make me lie down in green pastures, and send me forth beside the still waters* (Psa 23.1, 2).

O that it might please my sweetest, dearest Jesus, to fill my heart with such a love of him, as never can be quenched; to be ever present in mind, that I may be covered in love, and burn with perpetual desires for His company and enjoyment. Let this desire exalt my heart, and enable it to throw off that troublesome load of sensual and worldly affections, which now obstruct and press me down, and but add to my miseries, instead of gratifying my inclinations.

88

And having laid aside this weight, help me to run cheerfully and apace after the aroma of your ointments, still keeping on my course without incumbrance or diversion, till by your gracious guidance, I at last shall be received to yourself, there to be feasted forever with the pleasures of your beauteous presence.

For two so different passions — good and evil, sweet and bitter — cannot dwell together in the same breast. And therefore, if a man loves anything besides you, the love of God is not in him (1Joh 2.15). O love of exquisite pleasure, and exquisite pleasure of love! Love, all delight without alloy of torment; love, chaste and perfect, whose bright flame can never be extinct, but burns pure and cheerful to all eternity; my God, my Jesus, who are love and pleasure in the abstract, inflame my every part with this holy fire, pour your transporting joys, your inexpressible comforts and sweet raptures abundantly into my soul: kindle there desires that are chaste and holy, peaceful and calm, pleasant and secure, that thus overflowing with delight and inflamed with desire, I may love you, *my God, with all my heart, and soul, and strength* (Mar 12.30) — that you may always be in my mind, and mouth, and sight, at all times and in all places; and so refresh me, that no room may be left for any other, which are indeed no better than unfaithful and adulterous passions.

Hear me, my God, light of my eyes; hear what I ask, and grant my petitions; and that you may hear me effectually, inspire and direct my petitions. O merciful and gracious Lord! Let not my manifold offences stop your ears against my prayers, nor shut out your mercy from me. But let your servant obtain his requests, though not for any merit of his own, yet for the sake of His merits and intercession, in whom alone he trusts, and by Him alone presumes to ask anything — even the blessed Jesus, the son of your love, the one, the powerful *Mediator between God and man* (1Tim 2.5), who with you and your blessed Spirit, lives and reigns forever. *Amen.*

CHAP. 35.
A Devout Prayer to Christ.

O LORD Jesus, the anointed of God, the word of the Father, who came into the world on purpose to save sinners! I summon you by the most enlarged sympathy of your indulgent mercy, let me *cease to do evil; learn to do well* (Isa 1.16, 17), and reduce all my actions to rule and due order. Take away from me *whatever is offensive* to you, and hurtful to myself; and implant in me all those virtues and graces which may conduce to my soul's advantage, and your good liking and acceptance of me. *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean*, but you alone? (Job 14.4) You are a God infinite in goodness and power, *justifying the ungodly* (Rom 4.5); *quickening those who lay dead in trespasses and sin* (Eph 2.1); changing the hearts of men, and forming them into new and different creatures. Your eyes behold my many and great imperfections. Look down upon them with an eye of pity, send down your hand of compassion from above, and remove far from me whatever is displeasing in your sight. My spiritual health and diseases are both in your sight. O strengthen and preserve the former, I beseech you; and in much mercy, heal the latter.

Heal me, blessed Physician of souls, *and so I shall be healed* (Jer 17.14); *hold me up*, you almighty preserver of men, *and so I shall be safe* (Psa 119.117); you who *give medicines for the cure of our sickness* (Psa 147.3), and sustains that health which is your own; you who repair our breaches, and build up our decayed ruins with a word of your mouth.

90

If you think fit (as I hope You will) to sow the good seed in your field, my heart (Luk 8.14), the first part of that blessed work must be to prepare and correct the soil, by rooting out the weeds and thorns of vicious habits and dispositions, which otherwise will choke the work, and make it unfruitful. O sweetest, kindest, dearest Jesus! pour into me, I beg you, the abundance of your love, that there may be no remains of earthly or sensual desires or thoughts in my breast, but you and your love may reign unrivalled there, and possess my heart entirely. Write your name in my mind, that you and your commands may be ever before my eyes. Kindle in my soul that holy fire which you have sent into the world, that it may melt away my dross, and qualify me for offering to you the daily sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit.

Sweetest Redeemer, as you have given me the sincere desire, so give me the attainment of your chaste and holy love, fervent as my desire, and entire as the sincerity with which I ask it. *Let my head be waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears* (Jer 9.1), that these may speak for me, and testify of the greatness of my love, and the inward delights I feel — too big to be contained within my heart, and perpetually running over in tears of joy.

I frequently call to mind the devout addresses of your servant *Hannah* (1Sam. 1), who came to your tabernacle to beg a son from you. And upon each remembrance of her remarkable piety and perseverance in prayers, I find myself tormented with grief, and confounded with shame, for my own coldness and deadness in devotion.

91

For, if she not only wept, but continued weeping in hopes of obtaining a son, what affectionate complaints, what measure of tears become my soul, which comes to you in prayer, which seeks and loves my God and Saviour, desiring to receive him, and be received to him? What sighs and groanings, what earnest gaspings, what impatient thirstings should I bring, who am in pursuit of my God day and night, and desire to love and to enjoy nothing but him only? O look then upon me, and extend your mercy to me, for the *sorrows of my heart are enlarged* (Psa 25.17). Permit me to taste of your heavenly comforts, and do not disdain that sinful soul, for which you did not

grudge to die. Give me plenteous tears flowing from an affectionate heart, that by lamenting, I may prevail for forgiveness of my sins, a release from the bands of which I have so long been tired, and a godly sorrow which may produce spiritual and heavenly joy — that if I cannot rise to that exalted pitch of zeal with some illustrious martyrs, confessors, and eminently devout men, whose bright examples I despair of coming up to, I may not, however, let myself be outdone by the weaker sex, but be admitted to a share in your kingdom with devout women.

Another instance of female devotion also comes often to my remembrance: I mean, the one whose vehement affection for you made her wait at your sepulchre. Though your disciples went away, she would not depart with them, but sat there weeping, and deploring her supposed loss of her dear Lord. Rising frequently, she returned to search the empty cave with anxious eyes, not trusting her own senses, but hoping and seeking still, despite their former reports, to see the one her soul loved (Joh 20). She had no doubt examined the grave with finest diligence before; but still, her passionate desires could not be satisfied that she had sought you with sufficient care.

92

For what crowns and recommends every good work, is the virtue of perseverance. This person, then, because she loved more than the rest (Luk 7.47), and expressed that love by her weeping, and sought you carefully with tears, and still continued seeking, notwithstanding so many former disappointments, obtained the preference above the rest, and had the honour to find, and see, and converse with you, before any other person whatsoever.

Not only so, but she was chosen to be the first preacher of your glorious resurrection. By her you imparted the joyful tidings to your disconsolate disciples, and refreshed their memories with your promise of visiting them again, saying, *Go tell my brethren, that I go into Galilee; there they shall see me* (Mat 28.10). If then, this woman wept so tenderly, who sought *the living among the dead*, and touched you with the hand of faith, how should that soul be affected, and how lasting should that affection be, which believed in the heart, and confesses with the mouth, a glorified Redeemer enthroned in heaven, and reigning over the whole world? What sighs and tears should breathe out from that heart which loves nothing but you, and above all things longs to gain a sight of you — of you, the only refuge and hope of the miserable, who are never addressed without a comfortable expectation of mercy?

In this confidence I entreat you, for your own sake, and for the glory of your holy name, to grant me such a tender and affectionate sense of your goodness, and my own unworthiness, that every time I think, or speak, or read, or write of you — upon every remembrance, every approach to my God and Saviour, in the sacrifices of prayer and praise — my eyes may overflow with tears of remorse and love. You, the King of glory, the teacher and pattern of all virtues, have instructed us to weep, both by your word, and by your own example.

93

You have said, *Blessed are those who are mourn, for they shall be comforted*, and you yourself shed tears of compassion for your deceased friend, and yet more abundantly for the ungracious city of your people, and its approaching destruction (Mat 5.4; Joh 11.35; Luk 13.34).

By your most precious tears (Luk 19.41), and by all the wonderful instances of your mercy for the relief of lost mankind, I beg the grace of tears and godly sorrow, which my soul vehemently thirsts after. I cannot attain to this unless you grant it to me; for it is your holy Spirit alone that can bring water out of this rock, and soften the hearts of hardened sinners. This you have been pleased to communicate freely to many primitive and eminent saints, whose pious footsteps I dare to tread in. Send down your former and your latter rain, and water this dry soil with the dew of heaven, that I may with true compunction bewail my sin and misery; and kindle in my heart a fervent zeal, that I may be a burnt offering to you, a sacrifice of sweet savour in your presence. And let my tears wash that polluted offering, that it may be presented clean and pure.

For of these I still have daily need; because, though by the assistance of your grace I consecrate myself ever so devoutly and entirely to your service, yet such is my frailty, that I still *offend in many things* (Jas 3.2). Grant me, therefore, this necessary grace: that I may taste of your cup, and quench my thirst, that my soul may ever pant after you, and burn with the love of you alone, regardless of any other object, getting above the vanities of sense, and the miseries of the world.

94

Hear me, my God; hearken, Light of my eyes; grant my request, and grant me to ask for those things which you delight to give. Let not my manifold offences stop the current of your grace, whose property it is to be a *God who hears prayer*, and always has *mercy*. *According to the multitude of your mercies, do away with my offences; and think of me, O Lord, for your goodness' sake* (Psa 65.2; 51.1; 25.7).

CHAP. 36. **Another Prayer to the same Purpose.**

O GRACIOUS Saviour, O merciful Lord Jesus, who was pleased to die for our sins and rise again for our justification, be also pleased, by that glorious resurrection, I beseech you good Lord, to raise me from the death of sin to the life of righteousness — so that partaking now in the first and spiritual resurrection, I may be admitted to partake of the blessed and literal resurrection at the last day (Rom 4.25). Sweetest, kindest, dearest Lord, most mighty King of glory, who has ascended with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven, and sit enthroned at the right hand of the Father, draw me up to you; that by your powerful guidance, and more than magnetic force, I may run after the aroma of your ointments, and not faint. Draw this thirsty soul to the rivers of eternal pleasure, to the fountain of living water, that I may drink my fill, and live forever, O God of my life.

These are your own most comfortable words, *If any man thirsts, let him come to me and drink* (Joh 7.37, 38). O well of life! make good that gracious invitation to your unworthy servant, that I may continually drink of you and quench my eager thirstings, and according to your most true promise, be so filled with your holy Spirit that *out of my belly may flow streams of living water*.

95

O well of life! give me *drink out of your pleasures as out of a river* (Psa 36.8); satiate my soul with the delights of your love, that I may lose all relish for vain, and sensual, and worldly joys, and fix my thoughts and desires on you alone, and on your sweet mercies. As holy David professes of himself, *I remembered your everlasting judgments, O Lord, and received comfort* (Psa 119.52)

Shower down upon me the fructifying graces of your good Spirit, which you were pleased to represent by the waters promised to be given to those who thirst (Joh 7.39). Let all my desires and endeavours take me up directly to that blissful place where we most firmly believe you went, forty days after the resurrection; that nothing but my body may be detained any longer in this valley of misery here below; but my soul and all its faculties may be with you; that where my best and only treasure is — where my incomparable best-beloved Jesus is — my heart may be also (Mat 6.21). In the dismal deluge, the wide unfaithful sea of this tempestuous life, we are tossed and driven about by storms that blow from every quarter, without port or shelter, without one spot of dry ground for the weary dove to rest her foot upon (Gen 8.9); no peace, no calm, no security, but only rocks and quicksand, wars and contentions, and enemies on every side — *without are fightings, and within are fears* (2Cor 7.5).

You have framed us out of a wonderful mixture of different parts, and joined heaven and earth together in one man. *The earthly body presses down the soul* (Wis 9.15), and hence the mind, thus unequally coupled, is dragged back by its companion, moves heavily, and is soon tired with

its journey. Indeed, it often languishes and sinks down in the middle of its course; torn and wounded by the thorny cares and vanities through which its way lies; bruised by the roughness of the passage; hungry and hard beset, and often ready to perish with thirst in this dry, barren, and desolate wilderness.

96

Nor have I the means to satisfy its cravings, being, alas! poor and destitute of my spiritual comforts. Therefore I flee to you, my Lord and God, rich in mercies, and a bountiful giver of good gifts; imploring food in my necessity, refreshment for my weariness, balm for my wounds, and guidance for my wanderings. Behold, my soul stands at the door and knocks (Rev 3.20): *O let that tender mercy of God, by which the glorious Dayspring from on high has visited us* (Luk 1.78). Open to this importunate beggar! Extend your charity, and in a marvellous condescension take him in, that he may find refreshment and sweet repose in you, and be fed with the bread of life, the bread of heaven; that thus sustained and strengthened, he may climb up the hill, and mounting on the wings of holy zeal, he may be conveyed from this valley of tears, to the joys of the celestial kingdom.

O that my soul could fly like an eagle, bold and strong, without making any stop or perching by the way, till it arrives at the beauties of *your house, and the place where your honour dwells!* (Psa 26.8). O that it might feed there at the sumptuous table which you have prepared for the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem; and be led forth by its Divine shepherd into pleasant pastures, watered by fruitful streams (Psa 23.2) — so that this heart, this tempest-beaten heart, might be brought at last into harbour, laid up, and rest secure in you, my God!

O you, who *commanded the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm* (Mat 8.26; 14.27), come down and walk upon the waves of my heart, that all its tumultuous passions may be composed into a profound tranquillity! that all may unite into that one of love, and that love be determined upon its own proper object, even you my chief, my only good — that I may contemplate the delight of my eyes, my dear Lord, clearly and without interruption, free from the mists and dusts of trouble and confused thoughts.

97

Let my spirit take sanctuary under the shadow of your wings, and there be protected from the scorching heats of worldly cares; that lying close under that shelter, it may sing securely with your holy psalmist, *I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest, for it is you alone, Lord, who make me dwell in safety* (Psa 4.8).

Yes, let it take its rest, my God, I pray you, by having all the remembrance of evils laid to sleep; let it love righteousness, and hate iniquity. For what can be more delightful, more desirable, than in the darkness and distresses of this afflicted gloomy life, to look up to and pant after the sweet enjoyment of God and everlasting bliss? than to ascend there in our minds and affections, and there continually dwell, where alone true joys are to be found? O sweetest, dearest, loveliest, and most loving Jesus, when shall I be happy in the sight of you? *When shall I come and appear before the presence of my God?* When shall I be feasted with your beauty? When will you *bring my soul out of this dark loathsome prison*, into the regions of light, that I may give thanks to your name, and taste the bitter cup of grief no more? When shall I be translated into your beauteous palace, and hear the *voice of joy and salvation* continually sounding *in the dwellings of the righteous?* (Psa 118.15)

Blessed are those who dwell in your house, O Lord; they will always be praising you (Psa 84.4). *Blessed, indeed, is the man whom you choose and receive to yourself; and blessed are the people whom you take to be your own inheritance* (Psa 65.4; 33.12). Behold your holy ones *grow up before you as a lily* (Hos 14.5). They are filled with the pleasures of *your house*, and *you give them drink out of your fulness*.

For you are the fountain of life, and in your light, they see light (Psa 65.4; 36.8, 9). Such light, though they are but a derived and secondary light; yet the bright beams of You, the great original Light, are shed so plentifully upon them, that by virtue of this strong reflection, they *shine forth as the sun* (Mat 13.43) in your presence and kingdom. *O how goodly, how amiable, how delicious are the tabernacles of your dwellings, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord* (Psa 84.1, 2). This sinful heart and flesh cries out for the living God: it cries continually, and repeats this profession again and again, *Lord, I have loved the beauties of your house, and the place where your honour dwells* (Psa 26.8).

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life (Psa 27.4). *As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after you, O God* (Psa 42.1). When shall I see the living God, whom my soul thirsts after? When shall I see him in the land of the living? (Psa 27.13). For in this land of the dying where we now dwell, no mortal eye can see him. What shall I do, wretched man that I am! chained down to flesh and sense, and dragging after me a clog of corruption? What is this miserable condition capable of? *While we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord* (2Cor 5.6); for *here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come* (Heb 13.14). There is our *settlement* (Phi 3.20), and all our privilege, the hope of our high calling, the business and happiness of our lives, all in our native, in our heavenly country.

Woe is me, that I have so long dwelt in the tents of Kedar, and been constrained to sojourn among the enemies of my peace (Psa 120.4, 5).

O that I had wings like a dove, then I would fly away and be at rest (Psa 55.6). I know no pleasure comparable to that of being with my Lord. *It is good for me to draw near to God* (Psa 73.28), to be held fast *by God*. Grant me, therefore, gracious Lord, so close a union with you, even while I am imprisoned in this frail body, as to make good the apostle's observation: *he that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit* (1Cor 6.17). Arm my soul with the wings of contemplation, that it may soar up to you. And because of my frailty, I cannot help but fall without you; support my soul, that it not sink into the bottom of this dark vale of sense. Let no interposition of the earth eclipse the Sun of righteousness, and obstruct the influence of his refreshing beams; but let his light direct, and his cherishing heat warm my frozen heart, in my prospects and pursuits of high and heavenly things. For, from this instant I desire to bend my course to the joys of eternal peace, and leaving the clouds and storms of these lower regions of the air, aspire to the quiet and serene, the bright and blissful mansions of ethereal light above.

Uphold my heart with your mighty hand, for without you it cannot mount upward. I hasten to the place where sweetest and most profound peace reigns undisturbed. O, assist and govern my flight, that by your guidance I may come into those fruitful pastures where you feed *Israel* with eternal truth; that my mind may dwell upon you, the supreme Wisdom, who penetrates and governs all things. But while I aim at this ascent to you, I find many objections and obstructions to my design. I beseech you, remove and silence them all. Command, and the tempest will be still: let my soul possess itself in quietness, and silently pass over all created objects to fix on you. There, in her great Creator, let her eyes of faith, her desires, her hopes and thoughts, immovably rest; and let no object ever divert, let none entertain her, except her true and chief good, her exquisite and endless joy.

There are, indeed, many contemplations, in which a devout mind feels wonderful satisfaction; but it can never attain to that sweet tranquillity and delight, as when it meditates on you alone. For, *O how great is your goodness, and how great is your beauty!* (Zec. 9.17) And how

transporting are those secret pleasures which overflow the hearts of your beloved, who love, and seek, and desire to know nothing but you! Happy are those who have no other hope; happy those whose constant employment is praying to, and conversing with you; happy those whose solitude is spent in awful silence, and heavenly raptures, and constant watchfulness over themselves; happy those who, even while in this frail body, anticipate, so far as their condition will allow, the ineffable sweetness of their future glories.

By those life-giving wounds which you condescended to suffer on the cross for our salvation, those wounds, from which streamed forth that precious blood by which mankind is redeemed from death eternal; wound, I beseech you, this sinful soul of mine, for which you did not disdain to die; strike it through with a fiery dart of your most fervent love, which nothing can resist — *for the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing the joints and marrow* (Heb 4.12). Strike, therefore, gracious Lord, strike this hard heart of mine to the very quick; and let the waters of penitent and affectionate tears flow out in great abundance. Let me lament my present miseries day and night, and find no comfort till I am allowed to behold my fairest and best beloved spouse, my Lord and my God, in his heavenly bedchamber.

101

That there, forever gazing on your beauteous face with your chosen, I may fall down and adore your Majesty; and transported with rapturous and inexpressible joy, I may cry out with those who love you — Behold, I see what I have long desired; I am in full possession of my hopes; I am inseparably united to him in heaven, whom upon earth I loved with a most eager and impatient, a most sincere and undivided affection. This is the One whom my soul so earnestly panted after, the One whom I will praise and bless, and most devoutly adore. He is the one who lives and reigns, my God for ever and ever. *Amen.*

CHAP. 37. A Prayer in Time of Affliction.

LOOK down, O Lord, with pity and compassion upon a miserable sinner, doing the things he should not, and enduring the things which he has most justly deserved, every day multiplying his offences, and smarting daily under your correcting rod for them. When I reflect upon my many and great provocations, I cannot help but confess my sufferings are light and gentle in comparison; and I own they are by no means proportionate to what I have incurred and might expect. *Righteous are you. O Lord, and just are your judgments* (Psa 119.137; 92.15). Yes, just and faithful is my God, and *there is no iniquity in him*. You send affliction, but you send it upon creatures and upon sinners, and cannot therefore be charged with injustice or cruelty. For what is the utmost that we groan under? How does this declare your power in comparison to this almighty instance of it, which commanded us into being, when we were not?

102

How does this deserve the imputation of rigour, when set against that infinite mercy which in wonderful pity redeemed and restored us to happiness and life, when sin had reduced us to a condition so lost and desperate, that even our being had become a curse to us?

I am abundantly convinced that the events of this life are not left to the rash, uncertain hits of blind chance, but are under the steady governance and wise disposal of your good providence (Wis 11.24;⁸ Mat 6. 30). I know you love and take care of all your creatures, but more especially your faithful servants, who repose all their hope and confidence in your mercy, and in this

⁸ **Wis 11:24** For you love all the things that are, and abhor nothing which you have made: for you would never have made any thing, if you had hated it.

confidence cheerfully commit themselves and all their affairs to you. In this persuasion, I most humbly pray that you would deal with me not according to my sins, which have made me liable to your angry justice, but after your own great mercy, which far exceeds not only mine, but the whole world's offences. And may it please you, when you think fit to scourge my outward man, to strengthen my inward with the grace of constancy and unwearied patience — that even in the bitterest anguish of my soul, your goodness may still be acknowledged most thankfully, and your praise at no time depart out of my mouth. Pity me, O Lord, and help me, according to what you see necessary for me, both in body and soul. You know all things, and can do all things, and live forever, and therefore will, I hope, consider my needs and my infirmities, and extend mercy and relief in your own time, and your own way, which is always sure to be best and most expedient for us.

103

CHAP. 38. **A devout Prayer for Pardon of Sins.**

O LORD Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who with hands stretched out upon the cross, submitted to drink the bitter cup of sufferings inconceivable, for the redemption of all mankind, grant to hear and help me this day: behold a wretch in extreme poverty, addressing the endless treasure of your rich mercy! O, do not send me away empty and despised! I come with all the cravings of spiritual hunger; let my soul, I pray you, be filled with good things; at least do not deny me some sustenance.

And first of all, my dearest Saviour, I freely turn my own accuser, and so confess against myself all those transgressions and pollutions which render me unworthy of the least of your mercies. *Behold, I was shaped in wickedness, and in sin my mother conceived and bore me* (Psa 51.5). But from this defilement, you have been pleased to wash and sanctify me. O that I had been as careful to preserve my purity! But with shame I own that I have defiled myself anew with more and greater, and more inexcusable sins. Those I was born in, I could not prevent; they were not my fault so much as my misfortune. But the filth that I have wallowed in since, was entirely of my own choice and contracting; and the transgressions that I am most concerned about, have been in the strictest sense, my proper act and deed.

Indeed, to add yet more to my confusion, I cannot help but call to mind the great advantages of doing better, which you, according to your usual mercy, have been pleased to afford me. You have separated me from the conversation of sinners, and put into my heart good resolutions of avoiding their seducements, and following you; of assembling with the generation of those who seek your face and walk in the paths of righteousness; of abandoning a sensual life, and devoting myself to a mortified and spiritual and divine life.

104

And insensible and ungrateful wretch that I am, in return for such inestimable benefits, I have, even since my entrance upon this better course, done many and grievous things against your holy laws, and my own good intentions! Instead of amending and forsaking my sins, I have added greatly to their number. Thus have I dishonoured my God, and with pride and vainglory, and many other natural deformities, I have stained and defaced that image of His in which I was created; my poor soul is tormented and afflicted, wounded and destroyed, with the dismal prospect of this.

Behold, O Lord, *my wickednesses have gone over my head, and have become like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear* (Psa 38.4). And unless you, *whose property is always to spare, and to have mercy*, are pleased to put out your hand, and keep me from sinking, I will be irrecoverably lost, and swallowed up in the great deep. Harken, O Lord, to my cry; look down

and behold my misery, how proudly the adversary of souls insults me, saying, *God has forsaken him, I will pursue him, and take him, for there is none to deliver him. But you, O Lord, how long will you forget me? Turn, I beseech you, and deliver my soul; O save me for your mercies' sake* (Psa 71.11; 6.3, 4). Have compassion on your child whom you have made such, at the expense of infinite travail and pain; and do not remember my wickedness, so far as to forget your own goodness. What father is he, who would refuse to rescue his son from destruction? Or, what son is he who never offended, and whom the most affectionate parent does not chasten with the rod of his love?

105

Consider, therefore, O my Lord and Father, that though I am a sinner, I am still yours; I cannot cease to be so by a double title, for you are the author and giver, not only of my first and natural life, but of my second, my spiritual and better life. Since therefore I have sinned, correct me as you see expedient: but when your corrections have reformed me, deliver me up to your Son. *Can a mother forget the fruit of her womb?* (Isa 49.15). No, even if she were to forget, You, our kinder Father, have declared that you will *not* forget your children. Behold I cry, and you do not hearken; I am tormented, and you do not comfort me. What shall I do, or to whom shall I turn, when destitute of my only support, and cast out of the sight of your eyes?

Wretched creature! How great is the happiness from which I have fallen, how great the misery into which I have fallen! Where was I going, and to where have I come at last? Where am I, and where am I not? What bliss was I making towards, and what horrors do I groan under? I aimed at peace and joy, but behold perplexity and misery! I die, and my Jesus is not with me; and surely it would be better for me not to be at all, than to be without my Jesus; better not to live, than to live without him, who is the very life of my life.

But, O my dearest Jesus, *where are your tender mercies, and your loving kindnesses which have been ever of old? Will the Lord keep his anger forever, and will he no longer be entreated?* Be favourable, I beseech you; and do not turn your face away from him now, for whose redemption you did not previously turn *from shame and spitting* (Isa 50.6). I confess, O Lord, that I am a sinner, a great and grievous sinner. My conscience reproaches me with guilt continually, and sets before my eyes that hell and damnation which, I am sadly sensible, are the deserved wages of my evil doings.

106

I know too, that no remorse, no repentance of mine can be a sufficient satisfaction to your offended justice; and therefore I take sanctuary in your mercy alone; that mercy which can never be overpowered by any greatness, any number of offences. I beseech you, most merciful Lord, do not still write bitter things against me, nor *enter into judgement with your servant*; but *according to the multitude of your mercies, blot out all my offences* (Psa 143.2; 51.1). O what will become of me on that dreadful day, when the books of all consciences are laid open, and the Judge says of me. *This is the man, and these are his works!* What shall I do, or where shall I flee, when the heavens declare my unrighteousness, and the earth rises up against, and opens her mouth to me? Alas! I will not have one word to allege in my own vindication or excuse, no plea to make, barring the sentence passing upon me; but with a guilty and dejected countenance, I will stand trembling and amazed before your judgment seat.

O misery! misery! What shall I say? I will cry to you, my Lord and God; for why should I perish, and languish away in silence? And yet, if I speak, my pains will not be assuaged; and if I hold my peace, I am racked with secret anguish. *Mourn, my soul, mourn and weep*, like a disconsolate widow over the husband of her youth. Howl, wretched thing, and lament, because your spouse, your Christ, has divorced you in his displeasure. No, but O mighty avenger, do not let loose your indignation upon me; for it is not in the nature of a mortal to withstand the power of your wrath.

Have mercy, lest I sink in utter despair; and when my guilty reflections deject me most, let me find some refreshing glance of hope, that I not be entirely swallowed up in guilt and confusion.

107

'Tis true, I have lost that innocence which should preserve me, and given you just reason to damn me: but you have not, *cannot*, have lost that property which is used to prevail for the salvation of those who have deserved damnation.

You, O Lord, do not will the death of a sinner, nor do you take any pleasure in the destruction of him that dies (Eze 18.32); so far from that, that you yourself have died with the intent that those who before were dead, might live. Your death has killed the death of sinners, and from the instant you died, their life commenced (2Cor 5.15). Since, therefore, our living depended upon your dying, do not allow me to die, I beseech you, now that you are restored to life forevermore. But if your death reconciled me, much more let your life save me (Rom 5. 10). *Send down your hand from above, and deliver me from the hand of my enemies; do not let them triumph over me, nor let them say, We have devoured him* (Psa 144.7; 35.25).

Who, blessed Jesus, who can ever allow himself to distrust your mercy and goodness, after having reconciled us to God, and ransomed us from hell and death, with your own dearest blood, even when we were rebels and declared enemies? (Rom 5.8, 9). Under the shelter of this mercy, I dare approach the throne of grace; and thus protected and encouraged, I *run*, I *call*, I *cry* for pardon, and knock importunately, incessantly, till you open, and take pity upon me. For if you, of your own mere motion, call us to a pardon which we never sought, then how shall we not much rather obtain a pardon on our own request, and that request be grounded upon the encouragements, commands, and promises which you yourself have given us?

Do not look upon me, therefore, sweetest Saviour, in the capacity of a sinner who would awaken your justice; but consider me as your creature, and let that soften and enlarge the heart of your mercy.

108

Do not remember your anger to which guilt has made me liable, but remember your never-failing compassions, of which my misery renders me a fit object. Overlook my pride which incensed you, and observe my humility and affliction which implores you. And what indeed is *Jesus*, but a Saviour? By the importance of your blessed name, and by all that goodness which so fully answered its most extensive signification — arise, I adjure you, to *help me*; and *say to my poor soul, I am your salvation* (Psa 35.3). I entertain very assured expectations of your bounty, because you have taught me to ask, and seek, and knock (Mat 7.7). And therefore, what I do is not an act of bold and rash presumption, but of proper trust and faithful obedience.

You therefore, Lord, who commanded me to *ask*, grant that I may *receive*; you have put me to *seeking*, let me be happy in *finding*; you have bid me *knock*, *open* when I do so; strengthen a *weak*, restore a *lost*, raise and quicken a *dead wretch*; and be graciously pleased to direct and govern my several faculties, senses, thoughts and actions, in doing what is well-pleasing in your sight — that, for the future, I may serve you, live to you, and entirely devote myself to obeying you. I know, O Lord, the *whole* of what I am is your due, as my Creator; I am sensible that *more* than I am is your due, as my Redeemer. And if I had it, I would owe you as much more than I am, as you — who gave yourself to be man for my sake — are greater than the man for whom you were given. But this poor *self* is all I have to offer in return, and even *this* I could not offer without you. Accept me, therefore, I beseech you, and draw me to yourself, that I may from now on be yours by imitation and resemblance, by obedience and love — who am already all your own, as your creature and your purchase. Even yours, O sweetest Saviour, who live and reign, for ever and ever, *Amen*.

CHAP. 39. A Useful Prayer.

O LORD God Almighty, three persons, and one substance, eternal and omnipresent, before all, and in all, God blessed forever! I consecrate to your use, and commit into your custody, this day and for my whole life, my body and my soul, my sight and hearing, my taste, touch, and smelling; all my thoughts and affections; my words and actions; all without, and all within me; my sensitive and intellectual faculties, my imagination and memory; my faith and my perseverance; beseeching you in mercy to take charge of them day and night, and keep them safe from all the dangers and temptations which beset me, and which attempt to enter at these avenues every hour and moment. Hear me, O blessed holy Trinity, and preserve me from all evil, and all scandal, and especially from all deadly sin. Protect me from the subtle treachery, and violent assaults, and perpetual hostilities of evil spirits; and shield me from the malice of all my enemies, visible and invisible; and under your mighty protection, conduct me safe at last to those blissful mansions which you have prepared for those who love you, inhabited by patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, confessors and virgins, and all the holy men and women who have walked in fear of You, and done the will of their heavenly Father faithfully from the beginning of the world. Root out from me, I pray you, all confident boasting, spiritual pride, arrogance and haughtiness of spirit, and beat down my soul with true compunction for my sins, and a profound unaffected humility.

110

Open a vent for the tears of repentance; and when you have softened this rock within my breast, let those streams gush out abundantly (Psa 78.20). Deliver me, O Lord, *from the snare of the hunter*, and do not let my soul fall prey to those who seek its ruin, but keep me ever safe and steadfast in the performance of your will. *Teach me to do the thing that pleases you, for you are my God* (Psa 143.10). Give me a right judgment and a perfect understanding of Divine truths, that I may have worthy apprehensions of your unmeasurable goodness. Direct my prayers to you on all occasions, and let me ask for those things which you delight to give, and are best for me to receive. Kindle in my heart a holy zeal, such as may incline your mercy effectually to blot out the remembrance of all my past offences committed against your Divine majesty. *O Lord, hear; O Lord hearken and act: Do not delay for your own sake, O my God* (Dan 9.19). If you reject my petitions, and *turn away your face, I die*; if you show the light of your countenance, *I am renewed to life* (Psa 104.29, 30). If you regard my righteousness only, alas! this is no better than filth and pollution, and by your account I shall be no better than a loathsome carcass. But if you look upon me in your mercy, this raises my dead putrefying body from the grave of sin, and breathes into me again a life of righteousness and hope. Remove far from me whatever is odious and offensive to your pure eyes, and plant in me a spirit of charity and cleanness, that I may *lift up holy hands in prayer* (1Tim 2.8), and not bring such a sacrifice as is an abomination to my God. Put away from me all hurtful things, and give me such things as be profitable for me. O you blessed physician of souls, grant me balm for my wounds, and proper medicines to heal my spiritual diseases.

111

Possess my heart with your fear, with meekness and reverence, grant me unfeigned faith, a clean conscience, and a true charity, a tender regard to the good of my brethren; let me never favour or forget my own miscarriages, nor ever be inquisitive after, or severe with, the faults or failings of other people.

O be gracious and compassionate to my poor soul, to my frailties and transgressions. Visit me in my weakness, heal my sickness, refresh my languishings, and revive me from spiritual death. O

that there were in me a heart that might always fear you, a soul that might always love you, an understanding that might rightly apprehend and conceive worthily of you; ears ever open to hear you; eye, ever fixed and intent to see you. Have pity upon me, O my God, have pity upon me; and from the throne of your majesty on high, cast down a compassionate look; scatter the thick night of ignorance and error, and enlighten my dark soul with the bright beams of your holy Spirit. Give me the knowledge of discerning between good and evil; and help me to keep a constant watchful guard over myself — that I may see the things which belong to my peace, and carefully eschew all those seducements that would betray me into irrecoverable ruin. Above all, I beg free and full remission of my manifold and grievous sins, of you, my Lord, who died to purchase it; and that, by and through you I may find effectual propitiation, and comfort, and mercy, in *all times of my tribulation*, and anguish of heart, in all my necessities and distresses, but especially *in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment*. Finally, O Lord, grant to bestow on me everlasting life, not for any works which I have done (let them only be pardoned, and that is sufficient, a reward they cannot deserve), but for your manifold and great mercy, upon which I throw myself entirely, as the only refuge and hope of sinners and unprofitable servants.

112

And now, O Lord Jesus Christ, permit, I pray you, your unworthy servant to express his charity, by enlarging these petitions; and let them prevail for blessings not only on myself, but others. Grant to all princes and governors, that they may rule your people in justice and your fear; and establish the thrones of those who do so in righteousness and peace. Inspire your ministers with truth and zeal, that they may agree in a right understanding of your holy word, and diligently and unanimously prosecute their great work, by setting forth your glory, and setting forward the salvation of all men. Let your favour be ever present with your holy catholic church, and every member of it, men and women, priests and people, all who believe in you, all who labour in your love; increase their graces daily, and enable them to faithfully improve and persevere in every good word and work. Assist all your servants with such kinds and degrees of your grace, as are suitable to their respective conditions. Inspire all virgins with chastity and modesty, all persons devoted to your service with heavenly-mindedness and purity, all married pairs with fidelity and mutual love. To all repenting sinners grant pardon and consolation; to all widows and orphans, sustenance and relief; to the helpless and oppressed, protection and justice; to all travellers, a safe return home; to all in sorrow and trouble, patience and comfort; to all who are at sea, their desired port; and to everyone tossed on the waves of this troublesome world, the haven of salvation, and the land of everlasting life. Enable those who are strong, to stand; help those who are growing in goodness, to prosper and improve daily more and more; and to all who live in sin, to wretched me in particular, give the grace of speedy recollection, and effectual amendment.

113

O sweetest and most merciful Jesus, Son of the living God, and Saviour of the world! I acknowledge that I am a most unworthy, most miserable sinner; but you, O father of mercies, who have compassion on all, will not allow me to perish, nor cast me utterly out of your sight: if that had been your intention, you would have cut me off in the midst of my wickedness, and not have allowed me space or disposition to repent. Since, therefore, you are pleased to still forbear punishment, and to grant me a truce, give me a heart, as you have given me opportunities, to make my peace with you. Influence my mind powerfully, that I may seek, and desire, and love you above all things, and fear above all to offend you, and be careful constantly to please you.

Lastly, O God, and Father, blessed forever, I entreat you for all those who make charitable mention of me in their prayers, and all who have desired to be recommended to your favour, in those of the least and most unworthy of your servants: for all who have done me any good offices, or are in any degree related to me, that you would hear them for me, and me for them; and according to your bounteous mercy, preserve and govern them, and return all their kindness

and charity sevenfold into their bosom. That you would impart liberally to all who are yet engaged in their Christian warfare, the succours of your grace; and in your own good time, to all who have happily finished their course, the consummation of reward and glory. And O you, who are *Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end*, once more I repeat that most important request, that when the time appointed for my great change comes, you will in mercy stand by me at my last hours; strengthen me in my great conflict, support me in my dying agonies, pluck me out of the jaws of the ravening wolf, who will then stand ready to seize and devour me;

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defend me from his terrors and accusations, and take me for your own: so shall I be received into the blessed company of saints and angels in your heavenly paradise, there to rejoice, and live, and reign with you forever, who are over all, God blessed forever. *Amen*, sweet Jesus, *Amen*.

CHAP. 40. **Devout Reflections upon the Sufferings of Christ.**

O LORD Jesus Christ, who are *made to me from God* redemption, and mercy, and salvation! (1Cor 1.30) I praise you, I bless you, I render thanks to you, but thanks that are by no means proportional to the inestimable benefits for which they are due — thanks that are wretchedly defective in their zeal and devotion, which ought to warm this frozen heart of mine upon every remembrance of you — not such that I am sensible I owe, yet the best my soul can, with its utmost efforts, reach up to. Hope of my heart, and strength of my soul, let your power supply what my weakness cannot attain: may your fervent love make up for my lukewarm affection. For though I have not yet been able to love you so much as I should, yet if sincerity can be accepted instead of perfection, my conscience supports me with this testimony: that I nonetheless desire, and wish with all my soul, that I were able to love you as much as I ought to do.

O Light shed from above into my soul, from whom no secrets are hidden! You see my inward parts, and are conscious to all my desires. If any good is there, 'tis of your inspiring: if this desire of loving you is good (because I am sure it is), and it is from you, enable me to perform what you have made me to desire, and grant that I may love you to a degree as exalted as you require.

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I offer to you thanks and praises; do not let that gift be barren, producing no worthy fruit in me, a gift you have communicated of your own free grace — but crown and perfect your own work. And as your goodness first prevented me with holy desires,⁹ moved by no deserts of mine, so I beseech you, continue the same grace, in granting those desires their just accomplishment. Awaken my stupidity, quicken my deadness, and change my cold indifference into a most sensible and fervent zeal; for this is the aim and end of all my prayers, this is the proper effect of all my reflections upon you and all your benefits: that the more I converse with you, and the more often I remember you, the more vehemently I may love you.

It was your goodness, O Lord, that created me at first. It was your mercy that, when I was created, cleansed me from the stain of original sin; it was your power which preserved me after the sanctification of baptism; it was your clemency, your bounty, your long suffering, which, notwithstanding my numberless actual provocations since, has forborne, sustained, and waited for my amendment. You, Lord, have long expected the return of your prodigal child; and I, but not, alas! with equal carefulness, wait for the inspiration of your grace, to work in me repentance and holiness of life. My God, my Maker, you who spare me, you who sustain me, I hunger and

⁹ Apart from God's intervening (preventing) grace, we would continue in our bondage to sin and death. We are born again, born from above (Joh 3.3), enabled to see the kingdom — granted a new heart with holy desires (Eze 36.26).

thirst after you, I gasp for and pant after you; and just as a darling but desolate child, debarred of his most indulgent father's presence, weeps and laments incessantly, and thinks of, and longs for nothing but his beloved company, and wears the image of his face perpetually in his heart — so too, I am moved by the tenderest impressions, and with an eager impatience, I lament my distance from you.

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I often think upon, and am very sensibly affected by (though not as sensibly as I wish and ought to be) your sorrows and sufferings, your buffetings and scourges, your reproaches and revilings, your wounds and expiring agonies; how you were killed and crucified; how you were embalmed and buried; and with that, how gloriously you rose again; and how triumphantly you ascended up into heaven — and all this for me, sinful man, and for my salvation. These things I believe with a most steadfast faith; and in virtue of that persuasion, I bewail the miseries of my pilgrimage and exile from you. I propose no other comfort for myself comparable to that of my Lord's return to me, and I most ardently desire, as the sum and source of all my happiness, to see your beauteous face forever in your glory.

Say if you can, my soul, how you would have been affected if you had seen this Lord in person; seen the King of angels emptying himself of majesty, and condescending to converse with men, that men might be exalted to live and converse with angels; seen your offended God die to reconcile vile offenders to himself, and thus prevent their everlasting death. O what expressions, what conceptions, what wonder can be great enough for this unparalleled, this amazing love and goodness! But draw a little nearer yet, my soul, and take a more distinct view of this tragic, this astonishing scene. Could you have seen your dearest Saviour's side pierced with a spear, and would not the same weapon have pierced through your own heart also? Could you have stood by and beheld the hands and feet of him that created you, torn with nails and fastened to the cross, and the blood which redeemed you gushing out in streams, and not yourself have sunk and even expired with grief and horror at the sight?

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Say then with this (but *that* you cannot say), why with such a slender impression and concern, you now read, and hear, and meditate upon these things which, when seen by the eye of faith, are as certain as if you were present to that of the body. Why do you not drink up the bitter cup of tears, since your Jesus drank that cup of his Father's wrath for you? Why do you not feel a grief too deep to be described, like that of his virgin-mother when she saw her innocent and only son bound and scourged, tortured and slain before her face? For the relation here, too, is most close and dear: just as your Lord was her flesh and bones, so are you the Lord's, a member of that body of which he is the head?

If I, with holy *Joseph*, had taken my Lord down from the cross, wrapped him in spices, and laid him in the sepulchre, how happy should I have really esteemed myself, that any officious respect of mine had contributed to the honour of his interment? What glad astonishment should I have felt, if I had been in the company of those zealous women who were frightened with a vision of angels, and heard that comfortable, that reviving message, *Fear not; you seek Jesus who was crucified: he is not here, for he is risen* (Mat 28.5, 6). These, dearest Lord, were moving objects, which your providence did not think fit to give me a bodily sight of; but I behold them all by a distinct and undoubted faith. I see the pledges and memorials of them daily in your blessed sacraments. And though I was not allowed to kiss your scars, and drop my tears into the print of the spear and nails, yet as often as I approach your table with deep remorse and due reverence, I weep there over your crucified body, contemplate there the pangs of your bitter death, rejoice there in the triumphs of your resurrection, receive there the effectual representation of all that you have done and suffered for me;

and by a holy union with you and all your members, I attain a greater privilege than any conversation with you in the days of your flesh could have conferred. You are for all intents the same Saviour; and if those who saw you were blessed because they believed, yet your own mouth declared that I am no less *blessed, who have not seen, and yet have believed* (Joh 20.29).

But still, the sight of you — of your beauties and your glory — is the constant desire, the only end and noble reward of our faith; and in this clouded disconsolate interval, till *that* can be obtained, my soul finds itself frequently at a loss as to how to express itself, what to do, where to bend its course, or where to find its much-loved Lord. Who shall tell my spouse how I languish for him — how my joy is turned into heaviness, and my laughter into mourning, for want of his dear presence? *My flesh and my heart fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever* (Psa 73.26). My soul refuses comfort from another hand but yours, my joy and treasure; *for whom have I in heaven, but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides you* (Psa 73.25). You have commanded me to seek your face, and my heart most readily replies, *Your face, Lord, will I seek; O do not turn your face from me, nor cast away your servant in displeasure* (Psa 27.8, 9).

O most affectionate lover of souls, *the poor commits himself to you, and you are the helper of the fatherless* (Psa 10.14). O my most faithful guardian, preserve and pity me; I am an orphan destitute of friends, and my soul is in a state of poverty and widowhood. Look upon the tears I shed for your absence in this desolate condition; and come Lord Jesus, come to me quickly, that I may be comforted; show me your face, and I shall be satisfied;

reveal your glory, and my joy shall be full. My flesh and *my soul thirst and pant for you, the living God*, the fountain of life, *O when shall I come and appear before God?* (Psa 42.1, 2).

When will my comforter, whom I so earnestly look for, make his approaches to me? When, O when shall I feel the joy I so passionately desire, and be filled with the pleasures of that glorious dwelling which I hope to reach at the end of this wearisome journey of life? Lord, if I may not yet drink of *the river of your pleasures*, let me at east drink of *the brook on the way*. Let my tears be my food and drink day and night, till the dawn of that glorious morning when my soul should be awakened with that most welcome call, *Behold your spouse, your Lord, the marriage of the Lamb has come* (Psa 65.9; 110.7; Rev 19.7). All I presume to ask at present is refreshment and support under my sorrows; and that these may be such as will one day be turned into joy; for I know my Redeemer will come, because he is merciful and true; nor will he suspend my happiness by unnecessary delay, because he *loves those who love him, and those who seek him early shall be sure to find him* (Pro 8.17). To whom therefore be glory and praise for ever and ever. *Amen.*

End of the First Book of Meditations.

Book II. OF THE LOVE OF GOD.

CHAP. 1. Narrow the Way that Leads to Life.

BY what means we may avoid the torments of hell, and attain the joys of heaven, is an enquiry which deserves our most attentive application of thought; a science to be learned at the expense of our most watchful care, and most solicitous concern. And in this study, 'tis of great consequence to set out right; for all our most assiduous endeavours will be employed to very little purpose, if we are not first instructed in what way leads to everlasting bliss, and carries us out from all danger of everlasting misery. 'Twill therefore behooove us to very diligently consider those words of the apostle in *1Cor* 2, which taken in their just latitude, plainly teach us these *two* things: first, that the glories of the blessed in a future state, are greater than can be expressed; and then, secondly, what is the way by which we must arrive at this blessedness. *Eye*, he says, *has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God has prepared for those who love him* (*1Cor* 2.9). Now, when he tells us that these excellent things are prepared for those who love God, from there the inference is natural and plain, that love is the condition enjoined in order to obtain them.

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But then, the scripture makes it no less evident that the love of God, and the love of our neighbour, are virtues, inseparable from each other. For thus much is the importance of that passage in St. John, *He who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God, love his brother also* (*1Joh* 4.20, 21). It seems that true charity consists in these two parts, to which St. Paul has given so glorious a character when he closes his discourse about the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit with those remarkable words, *And yet I show you a more excellent way* (*1Cor* 12.31). Charity, then, is not only the way, but the *best*, no, the *only* way that leads to our heavenly country; for 'tis impossible for any man ever to come there by any other way. But who is it that knows or walks in this way? Even he that loves God and his brother. It will concern us, then, to be perfectly well informed what are the proper expressions of our love to each other, and the just measures of our affection to God and to our neighbour. And of this point, it may suffice to say that we are bound in duty to love God *more than ourselves*, and to love our neighbour *as ourselves*. Now, we love God more than ourselves when, on all occasions, we prefer his will before our own, and allow no private interest or sensual inclination to come in competition with his commands, and his honour. But it is very observable that, although we are enjoined to love our neighbour *as ourselves*, yet we are nowhere enjoined to love him *as much as we do ourselves*. And therefore, our duty in this respect is satisfied when we heartily wish and endeavour all that good to our neighbour, which we ought to wish and endeavour to attain for ourselves, especially the everlasting happiness of the soul;

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when we contribute to his obtaining it, and we omit no instance by which our help may be of any use to him in procuring any advantage (whether temporal or spiritual) so far as the present circumstances of affairs render our assistance timely; and our own condition puts it in our power to be serviceable to him. This explication agrees exactly with the equity of our Lord's rule, *Whatever you would have men do to you, do even so to them* (*Mat* 7.12). And it shows us, likewise, the necessity of that other rule left to us by St. John, *Let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth* (*1Joh* 3.18). But it may be asked once more, who are those neighbours whom we are bound to love in this manner? And to this the answer is very short, that the command is of unlimited extent, and comprehends all mankind: whether they are

Christians, Jews, or infidels; whether they are acquaintances or strangers; whether they are friends or enemies.

CHAP. 2.

Upon what accounts, and in what manner, we ought to love God.

BUT in regard, this duty is of such infinite consequence, and the whole of our hopes and happiness depends upon the due performance of it, that it is very necessary that we diligently consider what the grounds are of this obligation, and by what means it may be discharged. Now, nothing will conduce to begetting, cherishing, and heightening in our minds, a holy love towards God, so much as a frequent recollection and just estimate of his wonderful goodness, and of his innumerable benefits to us.

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For indeed, the blessings he gives us of his own mere motion, are so many and so great, and the recompense he gives us in return for any services we pay him, is so exceeding disproportionate to what we have reason to expect, that our souls must of necessity be at a loss, and perfectly confounded with amazement, at the number and the value of the favours we receive at his hands. But though these are so inestimably great that 'tis impossible for us to make such a return of love, and thanks, and obedience as they deserve, yet it is sure that we are bound to make the best we can; and by our diligence to pay to the utmost of our ability, remembering that the vast arrears are still charged to our account, not from any lack of will, but merely from the lack of power to clear so great a debt. And thus, my soul, you have an answer to the first inquiry propounded in this chapter, which concerned the ground of this duty. For therefore, our Lord is to be most affectionately loved by us, because he is so wonderfully compassionate and tender, so kind and bountiful, and he pours out his benefits upon us in such abundance — and all this is not from any manner of desert or worth in us, that might engage his favour; but it is of his own goodwill and mere motion, of which we are able to render no other reason than this: that *he will have mercy, because he delights in, and will have mercy* (Rom 9.15).

The other inquiry, *how this God is to be loved*, that command which enjoins the duty, makes the answer sufficiently plain. And what a strict observance of this command is required from us, we may easily infer from the terms in which it is expressed, and the solemnity used in laying it upon us. Hear then, O man, *the first and great commandment*; hearken to it attentively, remember it exactly, meditate upon it incessantly, and use your very utmost efforts to fulfil it without delay, without intermission, without end, or ever supposing that you have done so much, that you are at liberty to desist from any fresh instances of your regard to it.

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All this is implied in that awakening preface, by which God introduces it: *Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord* (Deu 6.4). Now the command itself runs thus: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength* (Mat 22.37). This is as if to say that our intellectual faculties — the understanding, the will, and the memory — should all be fixed on *this* as on their best and proper object: that God should be the subject of our study; that he should preside over all our inclinations, be the ultimate end of all our desires, dwell always present in our thoughts, and reign supreme as the governing principle of all our actions. In a word, that we should contemplate, and choose, and remember, and reverence Him above all, and make it our business to live to Him alone.

How men come so easily to satisfy themselves with being so extremely negligent in this most necessary branch of their obedience, is very difficult to conceive, unless it is from this: that lacking a due sense of the greatness of God's love, they proportion their regard to him according to their own scanty notions of his goodness toward them. And therefore, my soul, to prevent this

fault in you, attend with reverence, and thankfully recollect the innumerable benefits which he has bestowed upon you; and the many precious promises he has made to you. And then I have no doubt that what you have already, and what you are warranted to hope for hereafter, will sufficiently convince you that you are under the highest obligations to love God with a most fervent and entire affection.

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Now, in order to exercise and increase this love more effectually, begin your considerations where God began the expressions of his goodness, and think seriously with yourself, by whom, upon what motive, and to what purpose man was created, and what things God was pleased to create besides, for the sake and service of men.

First, then, we must understand, that there is but one cause which produced all created beings, whether they are things in heaven, or things on earth, whether they are visible or invisible. That this sole, this universal cause, was none other than the goodness of their Creator, who is the one true God — whose essential goodness is so large, and so communicative, that he was pleased to make others partakers of that blessedness which he enjoys from and to all eternity, and which he saw was capable of being imparted without any possibility of suffering diminution by being thus diffused. That good, therefore, which is his very nature, and in which his own happiness consists, He thus showed abroad, not by necessity, but free choice, because 'tis the property of the supreme Good to will the good of others; and 'tis the excellence of supreme Power to exert itself, not to the prejudice, but to the benefit of all who are subject to it. Now, because this blessedness of God cannot otherwise be partaken of, but by being understood — and the more perfectly it is understood, the more plentifully it is imparted — God was pleased to make rational creatures; and to give them a capacity of *understanding* the supreme Good, of *having* what they thus understood, of *possessing* this best object of their love, and of *enjoying* what they so possessed. This rational part of the creation is so ordered, that part of it retains its essential purity without being united to any bodily substance — such are the angels; another part is joined to the body — and such is the soul of man. Rational creatures, then, are either incorporeal or corporeal: the incorporeal are angels, for these are simple spirits.

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The corporeal are men, so called because the human nature consists not only of a reasonable soul, but also of a fleshy body. So then, the rational creature having any existence, and particularly having this *kind* of existence, is to be imputed wholly to the goodness of Almighty God, as its original impulsive cause. Men, then, and angels, were both created by the goodness of God. For we exist at all, because God is good; and the whole of that being which we receive from God, is good. But to what purpose were these rational creatures made? Surely to praise God, and to love him, and to enjoy him. In all this, it is not the Creator's, but the *creature's* advantage that is considered; for God is absolutely perfect and happy in himself, and cannot receive either addition or diminution from any of the works of His own hands. The only uses, then, that can be served by making such creatures as these, and the only account that can be given as to why they were made at all, must be the illustration of the Creator's goodness, and the promoting of the creature's happiness. Therefore, when the question is asked why, or to what end, rational creatures were made, the true answer undoubtedly is this: that they were made because God was good, and to the intent that they might be happy: for what can conduce to their happiness so much as to serve him, and to enjoy him?

CHAP. 3. **How God made all Things for Man.**

WHEN God is said to have made angels or men for himself, we must not so mistake this expression, as to foolishly imagine that He who made both, had any need of either; or that the

acknowledgments and services which he gave them a capacity to pay, are any addition to the felicity of His bliss and glory.

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For, how unworthily we would conceive of our Creator's majesty, by thinking that anything which we call ours, or is most valuable in us, could increase or take away from His blessedness? No, He made us to serve him, but it was because his service is *freedom*, it is an *honour*; and to be such subjects, is truly to be kings. This service redounds wholly to the profit of him who pays it, but not at all to His, to whom it is paid. And, as God made man for himself, so He likewise made the world for man; that is, so as to minister to man's use and comfort. Man, then, is placed in a middle and subordinate station, so as to be under authority himself, yet to have servants under him too; and thus all things are most admirably contrived to our advantage, when both the homage we pay, and that which is paid to us, flows into one common channel, and all unites at last in our advantage, as in its proper centre. God will be served by man for this reason: that not He, but man, may reap the benefit of that service. Again, God will have man served by the world, so that by this service, man may also be the gainer. So that, we may with due reverence say that the whole design of the creation, and every part of it, may at last be reduced to the happiness of man, since both that which was made for him, and that for which he himself was made, mutually conspire to make him happy. Thus *all things*, as the apostle says, *are ours* (1Cor 3.21), whether they are things above us, or on a level with us, or below us. The things above us are for our enjoyment, and such is God. Those on the level with us are for our society, and such are angels, whom I presume to call our equals, not only with regard to the same rational nature, but chiefly in prospect of our future state.

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For we are assured that however superior they are to us now in several respects, yet in the next world, the children of the resurrection shall be *as they are* (Mat 22.30), and shall live with them forever in heaven. The things below us are likewise ours; for we have the use and convenience of them, as the masters' goods are (in a true but qualified sense) said to be their servants. Not that this gives them a property exclusive of their masters, but it extends the benefit and the privilege of using them. Indeed, even the angels, in some passages of scripture, are said to do us service. Nor did the apostle think it any disparagement to their character and dignity, when he called them *all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who will be heirs of salvation* (Heb 1.14). This is a very great honour; but it is one that we should not have any difficulty believing will be done to us, when we reflect upon that so much more astonishing condescension of the Creator and King of angels, who describes the end of his coming into the world in these very humble terms: *he did not come to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many* (Mat 20.28). The angels are said to offer up prayers to God — not that they instruct him what we do, or what we ask; for he knows all things exactly as they are, even before they are; and therefore, He cannot possibly be ignorant of them afterwards. But they attend his pleasure on these occasions; they execute his orders; and what they know God had decreed, they are sometimes instruments of accomplishing; and sometimes they are messengers too, to give notice to the parties concerned. Thus the angel tells *Tobias* that he *brought the remembrance of his prayers before the Holy One*; and that there are some *spirits whose office it is to present the prayers of the saints, and to go in and out before the throne of God* (Tob 12.15).¹⁰ And all this is, in a sense, very agreeable to what we do when *we* pray.

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¹⁰ KJA **Tobit 12:15** I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One.

For neither is this religious exercise designed to inform God of our wishes or our wants; but it is necessary that reasonable creatures should refer all their temporal occasions to the judgment and disposal of eternal Truth — either by asking what they think fit to be done for them, or by desiring to know what He sees fit to be done *with* them, and *by* them. So that a principle of marvellous charity invites the holy angels from their mansions of bliss in heaven, that they may suggest good counsel in our difficulties, that they may visit and comfort us in our distresses and suffering, and that they may succour us in our conflicts and dangers. They perform all these good offices with the greatest cheerfulness and vigilance imaginable, upon God's, upon ours, and upon their own account. Upon *God's*, because they love and admire that reverence of their own excellences which appear in our nature; and upon their *own*, because they hope and wish to see their numbers recruited by the spirits of just men made perfect, and received into the place of the fallen angels.

CHAP. 4. Of the Love of God towards us.

FIRST, then, it is necessary that every man take a distinct view of himself; and when he has arrived at a due understanding of the honourable post God has placed him in, that he be careful not to dishonour himself, nor injure his Maker, by setting his affections on things below, or that are unworthy of his character. For objects which, considered singly and separately, may appear beautiful and lovely, they yet deservedly sink in esteem when compared with others that are confessedly more excellent.

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It argues great folly to put things that are manifestly deformed and vile, on the same level as those which are amiable and handsome. And is it a point of wisdom to raise those which have a noble and real excellence — depending neither on mere fancy, nor the lowest rank of beauties — to an equal degree with the highest and most eminently good? Consider, then, my soul, what excellences you are endued with, and taking your measures from them, which excellences deserve your love. Now, what if through negligence, or long disuse of the most exalted objects, your eyes are so far blinded that you cannot entertain such lofty ideas of your own condition as the case requires? Yet thus far, at least, conquer your own prejudices so as to learn to make a just estimate of yourself, by the judgment which *another* has made of you. And for this you cannot lack opportunity, because the matter is so plain as to give you sufficient direction. You have a lord and spouse; but how exquisitely beautiful, you do not perfectly know as yet, because you have not seen his face. He sees and knows you thoroughly; for if he had not done so, he would not love you. He has not thought fit to present himself to you before now, but he has made you many noble presents; and he has given you such pledges of his kindness, that they might be at once both assurances and signs of who it is that has betrothed you to himself, and how exceedingly tender that affection is which moved him to this union. If you beheld his charms, there could no longer be ground for doubt. For you would be convinced that one so fair, so heavenly sweet, one of such matchless excellence, could not be smitten with you, if there were not in your form something very graceful, very uncommon, to recommend you, and to engage his love. But meanwhile, how do you behave yourself on this occasion?

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You cannot see him face to face, because he is absent; and is this a sufficient reason for not paying him reverence, for insolently and shamelessly affronting him, for slighting that love which you cannot help but see, and impudently prostituting yourself to the lust of seducing strangers? O, do not treat him in this contemptuous manner! If you cannot as yet know all the charms of your lover, yet you can understand the valuable *instances* of his love. These are already actually in your possession; and if considered as they should be, they will plainly show

you what returns of love it becomes you to make, and how extremely solicitous you should be, not to displease, not to despise, not to lose him or his favour. The pledge he has given you is most extraordinary: a noble gift suited to the majesty of the Giver. And just as it would be below so great a person to bestow a thing of little value, so it would be no less unbecoming of so wise a person, to throw away things of the highest value on one in whom there was little or nothing valuable. Therefore, great is the present he has made, but greater still in his esteem, is that which he loves in you, and which induced him to give it.

But perhaps you ask, My soul, what is this great gift by which your spouse has shown himself to be so very bountiful in bestowing it upon you? Look round this universe, view every part of it, and tell me if you can discover anything there which does not in some way or other, do you service? Is this not the end to which every creature seems to have been designed? And does not the whole course of nature plainly promote it? Gratifying your desires, bringing in your profit, supplying your wants, furnishing a store for your comfort and delights — doing all this in great abundance, considering not only your bare necessities, but even your ease and pleasure.

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This is what the heavens, the earth, the air, the sea, and all the inhabitants and products of each of them, are with a continual and most officious diligence, employed about. The regular revolutions of time, the various seasons of the year, the stated successions of night and day by which the world dies and revives, grows old and young again; its fabric ruined and repaired, its provisions consumed and recruited — all is contrived so admirably for your purpose that, just as none of these vicissitudes are useless, so one cannot conceive how any of them could be spared without some manifest, some insupportable inconvenience. I suppose you are sensible of this. But are you not sensible at the same time, of Who framed and contrived this wonderful order, and disposed every part so advantageously, that whatever discord appears between each other, yet all are unanimous in promoting the common design; and all conspire to do you service? How brutish is it to feed upon the benefit, and remain ignorant of your Benefactor? The gift is evident, and is the Giver a secret? No, your own reason will not allow you such a vain imagination, that these advantages are, on any account, your due, or of your own procuring; rather, it loudly tells you that you owe them all to the liberality of another. Now whoever it is to whose bounty you are so largely indebted, 'tis plain he has given us much; and 'tis no less plain that he who gave so much, would not have done it if he had not loved much. So both the greatness of his affection, and the indispensable obligation to ours in return, are demonstrable from the quality of his gift. Now, how extravagantly foolish is it not to desire the true love of one who has it in his power to be so excellent a friend? How foolish is it not to do it of our own accord, and in regard to our interest, when there is no antecedent obligation? But how impious, how perverse, how base, not to love him in return, who has been so inexpressibly kind to us?

133

If, then, you love other things besides, do it with such limitations as are proper; maintain your character, and remember theirs; love them as things that are below you, as those that were made to do you service, as tokens of your spouse's love, the gift of a friend, the bounty of a master. But be sure *never* to forget whose goodness all these blessings are owing to; and therefore, do not be fond of them for their own sake; but for His sake who bestowed them on you. Nor let them divide your affections with the Donor; for to take them into your heart *together* with Him, is a wrong and great indignity; and therefore, they must be loved *for him*, but he must be loved *by them* and *for them*, and infinitely above them *all*.

CHAP. 5. Of the Fruition of God.

TAKE heed, my soul, that you not incur the reproach of a harlot, by doing like those common prostitutes who have no principle but profit, and value the price of the gift much more than the affection of the giver. You cannot be guilty of a more infamous, of a more injurious affront, than to accept and live upon his presents, and not return his love. Consider well the value of what you have received; or if you are not able (as indeed you are not) to truly estimate the greatness of His bounty, consider still the advantage of loving Him in return. Love him for his own sake; love yourself for his sake; love him that you may enjoy and be happy in him; love yourself that he may love you. Love him in the good things he has bestowed upon you; love him for your own sake, and yourself for his sake. This is pure and chaste love, debased with no sordid interest, embittered with no torment, but delightful and generous, firm and lasting.

134

Think, and recollect diligently, my soul, what mercies you have received in common with all mankind, what special marks of favour, of which all are not allowed to partake, and others which are peculiar to yourself alone. He has loved you in common with all your fellow-creatures; he has distinguished you from many of them by singular blessings; he has shown the same affection to you with all *good* men; he has preferred you before all *evil* men; and if being preferred before the evil ones seems a small thing, reflect further, how very many good men there are, whose blessings have yet come far short of yours.

CHAP. 6. The Mercies of Creation and Regeneration.

FIRST then, my soul, remember that there was a time that you were not at all; and that you ever beginning to be, is the free gift of God. Your very being, then, is an instance of His bounty. But was it possible, that before you had a being, you might give anything to God, which could oblige him to give you that being, by way of recompense for any former kindness on your part? No, certainly it is manifest that you *did not* and *could not* deserve anything at his hands, while you yourself were not as yet anything. Had his liberality then stopped there, and given you only your being, yet this single blessing is great enough to charge your continual praise and love. But He has given you a great deal more than bare existence, by making you a beautiful and glorious creature. Nor did the munificence of this noble benefactor content itself with an inferior degree of beauty, for he has wrought you up to the highest perfection, and formed you into a resemblance of his own Divine excellences.

135

Thus has He drawn those hearts to him by a likeness of nature, which he attracted by the engagements of his love. He gave us being, beauty, and life: that by *existence* we might excel those things that are not; by our *form*, those that are rude, unfinished, or deformed; and by our *life*, those things that are inanimate. How deeply then are you indebted, O my soul, to Him from whom you have received much, when yet you had nothing of your own — and having nothing of your own, have nothing in your power to make a requital with, but only to love Him who gave you all you have? For in recompense of what was given to you out of pure love, you cannot make any less, and you cannot make any greater return, than that of loving Him back. And it is evident that there could not be any other inducement for bestowing all these benefits, than the free love of God alone. But now I will open another and more amazing scene of kindness, by showing you how low this Lord and spouse of yours, whose majesty shone so gloriously bright in your creation, was pleased to condescend in the work of your regeneration. In the former he appeared so high and noble, and in the latter so little and so humble, that it is not easy to determine which of these two extremes is a more worthy subject of your wonder and praise. In the former his

power was illustrious, who conferred such glorious privileges upon you; in the latter, his mercy was no less illustrious, who submitted to endure such bitter things for you. That he might raise you up from the depth of misery into which you had sunk yourself, He granted to descend into the same pit himself, where you lay grovelling and unable to help yourself.

136

And he was content, in pity, to undergo the misery which you then sustained, that a way might be made for justice to be satisfied, with the restitution of the happiness you had lost. He came down, he took upon himself, he endured, he vanquished, he restored. He came down from the throne of God to wretched mortals; he took upon himself mortality; he endured affliction, and pain, and ignominy; he vanquished death; he restored mankind. Stand *still*, my soul, and with holy astonishment, gaze on the series of wonders, this inestimable complication of mercies; consider the greatness of His love, who did not grudge to do so much for you. He made you beautiful at first, but you have sullied and deformed yourself by sin. Notwithstanding this dishonour done to the charms you had received from him, your stains are washed away, and the purity of your former complexion is renewed again, by his marvellous compassion. Thus his love was the sole cause, both of the gift *at first*, and of its *restitution*. When you had no being, his love created you. When you had defaced his glorious image, his love refreshed the impression. And to demonstrate how exceedingly he loved you, he willingly delivered you from death, when that could be done at no less expense than laying down his own life. He would not do it at a cheaper rate, so that the price might demonstrate the vehemence of his affection, no less than the value of the advantages purchased with it. It was no doubt a mighty favour that the first man received from his merciful Creator, when the *breath of life was breathed into him, and he became a living soul, like the God* who made him (Gen 1.26; 2.7). But how much greater was the condescension, how much more valuable the blessing, when for the man that He had made, God afterwards gave himself? I acknowledge it is a great thing, that I am God's handiwork, and I own the gratitude due on this account. But surely a great deal more is due, when I consider that God was pleased to make Himself my ransom.

137

For thus there is so much expended on our redemption, as it might almost incline us to believe that man is a valuable consideration for even God himself. O how strangely has light sprung out of darkness! How happy an event was my guilt attended with, for the purging of which, while this love of my Saviour disposes him, that love is opened to my desires — and if I but give him my heart, I am secure of an easy access to, and a sure place in his. Had my misery and danger been less, I could never have had so noble a proof of his kindness. Have I not reason, then, in some respect, to bless that fall from which I rise with greater advantage than if I had not fallen at all? No kindness could be greater — none more sincere, more chaste, more fervent, more passionately expressed — than that of an innocent person dying for me, who had no recommendation to deserve, none to engage his love. What was it then, my dearest Lord, that you loved in me? What was it that you loved so much, to even die for me? What could you find in this poor wretched creature, worth doing so many miracles of goodness, worth suffering so many injuries and agonies for? I am perfectly amazed at this stupendous dispensation; and the more I consider either you or myself, the less I find myself able to account *for it*.

CHAP. 7.

The Mercy of being called to the true Faith.

THE merit and sufficiency of this redemption extend to all mankind; but the means ordinarily necessary to render it effectual, are not distributed with an even hand. Here then, my soul, observe and be thankful for a discrimination that is manifestly in your favour.

138

For how numerous, and of what condition (if compared to you) are those many who do not have the precious opportunities of that grace which are allowed to you? You cannot help but to have heard how many generations of men, from the beginning of the world down to this very day, have lived and died without the knowledge of the true God; how many more formerly, and how many even now, perish eternally and never heard one syllable of a redemption purchased by the blood of God. Your Saviour has distinguished you above all these, and signalized his love in granting those means of grace which none of them were thought worthy to partake of. They were left in their ignorance, and you are taken to be *made wise unto salvation*. But for this difference, there can be but one reason assigned, which is the one so often inculcated already: your blessed Master's love. Your spouse, your friend, your God, your Redeemer, chose *you* rather than *them*. He chose you among all. He singled you out from the rest. He has given you all possible demonstrations of his kindness. He has called you by His own name, that this mark and memorial might rest perpetually upon you; that you might never forget to whom you belong. He has not given you an empty name, but all the advantages imported by, and accruing from it; he has anointed you with the same *oil of gladness* with which he was anointed himself, that you might be the anointed of the anointed, and from *Christ*, denominated in the most beneficial sense, a *Christian*.

But why is this granted to the servant of your Lord? Did you excel in strength, in wisdom, or noble descent? in riches or virtue, or any other qualification which might entitle you to this special favour from which so many others are excluded?

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How many strong, how many wise, how many noble, how many rich men have there been who yet have all been passed over and rejected? This, therefore, is another enchantment of your favour: that notwithstanding all their pompous pretensions, they were not admitted to the same privileges as you who did *not* have them to allege in your behalf. You were miserable and deformed, naked and poor, dissolute and sinful, an object of abhorrence and detestation, yet your God did not disdain you; but even in these wretched, these forbidding circumstances, He extended to you the riches of this marvellous compassion and grace. And now that you have seen your happiness, my soul, see also what your duty is, resulting from the *sense* of it. For be assured that, notwithstanding all these kind advances, if you do not make it your constant care and your most earnest endeavour, to deck and adorn yourself as becomes you, you will not be admitted into the embraces of your heavenly spouse. Set about this necessary work, then, while you have time; for now is the proper season of dressing yourself for the marriage. Abate your too solicitous concern for the outward appearance of your body, and employ all your pains upon your inward man; prepare your face in the best manner; let your habit be clean and attractive, your spots washed off, your complexion clear, your decays and blemishes refreshed, your air modest and graceful, your deportment orderly; and let it be your chief, your *only* business, to so prepare and fit yourself for your Lord's approach, that the figure you make may be suitable to your character, and become the chastity, the *majesty* of one who has the honour of being a bride to an immortal husband, a heavenly king.

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CHAP. 8.

Of the Communications of Divine Grace.

NOR let your poverty discourage you, as if I now advised you to an impossible undertaking. For this is yet a further instance of your Lord's love: that he furnishes you with such ornaments as he likes to see you in, and such as could not be procured anywhere else, if His bounty did not supply you with them. It is from Him alone that you are put into a condition of being clothed with good works, adorned with charitable deeds, watchings, fastings, and other acceptable

instances of piety and devotion. All of these, like garments of the richest materials and most delightful colours, make up the dress, and set off the beauties, of a heavenly soul. Whatever is necessary for your health, whatever for your refreshment and delight, whatever can restore lost beauty, or add to the gracefulness of what you already have, you need not want; for he has plenty of all, and distributes his stores liberally. See now what a noble provision is made for you, and how abundant care has been taken for the relief of all your necessities. At first, you were possessed of *nothing*, and he imparted to you what was fitting. This gift was lost through your default, and He restored it to you — thus you are never forsaken in any of your distresses, to convince you how generous, how boundless an affection your lover bears toward you. He will not lose you; and therefore He waits with great patience for your better resolutions, and in great pity He grants you frequent opportunities to recover again and again those precious advantages which, through your own carelessness, were often forfeited and gone.

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So that, in all this matter, this remarkable difference deserves to be thankfully considered: that all the damage you sustain is entirely from yourself; but all the recruits ¹¹ of it are entirely from Him, And O! how many there are, who once received the same advantages as you; but though equally favoured in the gift at first, they yet were denied the privilege of having them restored when lost — which you have so very often had repeated, by a particular indulgence of your gracious God to you above others. The grace of doing well was never denied you when you were just as ready to receive and improve, as He is constantly ready to give it. And if you become an instrument of great good, it is His mercy that exalts you to this high pitch of virtue: but if you find great difficulties, and cannot attain to the perfection you labour after and eagerly desire, yet this should be esteemed an effect of mercy too. For he knows best what is convenient for you, and will make a more advantageous choice than you can for yourself. And therefore, the way to always think well and worthily of God, is to be thoroughly persuaded that *whatever* he does with you and your affairs, is wise and good. For such is the love of God towards us, that there is no one trial which human nature labours under, no one infirmity to which it is subject, no one event that befalls any one of us, that in his infinite goodness, and so far as we do not obstruct his gracious intentions of kindness, He disposes it to our advantage. It may be, you do not have the grace of an eminent and steady virtue; but while the storms of temptation shake you, that inconvenience is compensated by your humility taking deeper root. And humility with an alloy of frailties and failings, is more acceptable to Almighty God, than virtuous actions puffed up with vainglory, and spiritual pride.

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Therefore, when you observe any dispensation of Providence, do not presume to think that some other method or event would have been better; but fear His majesty, reverence his wisdom, and make your prayers to him, with a mind entirely resigned to His will. Imploring his protection and assistance in such measures of grace as he knows are fittest for you — that if there are any remains of evil in you, his mercy would take them clear away; that whatever good inclinations or beginnings he sees in you, he would promote and bring them to due perfection; and in a word, that he would at last bring you to Himself, by such a way as he finds most agreeable to his own wise purposes. For thus you attain the end; you need not be very anxious about the *means*. The end is the proper *object* of your desires; but when you extend your *desires* to the means too, they exceed their just bounds; and if too anxious, your desires presume to prescribe to Providence, in things which God has reserved to his own free disposal.

¹¹ *Recruits*: resupplies or reinforcements.

CHAP. 9.

The Mercy of Instruction and Illumination.

AND now, my soul, I must ask you again and again, *What shall we render to the Lord our God, for the innumerable benefits he has done unto us?* (1The 3.9) That you may take another prospect of this, consider that he not only gives us cause to thank him for the same good things which he bestows upon others, but He makes the very evils that befall us, experiments of his exceeding great love, so that in like manner we might be moved to love him exceedingly, whether we reflect upon the good we enjoy, or the evil we endure. You, Lord, have had compassion on my ignorance and blindness; and by my misery, you magnified your mercy in bringing me to the knowledge of you and your truth: and granted me a clearer understanding in the dark and difficult passages of your revealed will, than many others have arrived at.

143

Some of my equals in years and natural abilities, you allow to still continue in ignorance and error; but you have enlightened my eyes with your grace, and thereby made me wiser than the aged. You have endued me with strong faculties, a large capacity, a quick apprehension, a faithful memory. You give success to my undertakings, agreeableness in conversation, improvement by my studies, comfort in my adversity, protection in my prosperity: whichever way I go, your grace preserves and follows me; and many times, when I have given myself up for lost, you have by some sudden and surprising turn of mercy, delivered me from my calamities and my fears. When I went wrong, you have brought me back, and guided me in the right way; when I offended, you have reproved and chastened me; when I was in heaviness, you have supported my spirits; when I fell, you have set me up again; when I stood, you upheld me. You enabled me to know you more truly, to believe in you more steadfastly, to love you more vehemently, to follow you more eagerly. And now, O Lord my God, the joy of my life, the light of my eyes, what requital shall I make you for all your inestimable mercies? You command me to love you, but how can I ever love you enough? No, who am I indeed that you should desire or accept my love? For you, Lord, are my strength and my castle, my deliverer and my refuge, my helper and protector, the horn of my salvation, my support, my *all* — and that, in a word, comprehends the whole of what I can say or think: You, O Lord, are my God; and whatever I have, or can do, or am, is of you, and in you, and by you.

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CHAP. 10.

God's tender Care and constant Presence with us.

STILL I must repeat my grateful acknowledgment, that the blessings I have received from you are great beyond measure and many beyond number; it will be my most delightful entertainment to always be talking of these. And Lord, I beseech you, grant me a mind truly thankful, that my mouth may be ever full of your praise, and my heart overflow with your love, for your infinite goodness to me. You see, my soul, what noble pledges you have; and these pledges sufficiently declare the affection of that spouse who gave them. Take care, then, to preserve your charity and fidelity entire. Let no impure desires, no adulterous lust pollute or divide your affection; but keep only to him to the last moment of your life. If you were formerly a harlot, yet now your virgin innocence is restored. For such is the excellence of his wonderful love, that it restores purity to those who had lost it, and preserves it unblemished to them who are careful to retain it. Let, then, the greatness of his mercy never slip out of your mind, but consider how tenderly he loves you, who was never lacking in any demonstration to you of his kindness which your condition required. I cannot but confess, when I reflect upon the constant presence, and the abundance of his mercies towards me, that I am almost tempted to say that my salvation is his only business and care. For surely he could not be more tender of my safety,

more ready to relieve all my distresses, to comfort all my sorrows, to supply all my wants, to guard me in all my dangers, if he could be supposed to overlook the exigences of all his other creatures, and confine his good providence to me alone.

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So watchful does he show himself over all my affairs, so ever present to — no, ever *preventing* ¹² — my earliest wishes. Wherever I go, he does not forsake me; wherever I am, he stands by me; whatever I do, he strengthens and succours me; he is a constant observer of all my behaviour. And such is his goodness, that whatever commendable attempts I make, he works together with me in them, and by the success which I attain gradually, He shows me that he condescends to work, not according to the efficacy of his own almighty power, but in proportion to my weak capacity. These instances make it indisputably clear that, although the imperfection of our present state will not allow us to see his face, yet we cannot be so stupidly blind as not to be sensible of his presence. A presence, which can no more be concealed, than it can be avoided. But while my thoughts are engaged on this subject, I feel a new and unusual pleasure that makes such strong, such delightful impressions, that seem to transport and carry me out of myself. It seems I am changed in an instant, and have become quite another creature; and joys come flowing in upon me, more exquisite than I am able to express. My conscience is satisfaction all over; the anguish of my past sufferings is quite swallowed up, and there is not so much as a troublesome remembrance of them left behind. My mind is enlarged, my understanding clear and bright, my heart and its affections enlightened and purified; all my desires are filled with pleasure, and my soul is perfect rapture and triumph. I am no longer here, it seems, but translated (I know not how or where) to some unknown region of bliss. I embrace, as it were, with a most ardent love, some dear object with which I am not yet perfectly acquainted. I hold him fast, and strive all I can, never to part with him more.

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But still, it is with a sort of delightful difficulty that I struggle not to let that break from me, which of all things I wish to keep forever in my arms. For in Him my soul seems to have found the complement and end of all her desires. This thought creates that eager and inexpressible transport of joy, that she seeks nothing, covets nothing, beyond it; but would esteem her happiness complete if she could continue always to be as she is now. What can this delicious object be, that pours in such a torrent of rapturous and uncorrupted pleasure? Is it my Beloved? Undoubtedly it can be none but He. It is thus that my Lord grants to visit me. He comes in secret, not to be seen, not to be discerned by any of my senses. He comes to touch me, but not to show me his face. He comes to put me in mind of him, but not to let me perfectly understand him. He comes to me to give me a taste of his sweetness, but not to give me his whole self; to gratify my desires, but not to bestow upon me the fulness of his excellences. However, this is what my condition *will* admit, what I *ought* to receive with all the thanks and gladness possible; for it is an assured foretaste of heaven, an inviolable earnest and token of his marrying me to himself. And blessed, ever blessed be your mercy, for these assurances, these comfortable antepasts ¹³ of future happiness. You, Lord, are good and gracious, and cannot worthily be praised for those supporting consolations by which you — who have promised that my soul shall have a distinct view and full possession of you hereafter — convince her how sweet that enjoyment will be, and how precious the promises of it are, by condescending to give her a taste of you, *here*.

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¹² Stanhope uses “preventing” in several senses throughout; here it means “to go before” so as to enable or facilitate.

¹³ *Antepast*: foretaste.

CHAP. 11.

The Benefit of our bodily Senses, and the preservation of our Lives.

HOW fervently, then, my soul, should you love this good God, who has been so exceedingly kind to you! Nor am I yet, or ever should I be at an end, if I undertook to recount all his benefits. But to keep close to what you cannot help but surely feel, and see daily and hourly, it shall next be my endeavour to kindle and fan this Divine flame, by putting you in mind of what you are earnest about, and of what you yourself are a living monument. Consider then, what praise, what thanks, what devout zeal are due to Him who converted the desires of my parents, which since the corruption of human nature, are tainted and debased with an alloy of impurity, to a profitable purpose; and made use of these for creating me out of their substance; who breathed into me the breath of life, brought me to just maturity for birth, and put a difference between me and those who, perishing by untimely abortions, or strangled at the gate of the womb, seem to have been conceived for death rather than life. It is by His mercy alone, that I am; it is a yet more valuable effect of the same mercy that I am a man; that I was endued with an understanding spirit, which makes a very advantageous distinction between me and brutes. To the same mercy I owe the handsome form of this body, and the perfect use of those several organs of sense so commodiously placed in it. Hence, I have eyes for seeing, ears for hearing, nostrils for smelling, hands for handling, a palate for tasting, feet for walking; and (which crowns all the rest) a healthful constitution for my unspeakable ease and comfort.

148

And is this not another most wonderful instance of goodness, that God has made such plentiful provision for the service, the entertainment, the delight of the senses; and so suited objects to the organs, that each is proportioned to the use and convenience of that sense which it was designed to gratify and minister to? That there are many bright bodies, many delightful sounds, many sweet smells, many grateful relishes, many things that pleasingly affect the touch. For this, no doubt, the good providence of God had in view, when he infused such different qualities into the bodies created by him — that there should be no sense of man, which from there might not find a delight peculiar to it. And thus we see that sight is qualified to perceive one sort of objects; hearing another; tasting another; and the touch a different kind from all the former. The beauty of colours feeds the sight; the harmony of sounds delights our ears, the fragrant of perfumes entertains our smell, and things delicious relishes our taste. And who can express the vast variety of impressions with which our senses are gratefully wrought upon? These are so many, and so different in each sense singly, that if any one of them is considered apart, one would think Providence had made it its business to contrive plenty of amusements and pleasures for that alone. There is so inexpressible a beauty resulting from the diversity of colours to please the eye, and so many charming sounds of different sorts to delight the ear; such a vast usefulness attending those who are articulate, by which men communicate their thoughts to one another without any difficulty, relate things that are already past, discourse about the present, predict the future, and disclose those that are secret and must otherwise continue unknown — that if mankind were left destitute of these conveniences, their life would be little better than beasts.

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If now I were to add to all the advantages of speech, those other entertainments of this sense which result from the choirs of birds abroad, or from the melody of human voices, or from those improvements and imitations of natural music by art and instruments — it must be allowed me, that the several kinds of harmony are of infinite variety; indeed, they are so great, that the wit of man cannot conceive all the particular kinds, nor the words to explain and describe them distinctly. And yet, all these are contrived for the service and delight of the ear, so nobly is this single sense provided for. A great deal might be said to the same purpose, concerning the objects pleasurable to the taste and the touch. But the resemblance between the case of these and the

former is so great, that my reader may easily make his observations upon them, by what has already been said concerning those.

And as our senses, and a right disposition of the organs which serve them, is a very valuable blessing, so is it likewise, that our limbs have all their due place and figure — that no part of our body is so distorted, or defective, as to be painful to ourselves, or to make our deformity a subject, either of melancholy to our friends or relations, or of jest and scorn to strangers. But of yet higher importance, within this body so commodiously ordered, I have a glorious inhabitant: an understanding spirit capable of discerning and receiving the truth; of distinguishing between right and wrong, good and evil; indeed (which tends more to its happiness and perfection), it is qualified to seek and find its Creator, to desire and gasp after him, to praise and cling, and be united to him, by the cement of a most ardent and inviolable love. Another great instance of God's goodness to me, I acknowledge, is that I was reserved for the glorious times of the gospel.

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I was born in a country where his holy truth is professed; and among such friends as took effectual care to instruct and establish me in the faith, and make me a partaker of the blessed sacraments. This is a mercy which vast numbers of people have not enjoyed; and therefore I have a still greater reason to be thankful for it, since their condition and mine are in other respects the same. Nor can I boast of any qualification that would give me the preference, or recommend me to so singular a favour, which has not been in like manner extended to them. The sum and sole account of so distinguishing a providence is this: that God was just in leaving them, but exceedingly gracious in calling me. Nor should I on this occasion, forget to thank God that he was pleased to spare my parent's life, till the great business of my education was finished; that my care was not turned over to those who could not have the same tenderness and natural affection for me; that I escaped the many dreadful disasters which some others did not, and I was equally liable to suffer by: that the fire has never burnt nor disfigured me, nor the water swallowed me up; that evil spirits were never permitted to torment me; that God has shut the mouths of the beasts of prey, guarded me from their violence, kept me back from many a dangerous precipice, and preserved me from falls, and pits, losses or maimed limbs, to which the giddiness of childhood, and the heat and folly of youth are perpetually exposed; and lastly, that I was raised all along in the truth, faith, and obedience of Him, and his will, till I arrived at years of discretion, and made that service of God my act and choice, which I was disposed to before by the happy prepossessions infused into me by others.

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CHAP. 12.

God's long-suffering and Mercy which preserved us from, and forgave us after, the commission of sin.

SO great, so numerous, O Lord my God, are the proofs which you have given me of your marvellous love! But though I praise and adore your Majesty for all your wondrous works, yet you are more justly to be admired for none, than for those acts of goodness and tender pity, which plainly speak the most enlarged bowels of our heavenly Father's paternal affection, to his unworthy and rebellious children. These are so unbounded, as to reach all without distinction. For you despise no man, cast off no man, abhor no man, except such only as by their own incorrigible folly, have given you provocation, by first forsaking and contemning you. And therefore, O Lord, I in particular must own that I have many mercies, and much indulgence of this kind to love and thank you for. For you have frequently rescued me from dangers which had hemmed me in on every side, and left me no power to escape, by any strength or prudence of my own. When I was engaged in sinful actions, you did not leave me to perish in them; when I forgot you, you refreshed my memory; when I was falling off from you, you recalled and brought

me home again; when I returned in obedience to that call, you received and met me with open arms; and when my soul was wounded with grief for my former transgressions, you comforted my sorrows, pardoned my offences, accepted my repentance, and spoke peace to my troubled mind.

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Indeed, I would detract from the greatness of your mercy, in acknowledging the benefit of so gracious a pardon only for my *past* actual transgressions— since it is of the same mercy alone, that not only the crimes really committed by me, but all those too, which I would have committed if your grace and good providence had not restrained and protected me; and that they are not allowed to inflame my reckoning at the last terrible day of account. For just as with shame and deep remorse, I confess that the sins I have fallen into are many and grievous, so I am sadly sensible of my own weakness and frailty, and that my faults would have far exceeded what they now have done, if your watchful care and goodness had not preserved me.

Now, there are three ways which I plainly perceive you have made use of to this purpose; and each has greatly contributed to my safety. These are, the removal of the occasion, the power of resistance, and the integrity of my will and affections. For without any dispute, I would have been frequently ensnared in sin, if temptations and opportunities had offered themselves thicker to me, had the good providence of God not so ordered the matter, that many times I had no evil suggestions prompting me to wickedness, nor any opportunity given the tempter for an assault. Again, I have frequently found myself attacked with great violence; but you, O Lord, have come to my succour, and poured in fresh recruits of grace and strength by which I was enabled to get the mastery over my appetites, and to obstinately hold out against the siege, against the treachery of my own corrupt lusts which would have betrayed and undermined me; and against all the fury of the tempter, who laboured to storm the fort of my soul. But again, there have been some sins which your mercy, O Lord, has kept me at so great a distance from, that I perfectly abhorred the very thoughts of them, and never found myself so much as molested with any temptation to contract so black and detestable a guilt.

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O, that this had been the case with me in all things that offend the God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity! But where it was not, I have not lacked plentiful experience of your goodness and compassion. For, alas! my God, my conscience reproaches me with having too often and too heinously displeased your Divine majesty. Wretch that I am, I have behaved myself unseemly in your presence. I have done amiss and dealt wickedly, provoked your anger, and deserved the hottest of your vengeance. I have transgressed, and you have borne with it. I have sinned long and perversely, and still you suffer me to live. If I repent you spare me; if I return you receive me gladly. Even while I dally and am so dilatory in this, my most important concern, you wait for my better and more serious thoughts. When I wander, you bring me back; when I resist your gracious methods, you win me over and incline my will. When I am slothful, you quicken and spur me on; when I flee to you for mercy, you readily extend it: you instruct my ignorance, you dry up my tears, support my drooping spirits, raise me up again when I fall, repair my breaches and inward decays, grant when I ask, are found when I seek you, open when I knock, show me the good way, and teach me to walk in it when you have revealed it to me. The grace of being thus favoured upon my own solicitous applications, is indeed very great; but greater still is that by which your liberality, O Lord, even precedes my application to you. And yet even those gifts which I have received at your bountiful hand — before I could ask, or wish, or even think of them — are such that if I attempted to declare, and speak of them particularly, they would be found more than I am able to express.

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Had these unasked-for benefits prevented my requests and wishes only then — when the greenness of my years and understanding rendered me incapable of discerning my wants, and of addressing you for proper supplies — this would have been a compassion that was in some degree necessary, due to the ignorance of my childhood, or the inconsideration of my youth. But what enhances the obligation still more, is that I find the same goodness still following, and even preceding me, though I have arrived at an age of maturity and judgment; when I am qualified to present before you supplications suited to a due sense of my wants; when I am in a condition of seeking you, and desiring and clinging steadfastly to you as my chief and only good. But, O wonderful love! Even now you give when I do not ask; you are with me when I do not look for you; you impart to me those inestimable benefits which I have no just regard for; indeed, which I am so far from desiring, as even to despise them.

Another mercy of the first quality: I cannot help but esteem that providence of yours, which gives your angels charge over me. That a creature so frail and so exposed, should have a constant guard of your appointment, and not be left to travel through this hazardous and troublesome wilderness of a world, like a stranger in an enemy's country, naked and alone; but have powerful protectors and most affectionate guides to keep him company, and be an unseen security to him. This, surely, among other considerations, should abundantly convince us of the dignity of our souls; and how precious they are in your sight, that you are pleased to employ those bright and glorious *spirits in ministering continually for those who will be heirs of everlasting salvation.*

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But, above all, I must admire that unwearied patience and pity, which no provocations of mine could harden against me so far as to withdraw the influence of that preserving providence, though I have justly forfeited it long ago. And I am sensible that to this providence I owe still being in the land of the living, and having escaped the many dreadful disasters which stood ready to devour and destroy me. For I cannot say why the earth should not long ago have opened her mouth and swallowed me up; why I have not been struck through with hot thunderbolts, blasted with lightning, drowned in the waters, or suffered some untimely or uncommon death, which might evidently appear to carry the marks of a signal vengeance inflicted on me for the heinousness of my sins? There was reason enough to apprehend this. For when I departed from my God by sinning, I thereafter not only deserved your anger, and to be immediately punished by your hand, but I put myself into a state of hostility, and armed the whole creation against me. Thus we find it here below, that if any great man's servant revolts from his master, he does not exasperate his lord alone, but the whole family resents it, and they are concerned to punish the defection to the utmost of their power. By parity of reason, after incurring the displeasure of you, my God, the maker and governor of all things, I would cease to deserve any friendship or good offices from any branch of your numerous family. And I might expect that every creature should rise up against me, and fight the quarrel of their incensed Lord (Wis 5.17). The earth might say, I owe you no sustenance; and instead of nourishing, I should rather swallow you up because you have deserted my Maker and your King, and enlisted yourself in the service of his enemy the devil.

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The sun might tell me that he ought not to shed his beams upon my head, for the comforts of light and cherishing warmth; but if at all, to scorch me, or else to hide those beams and quite withdraw them; that my safety and convenience should no longer to be his care now, but only how to revenge the dishonour done to that Lord who is the source of Light, and by whose brightness it is that he shines at all. Thus every creature, in its turn and its respective capacity, might threaten and upbraid my rebellion against our common maker and governor. These, I am well assured, are weapons which God has often made the instruments of his angry justice against those who affront and live in defiance of Him and his laws. But in truth, there is no need

of Him issuing a fresh commission, or setting His creatures upon me on this occasion. For if God were only to withdraw that restraint he keeps upon them, once left to themselves, they would soon make examples of sinners. And their not doing it every day, must wholly be imputed to that controlling power which checks and keeps them in; because he who made us, *loves us*, because he is long suffering and tender, *not desiring the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live* (Eze 18.32).

But sure, when I sit down and compute my obligations, the more and greater I find these to be, the more thankful, entire, ready and cheerful I ought to show myself in my obedience, for fear at least that the suspension of the punishment might add to the weight of it; and forbearance abused, inflames the wrath of God, in proportion to the time and the baseness of my having it extended to me in vain.

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O let us then, my soul, lay seriously to heart the wonderful compassion of God, in not cutting us off in our sins; let us admire that grace by which he has elected us, that we should be *vessels of mercy prepared unto glory* (Rom 9.23); let us adore that incomprehensible love with which he has loved us. For on this account, he waited patiently, *inclined his ear to me, and heard my calling* (Psa 17.6); turning his eyes away from my iniquities, as if he were loath to see the greatness of those transgressions which His mercy disposed him not to punish. Therefore, I say, he overlooked, as it were, and made as though he did not see, that he might commend the exceeding greatness of his patience, and give us the amplest testimony of his love. To this end (for I perfectly remember, and still feel the smart of it) he pierced my heart, rousing it out of its lethargic stupidity, and making it sensible how grievously it was wounded and bruised with sin, so that it might understand its own condition, and groan under the anguish of a broken Spirit. He led me down to the gates of Hell, showed me the flames and fiends, the torments and horrors of that dismal place prepared for the damned. And when he had thus brought me to a sight of my misery and danger; when my heart was overwhelmed with grief and terror, and almost sunk in despair — then he turned back and revived me, let in fresh comforts upon my soul, inspired me *first* with hopes of pardon for my sins, and *then* bestowed that pardon which he had sustained me with hopes of. And this pardon is so frank, so absolute, that all the guilt and resentment is wholly taken away by it. He will not now, I'm sure, take this revenge in my condemnation. He will not expose me to shame by upbraiding me with my offences. He will not allow any unkind remembrances of what a wretch I *have been* up to now, to lessen his love of me as *I am* now. And these are all very engaging considerations. For how many are there who pass over injury so as to at no time make the offender smart for it, and yet take the liberty of frequently casting it in his teeth?

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Or, if they smother their resentments in silence, yet they bear a secret grudge, and remember the fault with bitterness and rancour? Either of these is very distant from a true and full forgiveness. But nothing can be more unlike than these, to the clemency and benignity of the Divine nature. For God gives liberally, and forgives absolutely; and so that repenting sinners may lack no encouragement to trust in his mercy, and may depend on a favourable reception when they have recourse to him — the greatness of the guilt, we are assured, is no bar to pardon. For *where the offence abounded, there it is often manifest that grace is wont to abound much more* (Rom 6.1). The scriptures furnish many eminent testimonies of this for our consolation. Such was St. Peter who, after having thrice solemnly and deliberately denied his Lord (Mat 26.74), had the care of Christ's sheep three separate times committed to his trust (Joh 21.15-17). Such was St. Paul who, from a blasphemer of the truth and a persecutor of the church of God, was made a *chosen vessel unto Christ, to bear his name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel* (Act 9.15). Such, once more, was St. Matthew who, from sitting at the receipt of customs, and having

the infamous character of a publican (Mat 9.9), was chosen to be an apostle, and had the honour of being the first writer of the New Testament.

CHAP. 13. The Power of Mastering Temptations.

TO all his former valuable gifts, God has been pleased to add that of continence — by which I mean the power of resisting and abstaining from, not only the pleasures of flesh and sense, but all other temptations and vices whatsoever, to which it is no less criminal to yield than it would be to those of carnality and indulgence.

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And I must own with all due gratitude, that in this respect, I have found myself so strengthened as of late, by the assistances of Divine grace, to exercise that mastery over my appetite for a long time together, which formerly I was seldom able to retain for three poor days, without some sad defect or interruption. And I count this so very happy an alteration, as to challenge ¹⁴ that acknowledgment of praise, *He that is mighty, has done great things for me* (Luk 1.49). There are some, perhaps, who have but a low esteem of this blessing; but to me, it appears a very signal one. For I am sensible of what enemies I have to encounter, and how very great a proportion of strength is necessary for waging this spiritual war with any tolerable success.

The first enemy which makes headway against this virtue of ours, is our own FLESH (Gal. 5.17); and the assaults upon it are those perpetual lustings against the Spirit, which every man has such woeful experience of in his own breast. Now, this is an enemy from whose cruelty there is no running away; 'tis a domestic foe, an intestine war, and consequently a combat of infinite hazard and danger. You cannot, O my soul, dispossess or drive him out of your quarters; the condition of your nature has tied him close to you, and you must carry him about wherever you go. Now, what can aggravate our perils or our misery more than this: that we are under an indispensable necessity of subsisting the forces that fight against us? We must not kill them, and we cannot starve them out. Consider this, and then tell me how strict a watch you ought to keep over a seducer who lies in *your bosom* (Mic 7.5).

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But neither is this the only adversary we have to engage with. There is another who lays close siege, and compasses us in on every side. I mean, the present evil WORLD, which has no less than five avenues always open to make his approaches by: the five senses of our body, through which he wounds me with his darts; and so *death comes up into my windows, and enters into my palaces* (Jer 9.21).

The third is that common and inveterate enemy of mankind, that old SERPENT, which is more subtle than all the beasts of the field (Gen 3.1). An enemy who attacks us unseen, and consequently, is more difficult to avoid. Nor does he always proceed in the same method; but he sometimes falls on us with open violence; sometimes he trepan¹⁵ us by secret cunning and fraudulent insinuation. His malice, however, and his cruelty, are always the same, and the end he drives at by the most different means, is constantly our mischief and eternal ruin.

And who now, shall I say, is sufficient to vanquish, or even to hold out, and keep himself from *being vanquished* by this triple alliance and joint force?

¹⁴ *Challenge*: daring anyone to contest the truth of it. Augustine goes on to explain the reasons for it: that we are unable to defeat our foes, but God enables us — therefore, *to God be the glory; bless His holy name*.

¹⁵ *Trepan*: to cut a hole with a trepan, as in surgery.

These things are what I thought fit to take more express notice of, that men might have a juster notion of the excellence, but of the difficulty, too, of that masterly virtue which I mean here by *continence* — that those who are happy in it, might be duly sensible of how valuable a gift they have received from God; and in that sense, they might excite their hearts to a more earnest love of their Preserver and great Benefactor who alone could bestow it upon them. For *it is through the Lord that we do all the great acts* of this kind, and *tread them under, who rise up against us* (Psa 44.5). He is the one who subdues and crucifies our flesh, with its affections and lusts; He is the one who protects us against this present evil world, and mortifies us to all its vanities; and He is the one who breaks the serpent's head, and bruises Satan under our feet, with all his wicked wiles and temptations.

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Is there not reason, then, from the contemplation of this virtue, and of the conquests it makes, and the power of making them — which is received from above — to cry out again and again, *He that is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name?* (Luk 1.49)

CHAP. 14. The Benefit of a Holy Hope.

BY being enabled to vanquish temptations, I am put into a condition of escaping eternal death; but it is yet a further instance of mercy, that the Lord my God affords me such grace as may qualify me for inheriting the blessings of eternal life. And this I take chiefly to consist in three things: the hatred of past evil, the contempt of present good, and the desire of that good which is to come. This desire is also supported and inflamed by another precious gift of God: the hope of obtaining that future blessedness. Now, there are likewise three considerations which uphold and strengthen my heart in this hope: and that so firmly, that *no* lack of desert on my part, not even the lowest and most mortifying thoughts of my vileness and unworthiness, nor the highest and most enlarged notions of the excellence of that bliss in heaven, can cast me down from this high tower of hope. No, my soul is rooted and grounded in it, past the power of being shaken with any melancholy misgivings. And the foundations that bear me up in all this firmness of mind are *three*. First, I consider the greatness of God's love, expressed in my adoption. Secondly, the truth of God, which has promised this blessedness. And thirdly, the power of God to make good whatever he has promised, to the uttermost.

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Let then my foolish desponding heart raise scruples to confound me, and object ever so importunately, "Vain man, consider what you are, and what you fondly imagine you shall one day be. What can you see in yourself, a creature so little, so polluted, to think that you should ever attain to a state of such purity, such excellent glory? Can you discern any proportion at all between a finite creature and infinite happiness? Or are you able to discover any such extraordinary merit to ground your hopes upon, as should incline God to exalt you so much above what nature seems to have qualified you for?" These difficulties I am in no degree terrified by; but I can with great assurance return this answer to them, and rest my soul upon it: *I know whom I have believed, and am truly persuaded*, that God would not have adopted me for his own child had he not loved me exceedingly; that he would never have promised had he not resolved to perform; and that if these things could be supposed greater than really they are, yet putting me in actual possession of them cannot exceed his power, because I am sure he can do whatever pleases him, both in heaven and earth. And therefore, I can never love God enough for inspiring and comforting me with this hope, and putting me into the way of attaining the bliss that he has encouraged me to expect at his merciful hands. And I have great encouragements from those earnest and antepasts of his future goodness which he grants me even in this world. For such, I reckon, are his following after and overtaking me when I fled away from him; his

controlling and banishing my fears by the charms of meekness and kindness, cherishing and frequently reviving my hopes when I lay languishing in despair; his even constraining me to better obedience by heaping on fresh benefits, notwithstanding my ingratitude for those I had formerly received;

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his giving me a better sense of things, and enabling me to relish the sweetness of spiritual joys, when my palate stood to none but those which were impure and merely sensual; his bursting my bonds asunder, and setting me at liberty from the bondage of evil habits which I had not the power to break; and his receiving me with so much tenderness, when by his help I had weaned my affections from the world, and forsaken all to follow him. He would not have done this much for me already, had he not intended to do more hereafter. And therefore I will trust his word for this fulness of bliss in reversion, and dare to depend upon the full accomplishment of it for his servant (though of myself I am most unworthy), since I have such grounds of assurance from the many precious pledges of an inviolable love exhibited, and paid me down in hand. ¹⁶

CHAP. 15.

The many Instances of God's Bounty, notwithstanding our Sins, and the Thanks due to him on this Account.

PROCEED then, my soul, in these most pleasing contemplations, and sustain yourself against all desponding thoughts, by recollecting those many other proofs of the Divine goodness which have been so particular, so secretly conveyed *to you*, that none but you could be privy to them. Think of those retired pleasures with which your Lord entertains you in secret, upon your retreat from the world, and private conversation with him; what delicious food he has provided for the satisfying of your spiritual hunger; what inestimable treasures of mercy he has given you to richly enjoy; what secret longings he inspires you with, and how plentifully you have been made to drink of the ravishing cup of his love.

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Was it not, then, a noble condescension, a most astonishing instance of compassion, that He did not leave me destitute of spiritual comforts? *Me*, I say, who was a slothful and ungracious servant, a fugitive, a rebel, and one who would never have returned to him and my duty, if He, in mere pity, in *boundless* pity, had not called me home? For sure, you cannot help but remember, my soul, that if at any time I was under sharp trials, He interposed with timely supports; if I was ready to be overpowered by dangers, he immediately fortified me against them; if I was dejected with grief, he sustained my spirits; if I was wavering in my duty, he strengthened and kept me steady: if I grew dry and heavy, fearful and faint, he poured in the refreshments of his holy Spirit, and gave a grateful relish to my devotions. O, I never can, I never *should*, forget when I have been reading, or hearing, or praying, or meditating — in private or in public — how often he shone in upon me; and by a ray of heavenly light, guided my mind to a right understanding of his holy word, opened my eyes that I might see the meaning, the wondrous hidden things of his law; collected my scattered thoughts; put a stop to my wanderings; and made them all to centre in himself, with a desire too intense to be expressed. How often he has drawn my mind off of earthly objects, and raised it up to heavenly delights — and fixed it there, and entertained me with those pleasures which are the portion of the blessed above. These and many more expressions of his mercy I have felt and rejoiced in; more than I can, more than perhaps would become me to mention particularly, lest I seem to exceed the bounds of modesty, to insinuate an opinion of some more than common worth in one so highly favoured, and arrogate to myself a part of that glory which is entirely His.

¹⁶ That is, “and down payment in hand” — which is His Spirit, our deposit and guarantee (2Cor 1.22; 5.5; Eph 1.13-14).

For, according to the vulgar notions of these matters, the grace of the giver, and the privilege of the receiver, are so closely connected, that the one who should alone be praised, is seldom praised alone — for the person who is so signally happy in the gift, is generally admitted into a share of the value and commendation due to it. But, alas! what share do any of us have, even the best of us, which he has not received? And what applause can belong to someone who freely received all the powers of doing well, as if this receiving were in any degree meritorious? To you, therefore, O Lord my God, to you *alone*, be the praise, the glory and thanksgiving; but to me, I am sure, belongs nothing but shame and confusion of face, for the numberless evil things I have done against you, and the numberless good things I have been blessed with from you.

And indeed, my thanks are by no means what they ought to be, unless both these articles are taken in. For though the consideration of Your goodness, by itself, is a just matter of gratitude and wonder — yet it is still more engaging, more astonishing, when that of our offences and grievous wickedness is added to it. For, if it is a commendation of bounty, to give largely where the receivers have deserved nothing, then how will we find ideas large enough to represent and worthily extol that kindness which returns good and evil, and bestows liberally where men have been as liberal in their injuries and provocations? What strange depths of a fatherly affection are those which the most insolent, most perverse, most undutiful children cannot harden against themselves? And yet, my soul, this is directly the state of the case between God and you. There are many things which, in mercy, he forgives — many that he forgives most readily, and in great abundance. But then we must remember, that the evils he forgives are entirely ours, and the good things he bestows are entirely his own.

He is always ready to pardon; he is not less ready to give: the one proves his boundless pity, the other his boundless liberality — or rather, indeed, both the one and the other prove that neither his pity, nor his liberality, have any bounds. Let us therefore give glory to God by confessing the good we have *done*, let us do it, likewise, by confessing the good we have *received*. Let us acknowledge the evil to be all our own, that his mercy may be inclined to pardon it; let us acknowledge the good to be all his, so that his bounty may continue, and add to it. And let this be our constant daily work; for we can never exceed in any expressions of that gratitude which is due, on account of both the sins he has pardoned, and the gifts and graces he has bestowed. Everyone should be thus employed, I say, who thinks himself a true lover of God, or who desires to be; for true love will always labour to express itself in such confessions and acknowledgments.

And what now do we think should be the result of all these considerations? What indeed, but this: that everyone who lays them seriously to heart, will take his mind off all other objects, and place his love on God alone, who has done so much for him; that he should find himself very tenderly affected, and wonderfully transported, with every reflection on such amazing kindness and compassion. If any man can observe so much mercy, such strong obligations, and yet be wanting in affection to God, let such a one be assured that this coldness proceeds from his neglect and thoughtlessness. For everyone who would be at pains to consider these things, will easily find himself so highly indebted to God, that all he can do in this service is little enough, and much less than is owed Him in return. It is true indeed, all men's engagements in this point are not the same.

Nor has God distributed his blessings with a perfectly even hand; but those who have least, have more than they can lay claim to, and more than they can ever be sufficiently grateful for. Allowing, then, that a man is not furnished even with all those graces necessary to salvation, yet this will not bear murmuring against providence, or charging God foolishly. For God is wise and

just in all his dispensations. He proceeds upon measures which, though unknown to us, are yet most reasonable in themselves. *He has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens* (Rom 9.16). And being no man's debtor, but absolute master of his own favours, He may give where he sees fit, and reassume what he had given, when and from whom he sees fit, without being accountable for either. Therefore, let him who does *not* have those gifts, lament his own misfortune with humility, and labour after them, and pray for them most earnestly; and let him who *has* them, make a just estimate of the mighty blessing, and give all diligence to be truly thankful to God for it.

CHAP. 16. Of the Death of Christ.

FOR my own part, I do most humbly confess that the benefits I have received from you, my Lord and my God, are unmeasurably great, are innumerable many — so many and so great, that of all creatures, I should be the most unworthy and insensible, if I did not always love and always praise you for them. For whatever good thing I am now, or ever was, or ever shall be possessed of, is from you, the Supreme Good, from whom all that is good proceeds. And yet, there is one thing still behind, which (I must own) inflames my heart, and excites my affection, more powerfully than all the rest.

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For never was an instance of your kindness so engaging, so irresistible, as that most shameful and most bitter death which you, O blessed Jesus, submitted to for accomplishing the most glorious work of our redemption. This singly, or at least this with the rest, lays indisputable claim to all our life, to all our labours, to all our obedience, to all our love. This, I say, is the consideration which, of all others, excites our devotion most frequently, entertains it most agreeably, and raises it to the loftiest pitch. For in this great design, the great Creator of the world takes pains, and seems to have retrieved the fabric of his own framing, with much more difficulty than when, at first, he built it all out of nothing. With what ease that was done, the Psalmist very lively expresses. *He spoke the word and they were made; He commanded and they were created*; but for the restitution of lost men, good God! how many, how grievous, how long a series of labours and sorrows you underwent! Come here then, my soul, and behold what manner of love your Saviour has bestowed on you. Without any manner of necessity to compel him, without any prospect of profit to induce him, but purely of his own free mercy, he was content to suffer such hardships, such barbarous indignities, for your sake! Well might I say, that this single act of goodness overbalances all the rest. For though it is a great kindness to lay out what we have for another's advantage, yet what we have bears no proportion to what we are; nor should that be compared with the giving of a man's own self. And if the most exalted friendship we ever heard of can go no higher than one friend laying down his life for another, how much more noble was that charity of which the Son of God left us this unexampled proof: of his laying down his life for his *enemies*.

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And the Apostle declares that this was our condition: *When we were enemies*, he says, *we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son* (Rom 5.10). And again, *scarcely for a righteous man will one die; but God commends his love towards us in this, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us* (Rom 5.7-8) — *the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God* (1Pet 3.18). He removed down from the mansions of bliss in heaven, that he might carry us back there with him. O unspeakable love! O sweetness of mercy inconceivable! O most amazing condescension! that God for the sake of man should be made man, that God for man should die in the flesh, that he should submit to be *tempted in all things as we are, only without sin* (Heb 4.15). See at how inestimable a price, see with what difficulty man was redeemed, who had

forfeited and enslaved himself to the devil. And had he not been ransomed at so vast an expense, he must unavoidably have suffered eternal damnation, with that tyrannical master of his own choosing. These reflections will show you, O man, how much you are bound to love God; and if he calls you to it, how patiently, how willingly — no, with how cheerful and eager a zeal — you ought to endure hardships, and pain, and tortures, for him who has endured so much incomparably greater for you. For it is *through much tribulation that we must enter into the kingdom of God*. And therefore, let my soul gladly embrace her crucified Jesus; let her, my sweetest Saviour, drink deep of your delicious blood; let this most moving theme be her constant meditation: that I may never, for one moment, be unmindful of him who died for me. *I am determined*, from now on, *not to know anything save Jesus Christ, and him crucified* (1Cor 2.2), lest other vain mistaken notions should draw my knowledge away from the firm bottom of saving faith.

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And O! let this wonderful love of yours take possession of all the love I am capable of, lest any rival passion insinuate itself into my heart, and I be swallowed up with a torrent of worldly affections.

In thus devoting my whole self to you, I will consult not only my duty, but my happiness too. For those hearts, which the sweetness of your love has taken full possession of, are all tranquillity and joy. There is no place for fear to dampen them, or lust to defile them, or anger to distract them, or pride to swell them, or vainglory to blow them about, or ambition to gall them, or covetousness to narrow them, or sorrow to deject them, or envy to emaciate them — in short, no disorderly vice disturbs their peace, nor corrupts their joy, but they continue firm and calm, like those upper regions where clouds and storms have no power. And what can we imagine will God give, or what will he *not* give hereafter, to those good men who taste so largely of His bounty here? For even the best of those gifts which men have in hand, are temporal; but those which he has promised to bestow on those who love him in the next world, are eternal; and consequently, they are much more desirable than any temporal advantages — even to make a comparison between them would be to injure and disparage them. For this is a condition common to all temporal advantages: that they are very hardly gotten, and very easily lost again; that while we have them in possession, they are kept at the expense of a great deal of anxious care, and parted with to our great grief; and if ever retrieved again, yet it is not without a great deal of toil and trouble. But the happiness of the next world is not capable of loss or diminution; the enjoyment of it is pleasure without alloy, and ease without fraud or disturbance; the desires of it are always keen, and the delights of possession are always new. No man receives them except with the full assurance that they will not be taken from him against his will, any more than he will ever have the will to divest himself of them.

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CHAP. 17. **The Promises of God.**

THIS may persuade us to make the promises of God another incentive to the love of Him. For, though the benefits he has given his Servants are great, yet those which he has engaged to give them, are incomparably greater. Now, these are: rest from our labours, a change from bondage to liberty, from fear to security, from grief to comfort; resurrection to a life immortal after death; and after that resurrection, exquisite and endless joy. In a word, He has promised to give us Himself: so unspeakably glorious are his promises. And the love which these beget in us, he expects should exert itself in a very particular manner: and that is, by a vehement desire for the promise, in which it is impossible to be guilty of excess. In other cases, we blame men for being impatient; but this case is an exception to the rest; and here men are to be commended for it. To

be contented with delays, argues languid desires and coldness of affection; and as the wise man observes very truly, *hope deferred makes the heart sick* (Pro 13.12). Since, then, these blisses are to be obtained nowhere but in our heavenly country, it betrays too great an indifference for such noble reversions, when we do not long most earnestly to get at them, and are not weary and perfectly sick of everything that conspires to detain us from them.

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CHAP. 18. The Happiness of a Future State

LET us then raise our thoughts as high, and stretch them as wide as ever we can, that we may try to represent to ourselves in some measure, the nature and perfection of that joy of the saints, which no other is equal to, and no other is like. Now that chief good, which we find called by the several titles of life, light, blessedness, wisdom, eternity, and the like, is but one most simple and supreme good, perfect and self-sufficient, without which no other thing can either be perfect, or indeed be at all: this good, I say, is God the Father, this the word, or Son of God, this again is that pure undivided love common to Father and Son both, the Holy Ghost, I mean, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. Now such as each of these persons is, considered apart by himself, such is the whole Trinity taken together — Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: for each of these singly is nothing else but the one most simple, constant being, which can neither be multiplied, nor diversified, nor changed. Here then is that one thing which is necessary: for that must certainly be a necessary good, in which all good is, nay, which itself is good, the one whole and sole good. If each of these things, which we call good, minister so much delight, how much must flow from the possession of Him who comprehends them all, and is as much superior to them in excellence, as the Creator is above the creature? Let us not then lavish away our time and pains upon things that only flatter us with deceitful promises of happiness; but let us love this one good, for that alone can suffice for all our exigencies, and fill all our largest desires.

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It is but lost labour to attempt a just description of the bliss reserved for us in our heavenly Father's kingdom; no words can express, no mind confined in flesh can expand itself sufficiently to conceive them. For when we have let loose our thoughts, still those joys are of a compass larger than they can fetch. Many and glorious things indeed have been spoken of this city of God, but yet the half of the truth has not been told us. This is the only instance, in which report can never exceed, and praises can never flatter; no knowledge can come up to it, no glory compare with it. The kingdom of God, in a word, is full of light and peace, charity and meekness, honour and glory, sweetness and love, joy and everlasting bliss. In brief, it is full of everything that is good, more, and better than can possibly be expressed or conceived. But still, just because I cannot do it as well as I would like, this is no argument for why I should not speak of it at all, or represent its excellencies as well as I can. We believe the majesty of God to be unspeakably glorious; but surely no man is so extravagant as to infer from this that we should never speak of him. No, it rather follows that we should speak the most glorious things we are able, that those who hear us may believe him to be still far above all that we can say of him. Much more, it is evident — it may be comprehended by the understanding — that a man can find proper words to utter; and yet the most profound and capacious mind cannot comprehend or have any ideas of the kingdom of Heaven that are in any degree suitable to its real excellence. And therefore, the life to come is what we have represented to us by the following character: that it is eternal in duration, and a blessedness to all eternity; a state where there is the most profound security and tranquillity — pleasure without passion, love without fear, love in perfection, day without night, activity and strength without possibility of decay, perfect unanimity; all the souls in it are rapt with the contemplation of God, and are past all apprehension of being ever deprived of His beatific presence;

a city blest with the most glorious inhabitants, where all the saints and angels take up their perpetual residence; the splendour of which consists in the shining graces of God's elect; where health abounds, and truth reigns forever! where there is no deceiving, no being deceived; out of which none of the happy are ever expelled, into which none of the wretched are ever admitted.

This is that happy contemplative life which they shall forever enjoy who can reach up to it by the finishing of their virtues, and be like *the spirits of just men made perfect* (Heb 12.22), and shall reign with them forever. What those have anticipated *here* by faith, they shall *there* have in sight: beholding with pure hearts the substance of their Creator; rejoicing with never-ceasing and exceeding great joy; united inseparably to God and to each other, by the full fruition of the Divine goodness, and the charms of mutual love. Then their once scattered bodies shall be restored, and put on immortality and incorruption; and thus united, they shall be made free subjects of their heavenly country, and invested with all the privileges of the city of God. Then they shall reap the fruits of all their holy labours, those eternal recompenses, the promises and distant expectation of which sustained their spirits in the many long and painful conflicts here below. There, a general gladness shall overflow, and these joys shall be so agreeable, that they shall always be thankful to their bountiful Rewarder, for the plenty he has so nobly enriched them with; and yet, that plenty will abate no man's satisfaction in the abundance he enjoys. There, every man's heart shall be open to every man, for every breast shall be so white and pure, that the soul so cleansed, shall find cause to thank God for washing away their stains in the blood of his Son, but not be at all ashamed, or blush for any of their old blemishes.

And why should they not see into one another's hearts freely, who have no secrets in reserve, no separate interest to promote, no deceit to manage, no faults to conceal? For neither sins nor sinners are in heaven. And those who once were such, from the instant of their entering that place of purity, are out of all possibility to ever be so anymore. None of the darkest secrets, none of the deepest mysteries, shall then continue as such. The blessed shall be let into a distinct knowledge of them; and what is infinitely better, they shall be ever viewing and admiring the adorable perfections of God himself.

This human nature shall then be advanced to its just and utmost perfection, incapable of being exalted or sunk lower anymore. All the excellences communicated to it by being made in the likeness of its Maker, shall then be set at their highest pitch; and the corruption and defects introduced by sin, utterly done away. No, we shall even rise above what was given us at our first creation, though we had been so happy as to retain our primitive advantages. We shall understand and judge without error, remember without forgetfulness, think without wandering, love without dissimulation; we shall have sense without anything to offend it, ease without pain, life without death; power of acting without obstruction, fulness without nausea, and such a perfection of every faculty, that there shall be in us all imaginable soundness and vigour, without any sort of disease or decay. Whatever maiming our bodies may have suffered here by sudden disasters, or wasting distempers, or mortified sores; whatever limbs have been lost by the bite of wild beasts, or the cruelty of men no less barbarous than they — by war, or fire, or any other dismembering accident — no indeed, even the weakness and deformities of sickness and old age, shall all be repaired at the general resurrection; every defect supplied, every loss restored.

And the body — complete in all its parts; sound and youthful, beautiful and gay — shall then, together with the soul, be clothed with everlasting health and immortality. So happy shall all the saints be at that day; but though all shall be happy, yet they will not all be equally so: their blisses *then* will hold proportion to their virtues *now*; as *one star differs from another star in*

that glory (1Cor 15.41), because the merciful King of glory *rewards every man according to his works* (Psa 62.12).

Book III.
Select Meditations out of
AUGUSTINE'S SOLILOQUIES.

CHAP. 1.

O LORD, who *searches me out and knows me* (Psa 139.1), help me likewise to know you, life of my soul (Joh 17.3). Show me your face, my light, my comfort, the joy and desire of my heart. Let me find, let me embrace, let me possess you, my heavenly spouse, my everlasting bliss. Let me love you, O Lord, my *strength*, my *tower of salvation*, my hope, and help, and sure refuge in all manner of distress (Psa 18.2). Let me enjoy you, my chief good, without whom nothing is good.

O *word of God* eternal, *sharper than any two-edged sword* (Joh 1.1; Heb 4.12), open my ears that I may hear your voice. O light incomprehensible, enlighten my eyes that they may behold you; and scatter, Lord, all those mists of vanity that dance before my sight, and which lead me into sin and error. Make for me a new smell, that I may *run after the aroma of your ointments* (Song 1.3), and correct my vitiated palate, that I may taste and delight in your sweet and gracious goodness.

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And, having thus reformed my *sensitive* faculties, carry on, I beseech you, the good work in the *intellectual* faculties of my soul (Psa 34.8). Oh, that my *understanding* may apprehend you, my *will* choose you, my *memory* retain and meditate upon you, and my whole *heart* cling to you with immoveable steadfastness, and a most sensible delight. O life, to and by whom all things live; without whom I die and perish; by whom I am animated, sustained, restored, exhilarated — where shall I find you, that I may go out of myself, and subsist entirely in you? You have indeed said, *No man shall see me and live* (Exo 33.20). Lo! if this is the condition of my happiness, I most gladly accept it. Yes, let me die, O Lord, that I may see you in heaven; and let me see you, that I may die to this world. *I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is far better* (Phi 1.23). I wish to die, that I may see my Lord: I would not live here, so that I may live with Christ. *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit* (Acts 7.59). Take my soul, my life; enter into my heart, you *joy* of my heart, that it may rejoice in you. Shed your bright beams upon it, sun of righteousness, that it may know and love you; for this is why it does not love you as it should: because it knows you only very imperfectly; and therefore, its knowledge is very imperfect, because your light has till now *shined in darkness* (Joh 1.5), and my *darkness* did not *receive* it as it should.

O light of truth, and true light, *which lights every man who comes into the world* (who comes *into it*, but does not love it; for whoever would be a friend *of the world is an enemy to God*, Jas 4.4). Dispel the thick darkness which is upon the face of this *chaos*, that my mind may see you by its intellectual powers, and so comprehend as to know you, and so know as to love you.

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For everyone who knows you, loves you, even more than himself — forsakes himself and flies to you, that there he may find peace and perfect joy. For want of that knowledge, I have been so extremely defective in *this point*: departing from you, the true inward and spiritual joy, and seeking satisfaction in outward objects. Thus I have, with an adulterous affection, set that unfaithful heart upon vanities, a heart which of right was entirely yours. And I have succeeded according to my folly. For as vanity was the object, so it has been the fruit and portion of my love. This made it impossible for me to delight in and rest upon you. For I was conversant about *external* pleasures, while you are to be found only in *internal* pleasures. I made temporal advantages my study. You impart yourself to those who are spiritual; my thoughts, and discourse, and inclinations, were engaged and entangled in short and transitory things; and you, O Lord, *inhabit* — no, you are yourself, *eternity* (Isa 57.15). You are in heaven; I am altogether

on earth. You love high things; I foolishly dote on those which are vile and low. And what way can be found to reconcile such contrary dispositions?

CHAP. 2.

WHEN, wretched man, *when* will this crookedness in you be made straight, and modelled by the rule and pattern of your God? He delights in solitude and retired contemplation; I pursue a variety of company and diversions; he dwells in silence, I in noise and hurry; he loves truth, I follow lies and deceit; he requires and is himself unspotted purity; I wallow in uncleanness, and all manner of filthy lusts. Thus, Lord, You are good, and I am evil; You are holy, I am a miserable sinner; You are light, I am blindness; You are life, I am dead; you are essential truth, I am *altogether vanity* (Psa 39.5).

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Such, alas! am I, and such is *every man living*. And now what shall I say to you, my God? I am your creature, and reduced to nothing; *your hands have made me, and fashioned me* (Psa 119.73). Indeed, your hands were nailed to the cross for me; *do not despise the work of your own hands*, my Creator (Psa 138.8); do not, my Redeemer, forget the wounds of your own hands. Behold, you have *graven me* upon the palms of your hands (Isa 49.16); O read those indelible characters, and save me. Your creature lifts up his soul to you; make me again by your regenerating power; inspire me with new life by your enlivening influence; heal my breaches, repair my decays, and spare me by your mercy, for my days are *even as nothing in comparison to you* (Psa 39.5).

Lord, what is man, that he should presume to expostulate with, or address to God his Maker? Pardon your servant. Lord, who is but dust and ashes, and yet *takes it upon himself to speak* to so great a majesty (Gen 18.27); let my necessity be accepted as an excuse for this boldness. My grief will have vent, and my calamity forces a complaint. I am sick, and cry to my physician for help; blind, and seek the light; dead, and implore the life of souls. For this physician is *You*, light and life are you, and only you; and therefore, *Jesus of Nazareth, have mercy on me; Son of David, have mercy on me* (Luk 18.37-39). O fountain of health, hearken to the complaints of your poor diseased patient. O light which passed by, stand still a while, 'till this blind creature can come to you: lend him your hand, and in *your light let him see light* (Psa 36.9). O life essential and everlasting, raise this wretch from the grave of destruction, long dead in trespasses and sins.

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Lord, what am I, to have thus taken it upon myself to talk to you? A stinking carcass, food for worms, a polluted broken vessel, fuel for the fires of hell: O wretched creature! Mercy, my God, mercy! for all this and no better, is *man born of a woman, who has but a short time to live, and is full of misery* (Job 14.1); *man who is altogether vanity, compared to the beasts that perish, and resembling them in folly* (Psa 39.11; 49.20).

But, alas! what am, I the worst of men? A dark abyss, a clod of earth, a *child of wrath*, a *vessel of dishonour* (Eph 2.3), conceived in uncleanness, living in trouble, dying in anguish; poor and naked, miserable and weak, not knowing where I came from and where I go; whose *days pass like a shadow, whose life withers like grass* (Psa 102.11). The more is added to it, the more is taken from it; and every step from my cradle is a nearer advance to my grave. For a while I am exercised with the vicissitudes of joy and grief, of health and sickness; with fear and trembling, hunger and thirst, heat and cold, languishing and pains; and at last I must sink down and vanish in death, which has a thousand ways of snatching mortals out of the world, when they are least aware of it — most certain in itself, but in the time and manner, most uncertain.

This, Lord, is my misery; and yet I am secure in the midst of all these dangers. So great is my calamity, so little is my sense of it. I will therefore cry to my God, *before I go away from here, and am seen no more* (Psa 39.13). I will confess my vileness before you, and show you all my trouble. Help me, my strength, by whom I am sustained. Shine upon me, my light, by whom alone I see: come to me, and quicken me, my life, by whom alone I live. For you alone are my help and light, my life and my joy, *my Lord, and my God*.

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CHAP. 3. The Misery of Unregenerate Man.

O LORD, the word of God, the word *itself* God; you *are* light, and by you the light was made (Joh 1.1, 2). You are the Way, the Truth, and the Life (Joh 14.6), in whom there is no darkness or error, no vanity or death. Without you, *I put darkness for light, and light for darkness* (Isa 5.20). Without you I am all over confusion and mistake, ignorance and blindness: say to my soul, *let there be light* (Gen 1.3), that I may discern the light, and avoid darkness; that I may see the way, and be delivered from my wandering; that I may know the truth, and not be deceived by falsehood; that I may attain the true life, and not be swallowed up in death. You are my Lord, and I will fear you, my God; and I will praise you, my Father; and I will love you, my spouse; and I will keep myself only unto you. Pity this desolate creature, who *sits in darkness and in the shadow of death, and guide my feet into the way of peace* (Luk 1.79), that I may *go into the house of my God with the voice of joy and thanksgiving* (Psa 42.4). For this is the way by which I must return from my errors: into You the true way, even the way of life.

I will therefore approach you, O Father of heaven and earth, and lay before you all my state, that the frank confession of my misery may recommend me to your mercy. I was reduced to nothing, — no, to worse than nothing — and I knew it not, because you are the truth, and I was not with you. I was wounded with my transgressions and felt no smart, because you are *the life*, and I was not with you. I was brought to nothing, because you are the *Word* by whom all things were made, and I was not with you.

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For God *saw all things that he had made, and behold they were very good* (Gen 1.13). They must be so, because nothing was made without him (Joh 1.3); and nothing that is good can be otherwise, except by its participation of, and union with, the supreme Good. But God made no evil, nor does it have any being of its own, but it is only a privation of good; and it is therefore *nothing*, and makes those who commit it, in God's account, nothing too, being made without the Word, without which nothing that has an actual existence was made. And therefore it is evil because it does not proceed from, and it has no part in, that good by which *all things were made*. And consequently, to be without the *Word*, is to be *nothing*; and evil argues only for a defect, and not a positive effect, because all things that are, are by the Word.

Now, what it means to be without the Word, is easily understood from that description he gives of himself: *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life* (Joh 14.6). He that is without these, is without the Word; and to be without Him is *evil*, because it separates from the Author of all *good*. It is also to be *nothing*, because it infers a defect, a privation of living in and with him, by whom all things that exist are, and are made good. As often, then, as we depart from good, so often we depart from the Word, and from our proper existence. And I thank you, O Lord, for so far enlightening me with the knowledge of you, and of myself, as to make me sensible that whenever I forget that which is good, and corrupt myself with evil, I am transformed from what I was — I lose my spiritual life and being, and am cut off from you. What a wretch I was, not to consider this before! How low I fell, and how exactly that description of the heathen idols suited the

condition of my soul; for during my separation from you, this idol also *has ears and hears not, nose and smells not, mouth and speaks not, hands and acts not* (Psa 115.5-7).

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In short, he is nothing but an empty form, the lines and proportions of every part, without the use and sensation that is proper to any of them.

It is so true, that while I was without you, I was not at all, but fell back into nothing; blind and deaf, and insensible to do good, having no inclination, no knowledge to avoid evil. Hence, my enemies had their will with me; they stripped and wounded, they spoiled and slew me, because I departed from you, my light and my defence. But, O God of my life, raise me, I pray you, from this death. Look upon me in the day of my trouble, and save me from the hand of the insulting adversaries. Let those who hate me flee before you, and let me live in you, and by you. They saw my misery, and held me in derision; they divided my virtues among them — those garments given to adorn my soul, and rode over my head! They defiled your holy temple with filth and sin, and brought me into ruin and desolation; they led me captive from one wickedness into another, and dragged me through mire and clay. I was a slave, and in love with my bondage; blind, and *loved darkness rather than light*; tied and bound, and fond of my chains; miserable, and knew it not. And all because I was separated from that almighty Word by which every creature subsists, and is preserved. O, from now on unite me to yourself; for when I go from you, I perish; and I can in no other way be restored to being, except by that Power of making a new creature, which at the first made me out nothing. And blessed be that power and mercy which visited me when I offended, raised me up when I was fallen, taught me when I was ignorant, and gave sight to my eyes when I was *blind*.

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CHAP. 4. **An Act of Praise for God's Manifold Mercies** **in Man's Present State.**

TEACH me, my God, how much I ought to love you, how thankfully I ought to praise you, how carefully I ought to please you. Let the voice of your thunder be heard from above, and pierce the ears of my stupid heart; that I may magnify that goodness which created me when as yet I was not; which enlightened me when I was in darkness; which revived me when I was dead; which sustained me from my youth forward with its bounty; and still cherishes this vile, useless, loathsome worm, with the good gifts of its right and left hand.

Open to me, *O key of David, which opens, and no man shuts* against him to whom you open; and *shuts, and no man opens* to him against whom you shut (Rev 3.7, 8) — open to me, *Holy and True*, that I may enter into your light, and see, and know, and thank you with my whole heart. *For great is your mercy toward me; and you have delivered my soul from the nethermost hell. O Lord, my God, how excellent is your name in all the world! What is man that you are mindful of him? Or the son of man that you visit him?* (Psa 86.13; 8.1, 4). O hope of your saints, and life of my soul, by whom I live, and without whom I die; light of my eyes, and joy of my heart — let me love you with all my mind, and with all my strength; because your heart is so wonderfully enlarged, and you have first loved me with an exceeding love.

And why should this be to *me*: that the Creator of heaven and earth, and of the great deep — to whom my goods cannot extend, and cannot add anything — that He should grant to love a creature of whom He has no need?

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O wisdom, O word of God, which enables the dumb to speak — open my mouth and inspire me with your praise, that I may thankfully recount the benefits which you have conferred upon your servant from the beginning. My very being is from your gift; I am, because you made me. And this was ordained by you from all eternity, before the mountains were brought forth, or the great depths broken up; before the earth was fixed upon its foundations, or the heavens stretched out as a curtain. I was written in your book, and numbered among your creatures by an everlasting decree, a certain foresight of everything that should be, long before it was.

And what, O merciful Father, and most mighty Creator, what could there be in me to deserve, what is there to incline your glorious majesty, to make me? What indeed, since I was not? And you did not make me a drop of water, a spark of fire, nor a bird or fish; not a brute or an insect, not a stone or a tree; not one of those creatures to whom you have imparted being without life; nor of those who have life without sense: nor yet of those who have sense without reason — but a creature superior to all those; *a little lower than the angels* (Psa 8.5), because I am partaker of an intelligent spirit common to man and them, by your merciful distribution and most wise appointment. But I am still a little lower than the angels, because they are happy in that knowledge of your glories which *they* attain by sight, but *I* by faith and hope only; they see you *face to face, I through a glass darkly*; they know you *fully*, I as yet but *in part* (1Cor 13.9, 12).

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CHAP. 5. The Excellency of Man's Future State.

THIS is my present condition, but this condition will not last always. *For when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part shall be done away* (1Cor 13.10). *Then we shall with open face behold the glory of the Lord, and be changed ourselves into the same image of him we behold* (2Cor 3.18). What then shall hinder us from being no longer *a little lower than the angels*, whom you have already crowned with hope, and shall then *crown with glory and honour* (Psa 8.5), whom you delight to honour as your friends and favourites, and advance to a dignity and happiness in all points like theirs? Thus has your truth declared: that *those who will be accounted worthy to obtain that world, are equal to the angels, and are the children of God* (Luk 20.34, 36). Children of God, in the most beneficial and exalted sense, if equal to the angels; and therefore sons of God, because the Son of God was made the Son of Man. The consideration of this mystery gives me the confidence to say not only that man is *little lower than the angels*, not only that he is *equal to the angels*, but that in some respects he is even *superior to the angels* — in that a man, not an angel, is God; and God granted to be made, not an angel, but a man.

This honour done to our nature gives man a prerogative above any other creature whatsoever. For the *Word, which was in the beginning with God, and was God* (Joh 1.1); that word which said, *let there be light and there was light* (Gen 1.3) (by which “created light” some understand those intellectual spirits, the angels); that word by which God made all things in the beginning, *was made flesh, and dwelt in us, and we have seen his glory* (Joh 1.14).

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This is that glory in which I glory: this the joy in which I rejoice. I acknowledge, therefore, O Lord, my life, my joy and glory, that in making me a creature capable of reason, you have made me, in some regard, equal to the angels; because this gives me a capacity of being made perfect by your word, and receiving the adoption of sons by your only begotten Son; that *beloved Son in whom you are well pleased* (Mat 3.17); your consubstantial coeternal heir, Jesus Christ, our only Lord and Redeemer; our enlightener and comforter, *our advocate with the Father* (1Joh 2.2). Our life, and Saviour, and only hope, who loved us more tenderly than his own body, *by whom we have boldness and access with confidence to you* (Eph 3.12), because *he has given us power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believe in his name* (Joh 1.12).

I will magnify your name, O Lord, for by creating me in your own image, after your likeness (Gen 1.26), you have given me a capacity of such excellent glory, as to become a child of God. This is an honour of which trees and stones, and all the vegetable and sensitive world, whether of creatures in the air, or earth, or sea, are totally excluded. To them you have not granted the power of becoming your children, because they are not endued with reason. For this capacity consists in that reason by which we attain to the knowledge of God; and therefore man alone is happy in it, because of resembling his heavenly Father in the dignity and perfections of a rational soul. Thus I owe to your favour and goodness, my being a man, and to a yet higher degree of the same goodness that, being man by nature, I am qualified for becoming your child by grace; which none of the other creatures in this lower world can be.

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And why is this granted to me, O universal Author and Maker of every creature? Why should I be so signally honoured above the rest of the works of your hands? You are the same *from* and *to* all eternity; and in time You created all things in the space of six days. Man and beasts, stones and trees, were produced together. No antecedent merits of their own contributed to that production; for how could they deserve it, who did not as yet exist? It was of your goodness alone that they had a being communicated to them; and in this respect, all were equal: that all were alike undeserving. How did it then come to pass, that *this* creature, whom you endue with reason, should receive such a peculiar, such abundant marks of your love? Why were *they* not advanced to the same level with me, or I at least thrust down to the same level with them? Did I have any right, any pretence at all, to that glorious privilege of being made capable of this Divine sonship? Far be it from me. Lord, to entertain so vain a thought. No, no, it was your goodness, your free grace alone, that made this distinction so much to my advantage: that I might see, and feel, and taste, and partake largely of your mercy. And therefore, by that grace which thus appeared so liberally in your first creation, I humbly implore you to make me a *new creature*; and grant me grace to be duly thankful for the infinite goodness thus extended to me.

CHAP. 6. Of the Almighty Power of God.

YOUR mighty hand, which is the same at all times and on all occasions, created angels in heaven, and worms on earth; nor was the one of these operations less a demonstration of your omnipotence than the other.

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For as no hand but yours could give being to creatures so noble as the angels, so none but yours could frame the vilest insect. Only yours could spread out the firmament; only yours could produce the least spire of grass; only yours could fashion these wonderful bodies of ours; only yours make the least hair of our heads white or black: for to that power which knows no bounds, all things are not only possible, but are equally so.

To you there is the same difficulty in making a worm, as an angel; to you the same ease in creating the whole heaven, as a single leaf; colouring a hair and compacting a body, are the same thing; and the Almighty finds no difference between hanging the earth upon the waters, and supporting the waters by dry grounds (Gen 1.6, 7, 9). *Whatever pleased him was done in heaven and in earth, and in the sea, and in all deep places* (Psa 135.6), and done exactly as it pleased him. He made them all, and me among the rest, according to the excellency of his wisdom and skill, and power, and good pleasure. Your hand, had you thought fit, could have made me a stone, or a bird, or a serpent, or any of the brute kind — but such was your goodness, that it would not. If then, I would be satisfied as to why I am none of these, but a creature by far more excellent than all these, no other answer can be replied to that question but this: that your wondrous goodness was pleased to thus order it; and that it thus ordered it without any

consideration on my part to deserve it, or in any way incline you to grant me such preference above the creatures of lower attainments and less honourable station.

How shall I therefore praise you, most mighty Lord? How shall I be able to contribute to your glory, who could contribute nothing to my own existence? Let your own works magnify you, according to the greatness and multitude of your power and mercies.

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Your praise is too vast to be comprehended by thought, expressed by words, or heard by any mortal ear. These all are finite, and pass away; but your glory is infinite, and the praise of it endures forever. Our thoughts begin and soon come to an end; our words form different sounds and vanish into air; our ear receives an impression of those sounds and quickly loses them again — but Your praise is fixed, and abides to all eternity.

What mortal man, then, is sufficient to *tell your noble acts, or set forth all your praise?* (Psa 106.2). He praises you indeed, who acknowledges himself *unable* to praise you. We only praise you in and by yourself, and all our praise is in you. Then we have true praise: when you approve your own works in us. When we seek it from any other, we lose true praise; for that is transitory, and yours is eternal; and as often as the transitory is grasped at, the eternal slips away from us. Let me therefore love and seek you alone, from whom is true and lasting praise. Give me yourself, and so I shall be able to praise you; for what am I without you, but dust and ashes, a dead dog, a loathsome carcass; and how should death and corruption praise *the God of the spirits of all flesh, who inhabits eternity?* (Num 16.22; Isa 57.15).

Can darkness praise light, and death life? Yet such is the difference between You and me. You are light, I am darkness; You are life, I am death; You are an eternal substance, I am vanity and nothing. And can a mortal man, who today is here, and tomorrow is not, praise Him who endures the same forever? Can rottenness and worms add to the glory of the great God? Can the one who is conceived, and born, and brought up in sin, praise that holiness whose pure eyes cannot behold iniquity?

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No, my God, let your own incomprehensible power, and wisdom, and goodness, your boundless mercy and unspeakable clemency — let *these* praise You, for these alone are qualified to set forth your praises: even that almighty power and infinite love by which you have created me to *natural* life, and regenerated me to *spiritual* life, O God, the life of my soul.

CHAP. 7.

A Prayer for the Divine Grace and Protection.

I WILL therefore rejoice under the shadow of your wings, and hope in your goodness which first gave me being. Your bounty made me; let it also help me. Preserve that creature which your goodness made, from perishing in its own wickedness and misery. For how am I the better for being made, if I am allowed to sink into my own corruption? *Have you, my God, created man for nothing? Do not despise, then, the work of your own hands* (Psa 138.8); but govern and preserve it. You made me out of nothing; and if you leave me destitute of your protection, I will quickly return to nothing. For as I was not, when you first command me into being, so unless you are pleased to assist and support me, there is that principle of destruction in me, which will soon make me not to be again.

Help me, therefore, God of my life, that I not perish. Had you not made me, I would never have been at all. Because you made me, I am what I am; but if you do not preserve me, I am no more. Let, then, that love which prevailed with you to give me being, also prevail for the governance and preservation of that being. Save what you have created, and complete your mercy; for it

would be better never to have created me, than to create me for sin and destruction. The benefit I ask is not less than that granted already.

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Your love is still the same, for you hate nothing that you have made, and are the same kind God — even love itself. *Your hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, nor is your ear heavy, that it cannot hear; but my iniquities have separated me and my God* (Isa 59.1, 2), between darkness and light, between the shadow of death and life, between falsehood and truth — between my perishing and your enduring and everlasting substance.

CHAP. 8.

A Prayer against Evil Desires.

THESE are the thick shades of night with which I am encompassed in the dark dungeon of this mortal body, till the *day dawns, and the day star arises in my heart* (2Pet 1.19). O that your powerful voice would issue that irresistible command, *Let there be light!* Darkness should so disperse *from off the face of the deep, so that the dry land appear* (Gen 1.2, 9), and bring forth abundantly the green herb, and the fruit of righteousness after its kind. O Father of life, leave me not under the power of wicked imaginations, nor give me a proud look: but turn away from your servant a haughty mind and vain concupiscence, and possess my heart with your grace, that I may serve and always think on you with reverence and godly fear (Sir 23.4, 5).

Enlighten my eyes that they may see you; and not exalt themselves, but gaze with humble wonder on the things that are too high to be thoroughly perceived. And fix my sight and desires on the blessings of your right hand, and not on those of your left. Attract my heart with that goodness you have laid up for those who fear you, that I may love you with everlasting love — and not wander after vain objects, and blinded with their deceitful appearance, *put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; darkness for light, and light for darkness* (Isa 5.20);

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but that, by your gracious guidance and mighty protection, I may be safely led, and escape those manifold snares which the subtle nature of our common enemy lays everywhere in our way to catch unwary souls. The one who wisely considered our danger, has given us fair warning about this: *All that is in the world, is the lust of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life* (1Joh 2.16).

Since, then, every place is so thick set with snares, and every step we take is so full of hazard, who is be able to promise himself safety? Surely none but he whom You secure from the *desire of the eyes*, by taking from him *a proud look*; none but he whom you defend against the *lust of the flesh*, by turning from him from vain concupiscence; none but he whom you have made proof against the *pride of life*, by delivering him from a haughty, insolent, and profane *mind*. Happy is the man who is thus armed, thus protected; *His enemies will not be able to do him violence; the son of wickedness shall not hurt him* (Psa 89.22).

I beg you, therefore, O my Redeemer, for your own mercy's sake, let me not fall into the snares laid for me, nor give the adversary occasion to triumph in my ruin. *Let my God arise, and let his enemies be scattered; yes, let those who hate him flee before him. Like the smoke vanishes, so you drive them away; and like the wax melts at the fire, so let the ungodly perish at the presence of God* (Psa 68.1, 2). You, Lord, are the Father of the fatherless: hear the cry of your desolate and helpless children. *Sleep not, nor slumber, O you keeper of Israel*, for the watchful enemy that labours for *Israel's* destruction, neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psa 121.4).

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O Light, before which all other light is darkness, which no night can dampen, no obstruction intercept, no blindness shut out — you who enlighten everything in every part, at once and always, receive me into your brightness, that I may see you in yourself, and myself in you, and all other things under you. If you withdraw your shining, the clouds of my ignorance gather, and I am overwhelmed with sin and error. Without you, all is black, all is evil: for what can possibly be good which is destitute of you, the true, the chief, the only good?

I know, O Lord, and acknowledge that besides you alone, not only all *without* me, but all *within* me, is misery and want. And I cannot be other than wretched when distracted by the vast variety of worldly objects, and drawn away from you, the one supreme good. I pursue first one, and then another, but cannot find satisfaction from *any*. I starve in the midst of plenty, and am but mocked with the empty pomp of a feast, when my soul feeds on anything but you — for you alone can satisfy my hunger, assuage my pains, and fill my large desires.

How wretched, *doubly* wretched, is that soul which forsakes You, with whom there is fulness and joy, to follow the world, where it is sure to suffer poverty and pain? The world cries out, *I cannot satisfy you*; You say, *eat and let your soul be satisfied*; and yet (such is the perverseness of my appetite) I follow after what cannot content me, and forsake that which can and would. Correct, O spiritual physician, this disorderly eagerness for *trash*, and help me to relish the wholesome food of souls — and to *labour for that food which endures to everlasting life* (Joh 6.27).

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The great things you have done for me already, encourage me to ask and hope for more. I was not, and you gave me being; I was lost, and you restored me; dead and you raised me up. You endured death to purchase my life; and though the King of heaven, you delivered up your person to ransom the least and most unworthy of your subjects; your blood was not thought a price too dear for my redemption; and I may truly say that, in some sense, you loved me better than yourself, since you were content to die for my sake. By so gracious a covenant, by so precious a ransom, I am redeemed from slavery and exile, from punishment and death. And that the remembrance of such astonishing mercies might be forever fresh and present with me, you have called me by your name, marked me for your own with your blood, anointed me with that oil of the Holy Spirit with which you yourself were anointed, and distinguished me with the most honourable of all titles, that of *Christian* (1Joh 2.20). Thus have your grace and mercy all along *preserved* me. And infinite are the dangers from which you have *delivered* me. You have been my guide and teacher when I strayed through ignorance; my reprover and corrector when I offended through carelessness or presumption; my comfort in trouble, my support in despair. When I fell, you picked me up; when I stood, it was because you upheld me; when I advanced, you conducted me; when I approached, you received me; when I slept, you guarded me; when I cried, you heard and answered me.

CHAP. 9.

Of God's seeing all the Actions and Intentions of Men.

THESE and innumerable other mercies I thankfully ascribe to you, my God, and recollect with such a sensible delight, that I could dwell upon them forever; and wish to speak and think of you alone; to love you with all my heart, and mind, and strength; and with every faculty and part of my soul and body, to be constantly employed in praising you.

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O how blessed are those pious men who can rejoice in you! But you, my God, see all my imperfections, and how far distant I am from this happiness. Your eyes are a thousand times

more piercing than the sun, penetrating the deepest and darkest recesses, and watching continually *in every place to behold the evil and the good* (Pro 15.3).

For you, who fill and govern all things, have a constant regard to the work of your own hands. Had you not loved your creatures, you would not have made them; and the same love which made them, will always continue to guide, and preserve, and watch over them. Thus you are ever present with me, always marking well my goings, and numbering all my steps; you stand over me as a watchful sentinel, and observe me as carefully as if all care of everything besides had been dismissed, and I remained the only object of your concern. For so entire, so unalterable, is the perfection of your sight and knowledge, that it is neither more exact, being confined to *one object*, nor at all perplexed or confused by taking into view the most distant and *innumerable objects*. Because, just as you consider the whole with all its parts as if one distinctly, so you see all — however many, however different, however remote — and see them all together, with one and the same act of your whole Divine knowledge. This is of such unbounded comprehension, so incapable of being separated in its own operations, or distracted with a variety of objects, that one and many are the same; and both are understood and observed alike, because they fall alike under the same undivided and entire wisdom which applies the whole of itself to the consideration of each and every thing.

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And thus I ought to believe that myself, and everything belonging to me, is as much under your eye as if your providence had no other care. For you are always present, always ready, if you but find me so. Wherever I go, you go along with me, unless I first forsake and fall from you. Wherever I am, you abide with me; for you are everywhere — that I may find you upon my every move, and thus subsist by you; for otherwise I must perish, not being able to subsist without you. I must acknowledge, then, that everything I do is done *in your presence*. You understand my every action, and the nature of it, much better than even I who am the doer of it. For let me do what I will, when I will, and *still* you are equally present at all times; an incessant observer of all my views and intentions, my inclinations and inward complacencies, my words and actions. So I have good reason to cry out with David, *Lord, you know all my desires, and understand my thoughts afar off* (Psa 38.9; 139.2).

You see how the Spirit moves me, where it comes from, where it rests, and where it tends — because you are the *Weigher* of spirits. The outward act, like a well-leaved tree, may be fair and flourishing, and impose upon the eyes of men. But the all-seeing Judge goes deeper: He examines the sap and root thoroughly. If this is rotten or bitter, if the intentions are corrupt, He deals with the tree according to its root, and recompenses the man according to the bent of his heart. The evil that he would do is punished, and the good he endeavoured and heartily desired to do, but could not do, is as kindly accepted as if it had been actually accomplished. You see what I would be at, as soon as I begin to move: what I design and delight in. Your ears and eyes are ever open. You attend diligently, and enter punctually into your book, whatever I do — whether it is good or whether it is evil — that the one may receive a bountiful reward, and the other its deserved punishment.

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And this shall surely be *when the books are opened, and all mankind shall be judged out of the things which are written in those books, according to their works* (Rev 20.12).

Thus may we understand what is said of you, that you *search out all perfection* (1Chr 28.9);¹⁷ because in human actions you have a greater regard to what we wish and intend to do, than to

¹⁷ **1Chr 28:9** "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts.

what we really do. And when I seriously consider that this is the method by which you proceed, shame and confusion, fear and horrible dread, sink my spirits — to think how holy and upright, how pure and sincere, all our intentions and behaviour ought to be, since we do everything in the sight of our Judge; a Judge on whom no disguise can impose; a Judge who not only sees our actions, but perfectly discerns our most secret thoughts.

CHAP. 10.

The Impotence of Human Nature to resist Temptations, without the Assistance of Divine Grace.

O LORD, *the God of the spirits of all flesh* (Num 16.22) — whose eyes are upon all the ways of the sons of men, from the very instant of their entrance into this world, to that of their departure out of it, that you may render to every man according to his doings — make me, I beseech you who are acquainted with me, truly sensible of my own weakness and my wants. I have indeed presumed to say but vain boasts: that *I was rich, and stood in need of nothing; while, alas! I was poor, blind, naked, miserable, and weak* (Rev 3.17). Thus I thought myself to be something, when in truth I was nothing; and *professing myself to be wise, I became a fool* (Rom 1.22).

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I arrogated ¹⁸ the little good I had, to my own wisdom and diligence; but you have undeceived my partial mistakes, and now have effectually convinced me that every excellence is entirely your gift (Jas 1.17); that *without you we can do nothing* (Joh 15.5); and as the psalmist well observes, *unless you, Lord, are pleased to keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain* (Psa 127.1). You have taught me by experience, what little significance human strength and industry are, by leaving me for a while destitute of your help, and bringing my supposed abilities to the proof. This was not for your better information, who knew me perfectly before, but in order to create in me right notions of myself; and to abate that unjust esteem which I entertained for qualifications not yet understood. For it is true, my God, I not only thought myself to be something, but also that being so, was owing to myself, and that my own strength was sufficient security. Nor did I discover that my safety was the effect of *Your* guidance and protection, till you thought fit to withdraw yourself for a season, and allowed me to fall for lack of your support. By this event, alas! I had but too sensible and too sad a demonstration, that all I did commendably before, was the effect of your gracious governance; that my misery and my fall was properly my own; but my recovery and my standing, were yours and *only* your doing.

Thus, in mercy you have opened my eyes, and awakened me out of my deceitful dream; by letting me see that *man is appointed to a state of warfare on earth* (Job 14.1); that dangers and temptations beset him everywhere; that no flesh can have anything to glory before God, in hopes of being justified in the sight of their almighty Judge — since whatever good thing we do, whether the proportion is less or more, the whole is still your gift, and nothing truly is our own but our sins and our miseries.

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And what shall man then find to glory of? Of his sins and miseries? That would be most absurd — a cause for shame and sorrow, but none for boasting or self-satisfaction. What then? Of any good? No, not that neither; for this is equally absurd: to glory in that which is not our own, but another's. For yours, O Lord, is all the good; and consequently yours is all the glory. Anyone who assumes to himself the honour of the good that is Yours, is a thief and a robber; and to that extent, he resembles the devil himself, that he would usurp the majesty and property of his Master. Someone who is ambitious to have praise for their gifts, and does not aim at promoting your honour but his own — however profuse men may be in their commendations of him — yet

¹⁸ *Arrogate*: to make an undue claim to something.

you will be sure to reproach and condemn him for his arrogance and injustice. And what will the praise of men then profit him? For though they extol him ever so much, if *You* disapprove, they will not be able to defend him when *You* sit in judgment, nor deliver him from vengeance when your awful voice passes the fatal sentence upon him.

Therefore, O Lord, who have formed and sustained me from my mother's womb, do not allow me, I implore you, to fall under that condemnation of attempting to steal away any part of your glory. Yours is all the good, and it is fitting that yours should be all the honour for it. To me belongs only confusion of face, and unspeakable misery; for mine is all the evil; and of that evil this must be the consequence, unless your mercy interposes and rescues me. But you, my Lord, will have mercy; your mercy extends to all your works, and you hate nothing that you have made; you impart to us of your own goodness, and enrich us with many excellent gifts, having declared yourself a lover of the poor, and a provider for their necessities out of your hidden treasures.

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Behold, we are poor; we are your needy children, your little flock; open to us your gates, that *the poor may eat and be satisfied, and the heart of those who seek you, may praise you and live forever*. For I am taught that none of those who see, and acknowledge, and lament their poverty, shall be unenriched by you; while the rich and great in their own conceits (who are in reality the least and most wretchedly indigent of all others) shall be sent away empty, and left to perish in their supposed sufficiency (Luk 6.20; Psa 22.26; Luk 1.52, 53; 14.11; Mat 5.3).

In a due sense of this dispensation, I most humbly confess my spiritual poverty; that I have nothing of my own; and if any good action has been done by me, the honour of it is entirely yours, because the good itself was your gift. I look upon myself to be no better than vanity, a mass of corruption, a dark and empty creature, a barren soil, unable without the fructifying dew of your blessing, to bring forth any fruit, but only the venomous and noisome weeds of shame, sin, and death. If I have any good disposition, it is of your infusing; if I have persevered in doing well, it is because your strength enabled me; if I fell away from a good course, it was because your grace did not preserve me. And in each of those relapses, I would have lain and been lost forever, had not your mighty hand raised me out of that dust of death. Your light alone delivered me from blindness — *your* defence from temptations, *your* support from relapses, and *your* continual governance from final misery and irrecoverable ruin.

Thus has your goodness, O my God, prevented me in all the events and exigencies of my life: rescuing me out of past evils, sustaining and defending me against the present, and arming me against the future.

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Hewing to pieces the nets and snares laid to entrap my soul, and taking out of the way the occasions and allurements to sin, which had you not done this for me, there is no crime in the world so black, that I might not have been guilty of it. For this I know, O Lord, that there is no sin ever committed by any one man, which any other man is not capable of committing too, if that almighty power which made him man, is not at hand with its assistance. But what I could not do for myself, you have in much mercy granted to do for me: you laid upon me your commands, and signified what I ought to abstain from. You gave to these commands the sanction of promises and threatenings; and to your grace alone, I ascribe my believing the one and the other. You have governed and preserved me to *You* and to myself; and by your seasonable and happy restraints, I have been kept from adultery, murder, blasphemy, and every heinous violation of your laws, which otherwise would have provoked your displeasure, and certainly incurred my own damnation.

Sometimes there was no tempter to persuade me to do amiss; and that there was none at hand, was the effect of your merciful providence. At other times the tempter was ready, and would have done his part — but for lack of a fit time and place, the temptation could not take effect. This also was from the same good providence. At others, he laid the bait, the place was convenient, opportunity was inviting, and then, by your restraining grace, I was withheld from complying with his black and deceitful allurements. Sometimes he made his approaches in the dark — black and loathsome as he is; and your assistance enabled me to discover and detest his deformities. Sometimes *the armed strong man* attacked me with open force, and hoped to carry me by terror and storm (Luk 11.21).

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And in these conflicts, You have so powerfully restrained him, and strengthened me, that I have not only stood the shock, but come off a conqueror. Sometimes he has accosted me in a bright and beautiful figure, and transformed himself into an angel of light (2Cor 11.14); and you have rebuked him, and opened my eyes in time to detect his borrowed disguises. For this is the red dragon, the old serpent, called the devil and Satan, *having seven heads and ten horns* (Rev 12.3, 9); the great *Leviathan*, whom you have made to take his pastime upon the vast ocean of this world, *in which are innumerable creeping things, both small and great beasts* (Psa 104.25) — that is, several kinds of evil spirits, working mischief day and night, and going about *continually, seeking whom they may devour* (1Pet 5.8). And devour they certainly will, unless You, the great shepherd of souls, deliver the prey out of their hungry jaws.

This is he who appeared in the form of a serpent in paradise, whose *tail drew down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth* (Gen 3.1; Rev 12.4); who poisons the waters, that men may drink of the envenomed liquor and die; *who trusts that he can draw up Jordan in his mouth, and is made without fear* (Job 40.23; 41.33). And who can defend himself from his greedy ravings unless you, Lord, deliver him — You who *break the heads of the great dragon!* (Psa 74.13). Therefore help and protect us; hide us under the shadow of your wings, and shield us from the force of the monster's horns. For this is his constant employment; this his only desire and endeavour: to destroy and swallow up the souls which you have made.

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To you, therefore, our God, we flee; to you we flee for defence against our daily and our deadly foe; who whether we sleep or wake, whether we eat or drink, or whatever else we are employed about, is night and day making war against us, by cunning stratagems and a thousand inconceivable arts of delusion. Sometimes in open fields, sometimes from private ambushes, aiming his poisoned darts at us, so that he may slay our souls. And yet, so wretchedly stupid, so perversely mad are we, that although we *know* and *see* this fierce dragon ever attacking us with open mouth, still we can fold our hands to sleep, indulge ourselves in ease and sloth, and wantonly sport upon the brink of ruin, as if no danger threatened us! His constant endeavour is our destruction; and he is so eagerly intent upon this, as never to slumber or sleep. We in the meanwhile sleep secure, and will not so much as be awakened into one serious thought of our chief, our everlasting concern. And alas! what must become at last of creatures whom the enemy uses so much industry to destroy, and they use so very little to preserve themselves.

For God knows, infinite are our hazards, and all our way is spread so thick with traps and toils, that we cannot tread one step where there is not some net laid for our souls. And whose wisdom and care is sufficient to escape them all? — snares in our plenty, and snares in our poverty; snares in our company, and snares in our most private retirements; snares in our pleasures, and in the ordinary refreshments of life; and snares in our very fastings and most mortifying austerities. Abroad or at home, asleep or awake, we are *never safe*; but every word and action, every thought and design, is hazardous and ensnaring. Such is our condition, and so manifold is

our danger. But Lord, deliver us from the toils of the hunter, that we may give thanks to your name, saying with the holy psalmist,

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If the Lord himself had not been on our side, our enemies would have swallowed us up quickly. But praised be the Lord, who has not given us over as a prey unto their teeth. Our soul has escaped even as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are delivered (Psa 124.1, 3, 6, 7).

O gracious God, my life and light, in order to complete this deliverance, enlighten my eyes, that I may see your light, and walk in it. For who can escape the snares he does not see? And who can see them, unless you open his eyes, and direct his unwary steps? The prince of darkness works in the dark, and spreads his nets unseen; and the children of darkness fall into them, because they are destitute of your light, in which whoever walks, walks safely. For *if any man walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if a man walks in the night, he stumbles, because there is no light in him* (Joh 11.9, 10). Now you, my God, are the light which alone can guide us; you are the light of the children of light, the day that never declines; and those who walk in you, tread sure and safe; but those who lack you, are still in the thickest night, and know not where they go.

This is most manifest from daily experience: that the farther any man wanders from you, the more he is bewildered in the night of ignorance and error, of sin and confusion. And the more gross the darkness about him, the less he is capable of discerning his danger — the oftener he is entangled, the deeper he falls, and he is not sensible that he does so. And how should he ask to rise again, if he does not perceive the necessity of such an attempt, but foolishly thinks he stands, even when he most desperately falls? How will that patient ever find a cure, who has no apprehension of his disease?

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I have so great an occasion to importune you, my God and Light, to enlighten my eyes and show me the true state of my case, that I may see my way, and rightly apprehend my danger, and not be overthrown before my cruel adversaries. For our common enemy intends no less than our utter destruction. He is a robber from the beginning, and such he will continue to the end of the world. He first formed a design of invading your glory; and for a punishment of that unjust and sacrilegious pride, he was cast out of your holy mountain (Isa 14.12). And now, since that fall from heaven, he still carries on his wicked designs with indefatigable industry and malice, labouring with all his might to undermine your children. And in implacable spite toward you, to destroy the creature honoured above the rest by being made in your own image, he designed to inherit that glory with yourself, from which he fell by his proud presumption. But you, O shepherd of *Israel*, break in pieces the head of this ravaging wolf; let him not tear and devour your tender lambs, but lead your flock safely, and conduct them at last to yourself. You know his goings out, and his coming in, and his rage against us (Isa 37.28). You see through all his cunning disguises, and can with ease detect his subtlest devices. Nor do I mention these to inform you of them, for you know all things, and the most secret imaginations are not hidden from you. But I lament my danger and my own disability, that you, my Judge, may see how sensible I am of both, that your compassion may come in to my assistance, and disappoint our enemy and yours, and save those souls whose strength you are alone.

Our enemy is wondrously crafty, and his contrivances are so disguised that unless you open our eyes, we cannot easily discover what he aims at, nor distinguish this deadly foe from a very affectionate friend.

208

For he conveys himself into every place, and is dexterous beyond what is possible to conceive, at putting on all manner of shapes. Sometimes he appears like himself, a raging wolf, or a black fiend. At other times, he seems a meek and gentle lamb, and is transformed into an angel of light. He watches all our motions, observes what posture our affairs are in, and accommodates his temptations to the mood, the occasions, the events and fortunes of each person. He considers the times, the places, the critical junctures, in which these are most likely to prevail, and is sure to fall in with those who are most favourable to his mischievous purposes. He counterfeits melancholy, so that he may delude the sorrowful and dejected; and joviality, that he may betray the sprightly and gay; he wears sheep's clothing, that he may deceive the secure; and dons all the savage fierceness of the wolf, that he may terrify the fearful. Thus he manages matters with such fatal address, that some are scared with *terrors by night*, and others are wounded with the *arrows that fly by day*; others are tainted with *the secret pestilence of lusts that walk in darkness*, and still others are destroyed by the open profaneness and impudent vices that *waste at noon day* (Psa 91.5, 6). And who is sufficient for these things? What prudence, what caution can be a match for such intricate impostures? Who can *discover the face of his garment, or bridle up the teeth* of this tyrannical *Leviathan*? (Job 41.13)

Behold, he hides his arrows secretly in his quiver, and hits us suddenly when we are least in fear. While he covers his hook with specious baits, and sets his traps out of sight, he draws us into misery and death by false appearances of happiness, and under the pretence of kindness and friendship: and these things pass upon us very easily, unless you, Lord, help us to pull off the mask, and detect his sleight of hand with which the crafty juggler deludes our credulous sight.

209

If we were in danger only from acknowledged vice, and the works of the flesh, the matter would not be so hard to guard ourselves against him. But, alas! he turns our own artillery upon us, and has a thousand ways of compassing us, for his ends and our destruction, by way of our very virtues and graces, by our devotions and most spiritual exercises. This, properly, is to transform himself into an angel of light: when he makes us ten times more the children of hell, by perverting those very methods which seem to have the most direct tendency to heaven. These, and innumerable other stratagems unknown to me, this son of *Belial* finds out, and in some one or other of them, he is perpetually exercising himself to our eternal mischief. But you, O Lord, *hew the snares of the ungodly in pieces*, and do not let him triumph over us. *Let him fall into his own nets*, and *let me ever escape them*; that he may *gnash his teeth*, and *be consumed* with envy and rage at the *perishing of his own desires*, and that you may be glorified in our preservation — *O you who are the saviour of all who trust in you, who save by your right hand* (Psa 141.10; 112.10; 17.7).

CHAP. 11. The manifold Goodness of God, and what Improvement we should make of it.

THIS I request with greater confidence upon every remembrance of your favour already granted to me. And therefore, behold your servant and son of your handmaid, acknowledging with all humility, and thankfully recounting the many mercies with which you prevented, preserved, and particularly blessed me from my youth up to this very day.

210

In this I rather exercise myself, in a due sense and detestation of my ingratitude — of how odious a sin this is in itself, and how very displeasing to you. For this is the ruin of all that is good: the dam that stops the current of your mercy, which is otherwise ever overflowing upon mankind. The seeds of vice, though killed by this, revive and sprout up afresh in our hearts; and the most thriving virtues, where this baleful quality enters, are immediately poisoned and

stinted; they grow sickly, fade away and die. Therefore, I will give thanks to my God, that I do not fall into this miserable state, nor lie under the dangerous influence and indelible reproach of a sin so malignant in its quality and effect, as that of ingratitude.

O Lord my deliverer! how often has the roaring lion opened his mouth upon me, and you have drawn me from between his teeth, by quashing the temptation? How often have I wickedly complied, and done the act, and the lion stood ready to carry off his prey; but you have defended me from the hell I deserved. Thus my offences against you were repaired by the manifestations of your power and goodness in the defence of me. I was not afraid, nor stood in awe of you, and yet you kept a strict and impregnable guard for my preservation. I departed from you, and surrendered myself to the enemy, yet you would not allow him to take advantage, nor allow me to be ruined, even by my own act and deed. These benefits my gracious God conferred; and yet I was so blind as not to see them. For in this manner you have snatched my soul from him who would have torn it in pieces; and you rescued me from eternal destruction, when I was not in the least sensible how near I was to it.

211

I have ventured to the very brink of the precipice, and you have plucked me back when dropping into it. I was at the very gates of death, and you have restrained the grave from shutting her mouth upon me.

Nor has the care of this kind providence been confined only to my soul; my body also has felt its good effects. For often have you, my God and Saviour, restored me from the bed of languishing, healed those diseases which had baffled all human skill, preserved and protected me by sea and land, in perils of fire and sword, shielding me from many a sore thrust, and setting aside deaths innumerable, which were levelled at my head — standing over, and covering me with the shadow of your wings, from all manner of hurt and danger. And you did this, as I have reason to believe, in great compassion for my poor soul, considering how unprovided I was for so important a change; and considering that had I then been hurried out of the world, hell and eternal misery must have been my portion. So that your grace and mercy, thus preventing me, have rescued me from a twofold death, and secured body and soul at once, by the same suspension of the fatal stroke; and by thus lengthening out my life, you laid a foundation for my living to all eternity. These, and many other benefits, I have received at your bounteous hand; and stupid wretch, I had not regarded them — no, I was so blind as not to see them, till the light from above opened my eyes. But now you, God of my life, by whom I live; you light of my eyes, by which I see; I have received the influence of your bright beams, and have been brought to a due sight and sense of you and your goodness; and most heartily return my thanks the best I can, though most disproportionate to the mercies for which they are due. For you alone are my God and most merciful Creator, a lover of souls, and hating nothing that you have made.

212

And I, alas! with shame, confess myself *the chief of sinners*, in whom you have shown all long-suffering as a pattern to those whose sinful and miserable state shall hereafter render them objects of your clemency and compassion.

I acknowledge that your mercies are unspeakably great, *for delivering my soul from the nethermost hell*; not once, or twice, or thrice, but hundreds, and thousands, and millions of times. I was perpetually driven there; and you, just as constantly, checking my furious career, and turning me back again. And had not your own goodness loved me better than I loved myself, you would have, before this, sunk me into the bottomless pit ten thousand times over. But such is your tenderness, that you will not suffer us to undo ourselves, and make as though you did not see our offences; so that, by forbearance, you may win us to repentance. So full of mercy are all your ways, O God, which I now plainly perceive, and have a deep and grateful sense of, and am

even lost in wonder and amazement at the kindness which has all along watched over me for good, and saved both body and soul from the death, which would otherwise have long since swallowed them up. For I was entirely in the hands of death, and you restored me entire to life. Yours, therefore, is the whole of this which lives by your clemency, and every part of me conspires in offering every part of me, as a sacrifice of praise. This whole spirit, and soul, and body, and all that life resulting from the mutual union of these, will from now on be consecrated to the God of my life. For you restored all of me, that you might keep all of me for your own. And therefore I will love my strength and my deliverer, and live no longer to myself, but to you. The whole of my life was lost and gone in misery; the whole was restored and given me afresh by your mercy. For you are a God *full of compassion, long-suffering, plenteous in goodness and truth, and showing mercy to thousands, to those who love your name* (Psa 86.15; Exo 20.6).

213

Now at length, O Lord my God, I plainly perceive the equity of that command which enjoins me to *love you with all my heart, and with all my mind, and with all my soul, and with all my strength* (Mat 22.37), at all times, with a most ardent and never-ceasing affection. This is because I would perish each moment, if you did not renew the gift of life by your preservation and continuance of it; and every moment you bind me faster to you, by the addition of new benefits, and repetition of former benefits. Therefore, just as no hour, no minute passes by without some instance of your bounty, so it is fitting that none should pass by without my grateful and affectionate remembrances of so kind a benefactor; nor without such zealous and constant love of so good a God, as my frail nature and narrow soul can extend to. This is indeed what should be; yet it is what will not be, and cannot be, unless the same hand gives the grace of gratitude which lends obligations to the duty. For *every good gift, and every perfect gift, comes down from above, and is from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning* (Jas 1.17). And *it is not of him that wills nor of him that runs, but of You who show mercy*, that I must be enabled to love you (Rom 9.15). Yours, Lord, is this gift; yours is everything that is good. You command that I should love you — grant me the power to do whatever you command, and then command whatever you please.

But still, the more I reflect on you and on myself, the greater occasion I find to ask again and again, how is it possible for me to love You to the degree that I should, or where will I meet with words to express the engagements that I have to do so?

214

If I look back to the first production of my nature, the several privileges by which you have distinguished mankind from all his fellow-creatures here below, are not only highly valuable, but even astonishing marks of your favour. For example, the honour of being formed in your own image; those characteristics of the Divine excellences impressed upon the noble faculties of my soul, setting me far above the vegetable and merely sensible world, and approaching the dignity of those intellectual spirits above — that is, the angels who minister about your throne, and are allowed to partake in the glories of your beauteous presence — the ample provisions made for our convenience and delight; and that dominion which man was invested with over the works of your hands in these regions about him.

And what can I suppose your wisdom designed by *putting all things in subjection under the feet of man* (Psa 8.6), if not to teach him that his subjection was reserved to you alone: that he should devote himself entirely to your service, whom so many other things were ordained to serve? For the creation plainly seems to proceed in this order. The things without us were framed for the use of our body, the body for the soul, and the soul for You — so that, being freed from the distraction of serving anything besides, you might remain the only proper object of its care, while it possesses *You* for its joy, and happiness, and ultimate end; and creatures of a lower

rank, are for its comfort and convenience, as means tending to the attainment of that end. For all contained within the compass of those bright orbs above us are, in their own nature and in your purpose, inferior to the human soul, and are made subservient to that. But this was made so far like them, as to be subservient to some good above it too, that it might serve and grasp at that, and possess that, which it would be exquisitely happy to enjoy.

215

And if it gets above the mean affections of those mutable things which are unworthy of its chief concern, and fixes its thoughts and desires on You alone, it will advance to a nearer resemblance of that supreme Perfection whose likeness it wears, and be admitted to a clear vision of the Divine Majesty in immortal bliss. Then it will be securely possessed of all those precious and inestimable treasures in the house of its Lord. If all that we see, use, and are fond of here, were put into the balance with them, they will be found *altogether deceitful on the weights, and lighter than even vanity itself* (Psa 62.9). These are the glories which You will one day confer upon human souls; meanwhile, by the prospect of gaining them, you support and fill your saints with inexpressible joy and comfort.

Such large designs of happiness and glory might be thought a just matter for wonder, rather than of belief and expectation, were it not that, in doing so much honour to man, you do it to yourself. You exalt your own likeness and copy, by receiving it into this union with its Divine original. Nor can I allow myself to doubt that any measure of kindness will be thought too great for the soul, when I reflect how much you have already shown to this corruptible and viler part of us, the body — for your liberality is admirable to every sense and organ of this body. The sun and moon are daily in attendance; and (in obedience to your wise appointment) they serve your children by fixed and regular successions of heat and cold, of light and darkness. The brightness of the heavens you have given for an entertainment to our sight; the pure and subtle air for liberty of breathing; the difference of harmonious sounds to charm our ears; the fragrant perfumes to feast our smell; a variety of relishes for our taste; and the tactile qualities of bodies to exercise our touch.

216

Cattle of several sorts are given to assist us in our toils, and lighten the labour of supporting life; fowls of the air, fishes of the sea, and fruits of the earth, are given for our sustenance and refreshment; plants and minerals have healing virtues which may relieve the pains and distempers we are subject to. And though your wisdom has thought fit to leave us liable to many and grievous bodily sufferings, yet you have furnished us with proper remedies to assuage or remove each of them. Such is the pity and love of Him who made us, and who knows our frame: the almighty Potter, in whose hand we are the clay, thus taking care to preserve the brittle vessels he has made.

But while I am thus endeavouring to beget in my soul worthy apprehensions of your bounteous mercy, I beseech you, pour from above the light of your grace. This may enlarge the prospect, and from these little things below, get above the objects and the comforts of sense. Help me to make a right judgment of the great, the invisible above, which our great Creator has prepared for our immortal spirits. For if my God is so solicitous for a thing so mean, and of so short and perishing a nature as this mortal body; if the heavens and the air, the seas and land, light and darkness, scorching heats and refreshing shades; if showers and dew, winds and storms, fowls and fishes, beasts and vegetables; if herbs and trees, the artful and the voluntary productions of the earth — all conspire to serve us, and so assiduously perform their part to entertain us with a variety that may render life not only supportable, but even delightful — then what are the comforts, what are the entertainments? How great, how rich, how innumerable, how inconceivable, is what you have *prepared for those who love you* (1Cor 2.9), in that *heavenly*

country where they shall behold you face to face? (Heb 11.16) If such provision is made for us in our prison, then what may we expect to find in our palace?

217

Great and marvellous are your works, O King of heaven. For since all those things are exceeding pleasant and good, which you have imparted to good and evil men in common, how much better must we suppose those to be, which you have reserved as the portion peculiar to the good only? If your gifts are so many, and so various, which at present your enemies, as well as your friends, have a share in, then how noble and how unmeasurable, how deliciously sweet and charming must those needs be, which none but your friends are thought worthy to partake of? If in our day of mourning, there are so many comforts afforded us, what will be our joys in the day of our nuptials? If our dungeon and our exile have so many refreshments, what will be the felicities of our own home, the native soil of our souls, the magnificent court of the King of heaven? Surely, my God, no eye has seen, nor *can* see the things you have prepared for your faithful and beloved, unless You who have prepared them, also grant to reveal them. For *as is your majesty, so is your mercy* (Sir 2.18); and infinite is the *goodness which you have laid up for those who fear you* (Psa 31.19) — as infinite as your own essential happiness, and the inexhaustible multitude of your mercies.

For you, O Lord, are great, *incomprehensibly* great; your power knows no bounds, your wisdom no number, your kindness no measure; neither do your rewards and gracious gifts, which are in every respect worthy of, and equal in extent to yourself. They must be so, because You yourself are the reward of your saints, the hope of those who combat in this spiritual warfare, *the crown of those who strive lawfully* (2Tim 2.5), and the joy and triumph of those who conquer.

218

CHAP. 12.

The Consideration of the Divine Goodness: our hope and comfort in Sufferings.

THESE, O my God, are the many, the *mighty* benefits, with which you one day have decreed to satisfy the wants and cravings of your needy children. For you are the hope of those who have forsaken all other hopes. You are the crown of glory which shall adorn every head that overcomes. You are the eternal fulness of those blessed souls who hunger and thirst after your righteousness and kingdom. You are their never-failing comfort, communicating yourself to none but those who are content to forego — no, who have learned to despise — all worldly comforts, in order to obtain your everlasting and spiritual comfort in exchange. For those who set up their rest, and seek their satisfactions here, are reputed unworthy of those you have reserved for your elect hereafter. But those who are tormented here, are comforted hereafter; and those who bear a part in the sufferings of their Lord and Saviour, shall not fail to obtain a share in his consolations. For matters are so ordered by your wisdom, that no man can have his joys and consolations both here and hereafter. God and mammon cannot both be served; to divide ourselves between them, is to lose all pretence of reward from either — and heaven and the world, spiritual and temporal, are objects so distant, things so incompatible, that the one who resolves in good earnest to enjoy the one, is unavoidably obliged to give up all his pretensions to the other. Upon these considerations my soul refuses to be comforted, and to find her happiness in this life, and rather chooses and begs of you, my Lord and comforter, that these may be reserved for her future and eternal state.

219

Acknowledging it is most equitable that everyone should lose you, who prefers any other thing before you, I therefore make it my most earnest request, that you will not allow me to take up

with any treacherous empty comforts that desert me when I stand in need of them. But rather, give me a general disgust, and make all other things bitter and loathsome to me, so that my soul may delight itself in nothing but my God, whose charming sweetness is of that invincible efficacy which sweetens the bitterest afflictions that can possibly befall man in this valley of tears and trouble.

Transported with the ravishing foretaste of this bliss, the first martyr, St. *Steven* (Acts 7.59), received the showers of stones poured upon him by his murderers, with triumph. Your apostles departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were *counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus* (Act 5.41). St. *Andrew* marched to his crucifixion without the least regret, because he was advancing to the possession of this bliss. The two great apostles submitted cheerfully to death, St. *Peter* by the cross, and St. *Paul* by the sword. St. *Bartholomew* thought he made a prudent bargain when flayed alive, to purchase it with his skin. St. *John* drank up the poisoned cup without the least signs of fear. St. *Peter* cried out, long before, upon a taste of this unspeakable delight, *It is good for us to be here* (Mat 17.4): we ask no other happiness. A drop of this sweetness had such mighty efficacy, as to create a disrelish of all other pleasures. And what can we suppose would have been the transports of his soul if, while in the body, he could have drunk the fulness of your cup overflowing with delights unspeakable? We may imagine some such antepast was granted to *David* when he cried out with holy zeal, *O how great is your goodness which you have laid up for those who seek you!* And again, *O taste and see how gracious the Lord is!* (Psa 31.19; 34.8)

220

This is the *blessedness* we live in hope of; *this* we firmly believe your bounty will one day bestow upon us; for *this* we fight under our Lord's banner against sin, the world, and the devil; for the sake of *this* we are content to be killed all the day long (Rom 8.36): in assurance that in You, *our life*, we shall live forever.

But, O hope of *Israel*, and desire of my heart, after which I pant night and day, make haste and do not tarry. Arise and come (Psa 44.26), and bring us out of prison, that we may give thanks to your name, and rejoice in the light of your countenance. Let your ears be open to the prayers of your desolate orphans, and do not hold your peace at their tears. They cry to you for their daily bread, that by the strength of that, they may be sustained in their travels, and happily conducted to the wished-for end of their journey, even to your holy mountain. Among these, I — the least and most unworthy to be called your son — lift up my heart and voice, confessing that I have no right to cry to my heavenly Father, nor any desert which might challenge for admittance into your house. But notwithstanding, I beg for your own mercies' sake, what nothing else can justify my asking: even that your servant may not be confounded, who puts his trust in you. For who shall enter *into your sanctuary, there to behold your power and glory* (Psa 63.2) unless you open to him? And if you open, who shall shut? *If you break down, it cannot be built again; and if you shut up, there can be no opening. If you withhold the waters, they dry up; and if you send them out, they overturn the earth* (Job 12.14, 15). *If you cut off*, and command all that you have turned back into nothing again, *who shall control or hinder you?* (Job 11.10). Such is your power, and no less is your mercy, extending to everything to which you give being.

221

And therefore we beseech you, remember that we are a part of the world framed by you, and preserve your own workmanship. Vile earth though we are, *You* are our Maker; do not despise the vessels of your own molding. Ashes and worms cannot indeed aspire *to the blissful regions of eternity*; but that power which made all things out of nothing, can find no difficulty in exalting even such as we are, *there*. And that goodness which moved you to make them, is

sufficient to prevail for making even thus happy, the creatures which you would not have made, had you not intended that they *should* be happy.

It is in this alone that I place my hope. For *I will not trust in my bow; it is not my sword that will help me; but your right hand and your arms, and the light of your countenance* (Psa 44.3), because you have favour toward your own handywork. You know our frame and temper, that we are all as a *leaf* that withers, our *life a blast and vapour upon earth*, and *every man living altogether vanity* (Psa 39.5). And these reflections give us confidence that we shall find compassion for our frailties. For will the God of matchless strength exert his power against dry stubble, driven about by every gust of wind? Will the *King of Israel* hunt a *dog or a flea*? (1Sam 24.14). We have heard largely of your mercy, O Lord, that *you did not create death, nor do you have pleasure in the destruction of the living, nor in the death of him that dies* by his own perverse choice (Wis 1.13; Eze 18.32). We beseech you, therefore, do not allow that which you never made, to have dominion over the creatures which you did make. For if you are grieved at our destruction, what can obstruct your finding joy in our life and salvation? If you will, you can save me; but I am not able to save myself without you, though I would never so pretend. For the number of my miseries is very great, and their weight lies heavy upon me.

222

To will indeed is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I do not find (Rom 7.18). No, even to will that good is not in my disposal; and even what I have the power to do, I sometimes do not find the inclination to do, unless you grant my petition that *your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven*. And what I would and could do, I do not know how to set about, unless your wisdom shows me the way, and enlightens my eyes, that I may discern and walk in it. No — further yet — although I know my duty, and have the will and the ability to sometimes discharge it, yet all my knowledge is vain and imperfect, unless your true wisdom, which descends from above, renders my knowledge active and effectual. For everything is possible to your will, and nothing can resist the great Lord of all. Let, then, your will be done in us, upon whom your name is called, that this noble creature not perish, which you have formed for the illustration of your own glory. For *what man is he who lives and shall not see death; or who can deliver his soul from the hand of hell* (Psa 89.48), unless you please to work out his deliverance — You who are alone that source of life, by whose life-giving influence all things live?

I have already ascribed my strength to you; and with the most profound humility, I confessed that I formerly trusted in my own strength which, upon trial, proved no better than weakness. When in this mistaken persuasion, I attempted to run, I fell where I thought I was most able to stand. I stumbled and went backwards, and the prize I aimed at fled farther from me, when I thought I was heading most directly to it. Thus by many disappointments of my vain confidence, You have brought me to a true sight of my own impotent condition.

223

And I was instructed by these dispensations, when that appeared *least* of all in my power, which I had imagined was most easy to be compassed without any help from abroad. How often have I boasted that I would attempt this good action, or perform that one, and neither performed nor so much as *attempted* either? How often was my will not bested by power? How often has my power lost all its efficacy for lack of the will to employ it? And why is all this, if not from my lack of looking up to Him, from where both the will and the power of doing good is derived; and from thinking myself the absolute master of both, when in truth, I was master of neither.

But now being brought to a better sense, I acknowledge before you, my God and Father, that *no man shall prevail by his own proper strength* (1Sam 2.9), and that it is but a folly and vain presumption, when my *flesh glories in your presence* (1Cor 1.19). For it is not in man alone to will the good he *can* do, nor to perform the good he *would* do, nor to *know* the good he would or

could do: but all their steps are guided by you. Theirs, I say, who are duly persuaded that it is not by themselves, but by you that they are conducted in the ways of holiness and salvation. Therefore, we most earnestly implore you, by the depth of your tender mercies, that you will save the creatures you have made. For if you *will*, you can do it; and upon your will to do it, depends the strength of our hopes, and the certainty of our salvation.

Call then to remembrance those tender mercies which have been ever of old, and to finish that goodness in its utmost perfection with *the blessings of which you have preceded me from the beginning* (Psa 21.3). Well may I say, you have preceded me. For, long before this Son of your handmaid was born, you prepared the way in which I should go, and be led by it to the glories of your house.

224

Before you formed me in the womb, you knew me, and had determined all your good pleasure concerning me (Jer 1.5); and ever since I was born, I have been held up by you, my God and my hope, even from my mother's breasts (Psa 22.9).

For such is your comprehensive and unchangeable knowledge, that what I expect thousands of years from now, is already fixed and done in your eternal purpose. And although it is still future with regard to the event, yet in your foresight and decree, it has already passed beyond the possibility of reversal or alteration. What this is, so far as I am concerned in it, stands entered in your book; but because I do not know what you have determined, I am full of fear and jealousies. The vast variety of dangers that threaten me on every side; the troops of enemies combined against my life; the numberless miseries that obstruct and intercept my course — these fill my soul with such perplexity and dread, that if you were not my assistance and support, I would be lost and sunk into despair.

But my hope is great in you, my most merciful King and my God; *in the multitude of the sorrows which I have in my heart, your comforts refresh my soul* (Psa 94.19). The signal marks of your goodness (even before I was born) in making such provisions for my happiness; the many more which have followed me since, and been particular to me and *beside* those which are common to other men; these all forbid me to distrust — no, they engage me to be very *confident* — that the past demonstrations of your love, are pledges and earnest of more and better blessings in reserve; that so much done on my behalf already, was never intended to be lost, but what you have begun you will graciously finish, and grant to me in your own due time, *to see the felicity of your chosen, and rejoice in the gladness of your people, and give thanks with your inheritance* (Psa 106.5).

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Why should I not believe and hope all this? Or how indeed can I do otherwise, when these glorious instances of your favour and love occur to my thoughts so often, but never too often mentioned. O my love and only delight, whom I love because you first loved me (1Joh 4.19), and proved it by those precious evidences of creating me like myself. You prefer me in honour above your other creatures, and you instruct me how to keep up the dignity of my character, which is then preserved only when I know and serve you, for whose use and glory I was made.

The same large expectations are further cherished by one reflection more: that of your angels being made *ministering spirits* for me (Heb 1.14); and having given them charge over me, to *keep me in all my ways, lest at any time I hurt my foot against a stone* (Psa 91.11, 12). These are the guards, the shining sentinels upon the new Jerusalem, and your mountains round about her; keeping watch over your flock night and day, lest our *adversary the devil* (that old serpent, who *like a roaring lion goes about continually seeking whom he may devour*) (1Pet 5. 8), should at any time surprise weak and unwary souls, and *tear them in pieces like a lion, while there is none to help* (Psa 7.2). These angels are like denizens of that blessed city above, which is

mother of us all (Gal. 4.26), *sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation* (Heb 1.14) — that they may support and conduct them safely; and who constantly behold the face of their *Father in heaven*, who has committed his *little ones* to their care (Mat 18.10).

And great is their affection towards their fellow-citizens, as the persons in whom they hope to see the breaches of their own order one day repaired.

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Hence, they are so wakeful and solicitous about us, so ready to relieve us at every time and place, supplying our wants, and going diligently upon dispatches between us and You, our common Lord (1Cor 11.10). Attending upon our devotions, presenting our requests before the throne of grace, and from there conveying down to us the blessings we desire. These bright attendants always keep us company, go in and out with us; observe how holily, how decently, we behave ourselves in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation; with what earnest zeal we *seek your kingdom, and its righteousness*; with what *fear and trembling* (Mat 6.33) we serve the Majesty on high, and with what pious raptures our hearts are transported at your goodness. They assist us in our labours, watch over us in our beds, encourage us in our conflicts, crown us in our conquests, rejoice with those who rejoice, provided they rejoice in you, and mourn with those who mourn, when their sorrows and sufferings are for your sake.

O how vigilant is their care! O how fervent their affection! And all this for magnifying that inestimable love with which you have granted to love us. For they love those whom you love, keep those whom you keep, and forsake those whom you forsake. They do not love the wicked, because you hate *all the workers of iniquity, and abhor those who speak lies* (Psa 5.5, 6). When we do well, the angels rejoice, and the devils are grieved: When we go astray, we bring joy to devils, and defraud the angels of that joy we owe them. For *there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents* (Luk 15.7, 10), and triumph in hell over one righteous man who relapses into sin. Therefore, gracious Father, enlarge your angels' joy; and furnish matter for it daily more and more, that you may be glorified in our obedience, and we may be brought with them into your one fold, to give thanks forever to your holy name, O Almighty Maker of angels and men.

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These benefits I gratefully commemorate; and I admire the greatness of that love which gave your holy angels for ministering spirits to us. You had given all things under heaven for our use and service, and as if you thought all this was too little; you have given us the inhabitants of heaven itself, for the same gracious purposes. Let your angels, O Lord, praise you; let all your works render thanks to you, and let your saints forever bless you, for this mighty favour. O God, our glory, how you have honoured, how you have enriched, how highly you have exalted and ennobled us with your manifold and marvellous gifts! *How excellent, how wonderful is your name, O Lord, in all the world; you who have set not only yours, but our glory above the heavens!* Lord *what is man, that you are thus mindful of him, or the son of man, that you should thus set your heart upon him?* Thus you have eminently verified your own word, that *your delight is with the children of men*. But is not man corruption, and *the son of man a worm? Is not every man living altogether vanity?* Yet, by a most astonishing condescension, you *open your eyes on such a one as this, and bring him into judgment with you* (Psa 8.9, 4, 5; Job 7.17; Pro 8.31; Job 25.6; Psa 39.5; Job 14.3).

CHAP. 13.

The Methods of God's Grace in our Sanctification and Salvation.

TEACH me, O unfathomable abyss, O wisdom by whom the world was framed, you who *have weighed the mountains in scales*, and hung the vast globe of the earth in a balance (Isa 40.12).

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Weigh up, I beseech you, this heavy mass of a body by your invisible power, and raise it nearer to yourself, that I may discern and know how wonderful you are in all the world. O light! antecedent to, and productive of all other light, whose brightness shined alone on the everlasting hills, and to whom all things lay naked and open, even before they were made (Heb 4.12); whose purity abhors the least blemish: what pleasure can you take in man? What *fellowship* can *light* so clear, *have with darkness* so gross? (2Cor 6.14). Or where is it, that you have prepared a sanctuary in me, fit for so glorious and holy a majesty to enter and dwell, and take delight in? The spirits, by whose sanctifying graces all things are cleansed, which cannot be seen by any, much less be possessed by any but the pure in heart, will not certainly lodge in any but clean habitations.

And is it possible to find in man a place fit to receive you? *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* (Job 14.4) Who indeed, except He whose very essence is purity? For what is unclean itself, cannot cleanse any other thing. And this was especially signified to our forefathers, the *Jews*, in the law given from a mountain burning with fire, and out of a cloud and thick darkness, by which it was ordained that whoever was touched by a person under legal uncleanness, should be reputed unclean from that contact (Exo 19.20; Lev 22.6). And such, alas! are we all. Even the very best of us is polluted, conceived and born in corruption (Psa 51.5), and carrying the marks of our impurity so visible, so foul, that it is to no purpose to attempt concealing our blemishes from Your all-seeing eyes. Unless you, therefore, who alone are pure, grant to sanctify us, we can never be clean.

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And this mercy you granted to those among the sons of men, in whom you condescended to dwell (Eph 1). These — by the unsearchable secrets of your judgments (always just, though to us unknown), without any desert of theirs — you have predestined before the world, called and chosen them out of the world, justified them in the world (Rom 8.30), and will exalt and glorify them when the world is no more (Joh 17.22). But this mercy you do not extend to all indifferently, but with a most wise discrimination — that the wisdom of this world may see it, and consume away with envy and astonishment.

When I reflect on these, your secret dispensations, amazement seizes me; and the profound mysterious methods of your wisdom and knowledge fill me with wonder at judgments too dark and vast for me to take a distinct view of. For to what else can we ascribe the distant fates of the same sort of creatures, and that the almighty Potter should *of the same lump, make some vessels to honour, and others to everlasting dishonour* and shame? (Rom 9.21). Those, therefore, whom your love chose to be a holy temple for your majesty, you clean by your Spirit, and sanctify with the *washing of water by your word* (Eph 5.26); whose names and numbers are exactly known to You, who *count the number of the stars, and call them all by their names*; these happy men are *written in the Book of Life*, and so are preserved by your power, *through faith unto salvation*, that all things, even their own faults and frailties, *work together for good to them. Though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down, because you uphold them with your hand. You keep all their bones, so that not one of them is broken* (Psa 147.4; Phi 4.3; Luk 10.20; 1Pet 1. 5; Rom 8.28; Psa 37.24, and 34.20).

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But dismal and most dreadful is the end of sinners. Before ever the world was made (in your infinite wisdom, to which the most remote futurities are ever present), you foresaw they would deserve to be reprobated by your *just*, though to us *secret* judgment; whose names and crimes are likewise known to You, who count the sands of the sea, and sound the great deep. These, for their manifold and obstinate offences, you give up to their own hearts' lusts, and let them follow their own imaginations (Psa 81.11, 12). And when they are thus permitted to perish in their folly,

all things work together for their hurt, and the very *prayer of the wicked is turned into sin* (Pro 28.9; Psa 109.7). Insomuch, that whatever promising appearances they make, yet all at last is blasted, and comes to nothing; and even those who seem to have set their nest in the stars, are brought down, and cast out as dung upon the face of the earth (Oba 1.4).

Great and marvellous are these your counsels, O most worthy Judge eternal, who sits in the *throne of equity*, and *brings to pass things deep and unsearchable* (Psa 9.4; Job 5.9). And well may these strike terror through every part of me, since man, during this mortal state cannot attain to perfect security, but is still left exposed to temptation and danger, that he may accomplish his warfare with greater circumspection; *serve you* in holiness and righteousness all the days of his life *with fear*, and *rejoice unto you with reverence* (Psa 2.11; Phi 2.12); that his obedience may be preserved by awe; and his joy tempered with humility and trembling; that *he who girds on his armour should not boast like he that puts it off* (1Kng 20.11); nor should any flesh glory in your presence, but rather fear and humble itself before your Majesty, when all are kept in this profitable ignorance of what may befall them in the end; and cannot make a judgment of your love or hatred, or sing songs of triumph to their souls, till all the hazards of the fight are over.

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How many have our own eyes seen, and how many more have we heard of (which I never see, hear, or recollect without great impression) who have long been renowned for their conspicuous patterns of heroic virtue; and those who seemed — if any could do so absolutely — *to have made their calling and election sure*? And yet, upon some trying emergency, even these men have been vanquished and ensnared, and so entirely lost, not only to the *practice*, but by degrees to the very *principle* of goodness, as to wallow and be hardened past all feeling in the most enormous and scandalous debaucheries! These are *the stars of heaven struck down to the earth with a sweep of the dragon's tail* (Rev 12.4). How many, on the other hand (which sustains me with comfort), have lain grovelling in dust and filth, profligate and ignorant, as well as averse to all goodness — and yet, even these abandoned wretches you have wonderfully raised, when they seemed to be just sinking into hell. Thus we may frequently observe that the living die unexpectedly; and the dead in trespasses and sins, just as much to our surprise, are raised to a life of righteousness and hope. Light clouded over with darkness, and darkness breaking forth into marvellous light. Publicans and harlots seizing heaven by violence (Mat 11.12), and the children of the kingdom are cast into utter darkness.

And why is all this, if not because they ascended into that mountain of pride into which the first pattern of disobedience went up an angel, but came down a devil? By contrast, the meek and humble are the persons chosen and called, sanctified and built up, to be a fit habitation for the majesty of the great God, through the Spirit of his grace. With these, you enjoy holy and chaste delights — dwelling in their hearts by your presence, and making them your temple, which is the highest honour our human nature is capable of.

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For this soul of ours, which you have created by your word, though not of your own substance, nor yet of any elementary matter, but out of *nothing* — this rational, intellectual, and spiritual being, ever-living and ever in motion (upon which you have impressed your likeness, and consecrated it to yourself by the laver of regeneration) — is given a capacity to receive your Divine Majesty, and is so contrived as to be filled with you, and nothing else but you (Gal 2.20). When it is in possession of you, its desires are satisfied, and nothing besides remains an object of its wishes. But while it continues to desire *any* external object, it manifestly betrays the want of you within — because when you are there, it seeks for nothing beyond you.

For since you are the supreme and universal good, in you possessing all things, the soul cannot lack anything that is good. But if it does not desire that which is the sum of all good, then some other good will necessarily be sought after — because it has not yet attained to all good, nor yet attained to the *chief* good; and so it aims at the possession of the creature rather than the Creator. So long as the creature is the object of its desires, those desires are never to be satisfied; for some fresh thing is ever presenting itself; and the soul still remains empty and discontented, because it is out of its element, and destitute of its proper happiness. For nothing will content it except the utmost perfection that it is qualified for; and such alone is that blessed Original, in whose image it was made at the first. Now, you are pleased to thus communicate yourself, only to those who desire nothing but you. You make them holy as you are holy, pure and worthy of you; you esteem them your friends, who *counting* all things but dross and dung, propose no other end, no other bliss, than to gain you alone.

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And this is the blessedness which your, mercy has bestowed upon man. This is your honour with which you have distinguished your favourite creature, and exalted him far above the rest of the works of your hands. And now, O Lord, at length I have found the place where the great, the good, the mighty God is pleased to dwell: even in that soul which you have formed into a resemblance of your own excellences; which seeks, and loves, and longs for you alone; but not in that soul which divides its affections — which either loves you, and does not desire you; or else loves you, and longs for other things *besides you*.

CHAP. 14.

We are not to conceive God to be a sensible Object.

I HAVE gone astray like a sheep that was lost, seeking you with great anxiety without, when yet you are within, and dwell in my soul, if it desires your presence. I wandered about the villages and streets of the city of this world, inquiring for you everywhere, and did not find you, because I expected to meet abroad, that which all the while I had at home. I sent my messengers into all quarters, and charged my bodily senses to make strict search, and bring back a true report; but it was all to no purpose, because I used a wrong method, and employed those who were not qualified for the discovery. This error I now perceive, because you have enlightened and shown me the right way; for though You are within me, yet none of these sentinels could give any account of how you came there.

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My eyes declare that if God has no colour, he did not come in at those doors; my ears, if he made no noise, he did not pass this way; my nose, if he did not affect the smell, he did not enter by me; my palate, if he has no taste, he could not enter here; my touch, if he is not a bodily substance, I can give no account of him. These qualities, then, do not belong to you, my God, because I am not conscious of any such impressions upon your approach. For you do not have the form of a body, nor the whiteness of light, nor the sparkling of precious stones, nor the harmony of music, nor the fragrance of flowers, ointments, or spices, nor the delicious taste of honey, nor the charms of those things that are pleasant to the touch, nor any other qualities by which our senses are entertained. When I seek after God, I pursue a happiness very different from all these; for to suppose him to be such a being as even brutes are capable of feeling with the organs of sense, would be to think most unworthily, most *absurdly* of him.

And yet I cannot help but acknowledge that in God I expect to find a certain light above all other light, too bright for mortal eyes to behold; a powerful voice above all other voices, too strong for any ear to hear; a sweetness above all other sweets, too exquisite for any taste to relish. A light shining without being confined by any determinate space; a voice sounding without losing itself in the air, a fragrant perfume without the assistance of winds to waft it. Such is my God, and

there is none that can be compared to him. And such is the object which my soul loves and longs after.

And it was too late that I set my heart upon you, O my Beloved, whose beauty was from everlasting, and yet is always new and blooming. Too long I pursued you in vain, while running after the beauteous creatures you have made, and thinking to find you there. You were with me, but I was not with you; and those things kept me at a distance from you, which yet could not subsist except in and by you.

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I asked the earth, if it was not my God, and it answered, *No*; and all that it contains unanimously agreed in this same confession. I asked the sea, the great depths, and all the vast and strange variety of creatures living and engendered in those watery regions; they replied, *We are not your God; look for him above us*. I inquired of the firmament, and the air with all its inhabitants replied that *Anaximenes*¹⁹ was quite mistaken; so did the sun, and moon, and stars, declare that they were not God. Then I desired the object of my senses to inform me somewhat of that good which they disclaimed all pretence of being taken for. They all cried out aloud, *It is He that made us*. At last I resorted to this globe of the world, but there again the answer was, *I am not God, but I am by Him; the Being whom you seek in me is He that made me. And you look much too low; for he who made and governs me is much more excellent, and seated far above me*.

Now, by inquiring of these several creatures, I mean by an attentive consideration of their respective natures and conditions; and by their answers, I mean that evidence of their being created by God — this is the plain result of such a consideration. For most agreeable to the experience of every wise and sober person, is that of the apostle: *the invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that were made* (Rom 1.20).

After thus consulting the creatures abroad, I came home at last, descended into myself, and asked, *What are you?* The reply made to me was, *A rational and mortal man*. Then I began to examine what, and from where, this sort of animal should be; and I quickly reflected, *Where could it possibly be, but from You?* It is *You*, my God, *who have made me, and not I myself* (Psa 100.3)

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But still, *Who are You?* You are the one by whom I live; the one by whom *all* things live. You are the one true God, the only omnipotent, and eternal, and incomprehensible, and infinite God. Everlasting, and nothing dies in you; for you are immortal and *inhabit eternity* (Isa 57.15) — wonderful in the eyes of the angels, inexpressible, unsearchable, and of perfection so great as to lack a name. Strong and powerful, and greatly to be feared, without beginning and without end, for You yourself are the beginning and the end of all things. Existing before time was, governor and Lord of all that you have made; whose causes all are fixed in you, and the effects subsist in such a manner and to such a term, as your immutable wisdom sees fit.

Tell then your servant, who desires to know, from where could man take his original, but from you? Could any of us give life and being to himself? No. Was it possible for any other to give him either of these, but for you alone? Are you not the first and supreme Being, from whom all else receives its being? Whatever is, is certainly from you; for nothing is without you. You are the fountain of life: whatever lives, it lives by you; for nothing can live without you. You have made all things; and can I then doubt who made *me*? you certainly are my Maker, and I am your workmanship. Thanks be to my God, by whom I and all things subsist and live, for my creation;

¹⁹ *Anaximenes* — a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher and associate of Anaximander, who believed that all things are made of air in different degrees of density (6th century BC).

thanks to this skilful artificer, whose hands made and fashioned me, for creating me a man. Thanks to that light, which revealed itself to me, and me to myself. For in finding and knowing myself, I find and know you: and it is by the communication of your light, that I know you. Thanks, therefore, my God, all thanks and praise be to you, for thus enlightening me.

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But how can I pretend to say, I *know* you? Not *you* God, who are infinite, incomprehensible, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, *who only have immortality, and dwell in light which cannot be approached, whom no man has seen, or can see?* (1Tim 6.16). A God who hides yourself from mortal eyes? And who can know what he has never seen? The herald sent to prepare the way for your truth, proclaimed, *No man has seen God at any time*. And that truth itself declared, *No man knows the Son, but the Father, nor does any man know the Father, but the Son* (Joh 1.18; Mat 11.27). Thus the Lord is said to be high above all heavens, and such as even the angels (strictly speaking) rather admire than behold. This is the heaven to which *none has ascended, except he that came down from heaven* (Joh 3.13). Thus the Father is known to none but the Son, and the Spirit proceeding from both; and the Son to none but the Father, and the same Spirit is common to both. The holy and wonderful Trinity, then, exceeds all comprehensions but its own; and the very angels who are continually looking into this glorious essence, and who contemplate it with a most intense desire, are yet not able to express, conceive, or acquaint themselves thoroughly with all its most mysterious perfections.

How is it then, that I know the most high God, whom neither heaven nor earth contain, whom even cherubim and seraphim adore with astonishment, and veil their faces with their wings before Him who sits on the throne; crying out, *Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory?* (Isa 6.3). I do not know you, my God, as you are in yourself, but as you are with respect to me: not in your essence, but your operations. And even this knowledge is not from any powers of my own, but wholly owing to the guidance of that light which you are pleased to reflect upon me.

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Your glories are understood by yourself alone, your grace and goodness manifested to me. And what are you with respect to me? Tell me, O Lord, and *say to my soul, I am your salvation* (Psa 35.3). Do not hide your face from me, lest I die. Suffer me to speak to your mercy, I who am but dust and ashes. You have made your voice heard from above, and broken through the deafness of my heart; your light has shined forth; and you have shown me that you are my Saviour and my merciful God; and thus it is that I have said, *I know you*.

Thus have I known you, *the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent* (Joh 17.9). How wretched was that blindness in which I saw you not! how stupid that deafness, when I heard you not! how miserable my condition, when I loved you not! For no man loves you, who does not see you, and none can see you, who does not love you.

Honour, and praise, and thanksgiving be to the light of my life, for those manifestations of himself, which he has granted to make to my soul. But how is it that you have manifested yourself to me? Even by instructing me that you are my only God and Creator, the true living God — almighty, immortal, invisible, eternal, incomprehensible, unsearchable, unchangeable, infinite, by whom all things were made, and the principles of all subsist — whose majesty, just as it had no beginning or increase, so it shall never have diminution or end. The one and only God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons and one substance, author and common cause of all things both visible and invisible, who by your mighty power, at the beginning of time, formed spiritual and corporeal substances; the angels of the former, the things of this world of the latter;

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and man partaking of both natures, consisting of body and spirit, by a stupendous conjunction of material and immaterial — and all these were created out of nothing (Psa 86.10; Gen 1.26; Joh 17.3; 1Tim 1.17; Job 11.7; Psa 90.2; Mat 11.25; Joh 1.3; Col 1.16).

I know and acknowledge you, O Father, begotten of none — you, O Son, begotten of the Father; — you, O Holy Ghost, the Comforter, proceeding from both;²⁰ — three persons, co-equal, consubstantial, co-eternal. This holy undivided trinity in unity, and unity in trinity, *I believe with the heart unto righteousness, and confess with the mouth unto salvation* (Joh 14.26; Rom 10.10).

I confess and acknowledge you the true God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, Creator, Saviour, and Redeemer of me, and of all mankind. *Begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of light, very God of very God, being of one substance with the Father, and Holy Spirit, by whom all things were made.* ²¹ Firmly believing, that you, God, only begotten Jesus Christ, by a marvellous concurrence of the whole Trinity, was *for us men and for our salvation*, incarnate of the ever blessed virgin Mary, conceived by the operation of the Holy Ghost — and so, perfect *God* was made perfect *man, subsisting of a reasonable soul and human flesh* (Joh 1.4, 5; Heb 1.3; Mat 1.21).

Who, though in regard to your Divine nature, you are impassible and immortal, yet for the unspeakable love with which you have loved us, by taking our human nature into that Divine nature, you became subject to sufferings and death. And thus, the same Son of God condescended to die upon the cross for a time, that he might deliver us from everlasting death.

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You, Giver of Light, descended into hell,²² where our forefathers sat in darkness; and the third day you rose again from there, a glorious and triumphant conqueror; taking up that blessed body of yours, which for our sins had lain dead in the grave; and restoring it to life the third day, according to the Scriptures, that you might enthrone it at the right hand of the Father. Then you led that captivity captive, which the enemy of mankind had taken prisoner; and thus you, very Son of God, with our very substance — that is, the human soul and body, derived from your blessed virgin mother — have ascended on high, far above all heavens, where angels, principalities, and powers, are made subject to you; where you now sit at the right hand of God, in endless overflowing life, in light inaccessible, in that peace which surpasses all understanding (Eph 4.8, 10; 1Pet 3.22, 24; Mat 28; Phi 4.7).

There we believe and worship Jesus Christ, very God and very man; confessing that God, *who has so exalted you*, is your Father of a truth, and waiting for your coming *in the end of the world to judge the quick and dead, and render to every man according to his works* (Acts 10.42; Mat 16.27); to the good, a reward and rest; and to the evil, eternal grief and punishment. For on that day, all men shall *hear your voice*, and come forth with their own bodies, that each may receive at your hand, *according to what he has done in his body, whether it be good or bad* (Rom 2.6-10; Joh 5.28, 29; 11.25). You are our life; you are our resurrection; and in you, we look for a Saviour, *Jesus Christ the Lord, who shall change our vile body, and fashion it like his glorious body, according to his mighty working, by which he is able to subdue all things to himself* (2Cor 5; Phi 3.21).

²⁰ This is the *Filioque* (“and the son”). This teaching did not originate with Augustine. It had already been variously expounded by Tertullian, Hilary, Marius Victorinus, and Ambrose. See Augustine’s *De Trinitate*.

²¹ This is taken from the Nicene Creed of 381.

²² In Acts 2.27, the Greek is *Hades*, the grave, not *gehenna* (Mat 5.22; Jas 3.6) or *tartaroo* (2Pet 2.4), the place of eternal fiery torment; but the Latin Vulgate uses *inferno*; hence Stanhope translated it “hell.” The Apostles Creed did not have the phrase “*descendit in inferna*” until after 600 (though some attribute it to Rufinus in 390).

I know and acknowledge you, the one true God, Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son; of the same substance and eternity with the Father and the Son, our advocate and comforter (1Joh 5.7; Joh 14.16);

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who descended like a dove upon him, our Lord Jesus Christ, and appeared in fiery tongues upon the blessed apostles (Mat 3.16; Act 2.3; 1Cor 12.9-11); who has, from the beginning of the world, shed abroad the gifts of your grace upon all the saints and chosen of God, and opened the mouths of the prophets, that they might reveal the wonders of his kingdom; who together with the Father and the Son, is worshipped and glorified in all the churches of the saints. I also, your lowliest servant, beg leave to publish your praises among them, for the saving light communicated to my poor soul. For you are the true light, the holy fire of God, to whom all saints are subject; the Spirit of truth who *teaches us all truth by your unction* (1Joh 2.20, 27; Rom 8.8, 9); without whose grace it is impossible to please God. For you are God of God, and light, proceeding in a mysterious and ineffable manner from the Father of lights, and from his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. With these you are co-equal, and co-eternally united in the same essence; and with them you reign, and are glorified, by a singular and a most stupendous union.

Thus I know the one true God, three in persons, and one in essence; *thus* I confess and adore with my whole heart, the Maker and Governor of all things that are in heaven and earth, and under the earth. I know these by that faith which you have inspired into me: for you are the light of my eyes, the hope of all the ends of the earth, the joy of my youth, and the support of my old age. *All my bones shall be joyful in you, and say, Lord who is like you?* (Psa 35.10). Yes, *who* among the gods *is like you, O Lord?* You were not made, as they were, by men's hands; but you Yourself made the hands of men.

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The *images of the heathen are silver and gold*, and all their gods are devils (Psa 115.4). But *the Lord made the heavens* (Psa 96.5). *The Lord, He is God. The Lord, He is God* (1Kng 18.39). Confounded be all the vain gods, and let them find no place in heaven and earth, for they made neither heaven nor earth. But let heaven and earth, and all that is in them, forever glorify and praise Your name: for *You* have made heaven and earth, and all that is in them (Exo 20.11).

CHAP. 15.

A Confession of our Vileness and God's Excellences.

WHO is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? (Exo 15.11). It was too late, alas! that I was brought to a due sense and knowledge of you. A thick and gloomy cloud hung too long before my blinded eyes, through which I was not able to discern the Sun of Righteousness and Light of truth. I was muffled up in darkness, a child of darkness; and I not only endured but *loved* my darkness, because I was yet in ignorance of the truth. I was blind, and fond of defect and misery; and every day bewildered more and more, in darkness that could even be felt. And what kind of friend was he who took me by the hand to draw me out of this shadow of death? Who was so compassionate a guide to this blind wretch, to seek me when I sought him not, to call me when I never cried for help, never complained — no, never even felt my calamitous and lost condition? This can be none but yours, my God: *the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort* (2Cor 1.3).

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No compassion that is less enlarged than yours, could show such tender pity and affection. Blessed, therefore, be your name; forever blessed be your name; forever blessed be your love, which was found by a miserable creature *who sought you not, and asked you not, and asked for him who did not inquire after you* (Isa 65.1).

In this spiritual creation, as previously in the natural creation, your powerful voice said, *Let there be light, and there was light* (Gen 1.3). The gross night which swam before my eyes dissolved in an instant. I felt it scatter, and descried²³ the dawning day, and heard the powerful command. And full of thankful wonder, I cried out, *You truly are my God, who have brought me out of darkness and the shadow of death, into your marvellous light* (1Pet 2.9). You spoke the word, and behold, *I see*. It was then I first discovered the horror of my former darkness, the dismal abyss in which I lay; and trembled at the reflection. O wretched state! O most uncomfortable blindness, which all the light of heaven did not penetrate! O deplorable ignorance! which did not know Him who made me, and who preserves me, and is always present with me, always inseparably *in me*. Thanks to my God, for bringing me to a sight of that which I must have seen before, if my corruption had not been so opposite to your purity. But then, alas! we are in direct contrariety: you are light, I am darkness; and I could not discern you, till you darted yourself into my soul; for there is no light besides you, none without you.

Such is my meanness and misery, considered in itself; but I am yet much more vile and despicable in my own sight, when from such reflections I raise my soul to contemplate your unchangeable majesty, O Lord God most holy, God of gods, and Lord of lords, at whose presence the hosts of angels tremble, dominions and thrones fall down and adore, of whose power and wisdom there is no end, no measure;

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who have laid the foundations of the world upon nothing, and gathered the waters of the sea together as a heap; the most mighty God of the spirits of all flesh; at whose word and presence the heavens and the earth quake, and to whose beck every element pays a ready obedience. Even so, blessed God, may you be forever worshipped, obeyed, and glorified by your whole creation. *Amen*.

In company with these, I, your unworthy servant, bow the neck of my heart by faith, and prostrate myself before the footstool of your majesty, with humble gratitude for all your mercies, but more especially for that spiritual light and guidance which you have been pleased to grant to me. By you, *O true light, who lights every man who comes into the world* (Joh 1.9), I see and am thankful. I feel your bright beams descending from above into my soul, cherishing and warming my inward parts, and making glad all my bones. *Finish*, I beseech you, *the good work already begun in me* (Phi 1.6). Increase your blessed gift, and let the brightness of your illuminating grace diffuse itself plentifully through every power and faculty of my mind.

What glorying in my breast is this I feel? What light, that darts its rays into my soul? O fire that is never quenched, kindle my affections! O Sun of Righteousness, that never sets, and is never clouded, shine in my heart! How sweet is your warmth! How secret and pleasant is your cheerful light! O let me ever be inflamed with your Divine, your delightful beams. Wretched are those who burn with impure fires; wretched those who walk by any other light, and remain destitute of yours: wretched are those blind eyes which *do not*, those dim eyes which *cannot*, those wilful eyes which wink hard, and *will not* see the truth.

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Wretched are those who do not turn away their eyes from beholding vanity; for being long habituated to darkness disables them from bearing the brightness of your light, or valuing as they should, the blessing of your cheering influences. They feel, and approve, and dote upon darkness; and sinking every day into grosser degrees of ignorance, they do not know upon what slippery ground they stand, nor the dangerous precipices into which they are falling. O miserable wretches who are not sensible of the worth of what they lose! And yet more miserable

²³ *Descry*: to catch sight of; to perceive with the eyes.

are those hardened souls who are sensible of their loss and ruin, but nevertheless stumble and fall with eyes wide open, and go down quickly into hell.

O heavenly lustre! who reveals yourself only to unblemished eyes and clean hearts! *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God* (Mat 5.8). Cleanse me thoroughly, you sanctifying Spirit; take out the beams and splinters from my eyes, that I may be qualified to steadily behold your Divine beauties. Command the scales of my old errors to fall off, which like thick mists dance before my deluded sight; and pierce them through with your resplendent beams, that *in your light, I may see light* (Psa 36.9). Praised be my God, the fountain of light; for though I was formerly blind, *now* I see. Strengthen, then, I beseech you, and diffuse this grace still more plentifully in my soul. *Open my eyes, that I may discern the wondrous things of your law* (Psa 119.18). Thanks for the prospect I already have of your stupendous perfections, which though as yet only distant and indistinct, dark and through a glass, it still makes me vehemently desire a nearer view, and one that may be face to face. O! when shall that day of joy and triumph come, which will introduce me into the secret place of your dwelling, the constant bright abode of your majestic presence, that I may satisfy my largest wishes, and find a fresh and never-ceasing plea, sure in still desiring what I enjoy, and enjoying what I desire.

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CHAP. 16. **The Soul's earnest Longings after Future Happiness.**

AS the hart pants for the water-brooks, so longs my soul for you, O God (Psa 42.1). O fountain of living water, when will I approach you, when will I have travelled through this dry, and desolate wilderness, in which there is no way; that my soul may be satisfied with the plenteousness of your mercy? Behold, O Lord, I thirst: you are the well of life; O quench my thirst. Yes, I thirst after the living God, O allow me to drink of your pleasures; and hasten that day of praise and thanksgiving; *that day which you have made, O Lord, that your servants may rejoice and be glad in it* (Psa 118.24). O glorious day! O everlasting morning! whose sun never declines, in which I will hear that most transporting sentence, *enter into the joy of your Lord*. Into that joy where there are *things great and unsearchable; yes, marvellous things without number* (Job 5.9). A joy without conclusion, without interruption, without alloy; where we shall meet with all we can wish, and rest secure from all we can fear; free from the enemy's assaults, from the tempter's seducing insinuations; full of security, and rest, and peace, blessed with the ravishing vision of the Deity forever: such is the joy of the Lord your God.

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O joy most exquisite, most excellent, most comprehensive — above which, in comparison to which, and beside which, there is no joy. When shall I enter into you, and behold my God who dwells in you? What is it that detains me from him whom my soul loves? How long shall it be said to my eager heart, *Wait, wait patiently*. And now, O Lord, what do I wish and wait for? Surely it is for *you, my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be like your glorious body* (Phi 3.21). Surely it is for my Lord's coming to the marriage, that he may admit me into the bride chamber (Mat 25.10). Come quickly. Lord, and do not tarry. Come in Lord Jesus, and visit us in peace and favour; come and unlock our prison doors, that your released may rejoice before you with a perfect heart. Come, *you desire of all nations, show the light of your countenance, and we shall be whole* (Psa 87.7). Come, my Light, my Redeemer, and set my soul at liberty, that I may give thanks to your holy name. How long must I continue to be tossed upon the waves of this mortal life, crying out to you, O Lord, and you hear not? *Bow down your ear*, I beseech you (Psa 86.1), and listen when I call out of the deep, and bring me to the haven of everlasting bliss.

O happy souls, who are delivered from the perils of this sea, and have gotten safely to shore; who have reached their native country, and exchanged their prison for a palace! Happy are those combatants who have received that crown of glory which they endured the fight of various afflictions to obtain, and are now translated from short tribulations to endless triumphs! Happy beyond all expression, those who have put off their load of frailty and suffering, who are in quiet possession of the glory which does not fade away, and are clothed with majesty and honour! O blessed state, O kingdom everlasting: where the souls of the saints are in peace and felicity, *where eternal rejoicing is upon every head, and sorrow and sighing flee away* (Isa 35.10);

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where the saints reign with you, their beloved Lord, and *deck themselves with light as with a garment* (Psa 104.2). O kingdom ever blessed, in which you, Lord, the hope and crown of all your faithful servants, make them *glad with the joy of your countenance* (Psa 21. 7), and *that peace which surpasses all understanding* (Phi 4.7). Their joy knows no bounds, their mirth no sorrow, their health no pain, and their light no intervals of darkness; their life has no death, their happiness is universal, without the least mixture of evil; their youth is ever fresh and gay, their beauty always blooming, their love ever fervent, and their pleasures have no abatement. For you, O God, are their all in all, their sole, their chief, their perfect good.

But the more we admire the happiness of those who are exalted to this secure and blissful state already, the greater cause we have to bewail our own misery, we who are still exposed to all the storms and shipwreck of a tempestuous and troubled sea. For, alas! we can only hope the best, but are not sure that we will ever make the port of everlasting life and salvation. For our life is a state of exile and captivity, our end unknown, our fate wrapped up in clouds of a dark futurity. We lie at the mercy of winds and waves, and cast many a weary and longing look to the land of our hope and rest. But O, you stay of our souls, our refuge and strength, whose light like the sailor's star, shines through the thick clouds that hang over our heads — steer, we beseech you, this floating vessel with the helm of your cross, lest the deep swallow us up. Draw us out of these surges to yourself, our only comfort, you whom now our weeping eyes can only just discern — standing afar off, like the dawn of the morning star, to conduct and receive us to the wished-for regions of light

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We are your redeemed, and as such, we cry out to you; captives indeed at present, but such as you have ransomed with your most precious blood. *Hear us, O God of our salvation, you who are the hope of all the ends of the earth, and of those who remain in the broad sea* (Psa 65.5). You stand upon the shore, and see our dangers, and how our vessel works in the storm; O save us for your name's sake, and so direct our course, that we may happily avoid those rocks on every side, which if we strike upon them, we are dashed to pieces. You know the value of our cargo, and the difficulties of the voyage. *Save us, Master, or we perish!* (Mat 8.25)

This is our distressed condition at present. But when you have brought us home to yourself, the fountain of wisdom and Father of lights, such complaints and all occasion for them shall cease. Then in your light we shall see light; not such as our corporeal eyes are now blessed with, but light unbodied, incorruptible, unquenchable, uncreated, the inaccessible, the true, the *Divine* light — that which enlightens angels, and is the privilege and joy of saints, even the source of light and life, even *you*, my Lord and my God. For you are the light, in whose *light we shall see light*; that is, we shall behold you, in yourself, and face to face (Psa 36.9; 1Cor 13.12). What else can this import, but what your blessed apostle has very justly explained: *knowing as we are known*; being let into a distinct view and knowledge of your truth and glory? So that, to *see your face* is in effect to know the power of the Father, the wisdom of the Son, the clemency and goodness of the Holy Ghost, and the mysterious adorable union of all three in one undivided

essence. And thus to see the living God, is the most exalted happiness, the honour and reward of blessed spirits, the crown of glory and eternal bliss, the beauty of peace, the paradise of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and that fulness of joy which no finite mind can comprehend.

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For this is the utmost blessedness of glorified man: to see Him who made heaven and earth, the infinitely good Being who created, and saved, and brought him to bliss and glory with Himself. This sight consists in a clear knowledge of him, in loving and admiring, in praising and possessing him. For He is the inheritance of his people, even of the spirits whom he has purchased of old. He is their portion, and the recompense of their hopes and holy labours. *I am your exceeding great reward* (Gen 15.1). This was his declaration and promise to Abraham, and it was a promise in every way worthy of the Divine Maker: for great and noble things suit the character of great and noble persons. You indeed, my God, are exalted far above all gods, and your reward is proportionately high. For *You* are not great and your *reward* little; but as you are great, so is that reward great: for you are not one thing and your reward another; but both are the same, and both exceeding great. You are the bestower of the crown, and the crown itself; the maker of the promise, and the matter of the promise; the giver and the gift; the diadem of hope bedecked with glory; the desire and the joy of your holy ones. The sight of you is therefore all that bliss and recompense we can possibly hope for. *This is eternal life, this your own wisdom, to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent* (Joh 17.2). Therefore, when we see you, the only, the true, the living, the almighty, infinite and incomprehensible FATHER — and your only begotten, consubstantial, and co-eternal SON, whom you sent into the world for our salvation — by the power of the HOLY GHOST — when we see those three persons in the unity of that Spirit, only one Divine essence, besides whom there is no God — then we will actually possess what we now solicitously labour after: even that everlasting life and glory which you have prepared for those who love you, laid up for those who fear you, and the portion of those who seek your face continually.

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And you, O Lord my God, who have formed me and preserved me from my mother's womb, do not allow me, I beseech you, to be diverted from this *one* object, and distracted in the pursuit of *many* objects; but gather in my wandering thoughts scattered upon things without, and let me stand collected in myself; and from myself, let me rise up and fix on you alone, that my heart may always be in a condition of saying with your devout psalmist, *You have said seek my face — your face, Lord, will I seek* (Psa 27.8): even the face of the Lord of hosts, in the vision of which the everlasting life and glory of blessed spirits in heaven consists. Let my heart therefore rejoice, that it may fear your name. Yes, *let the heart of them rejoice, who seek the Lord* (Psa 105.3). And if the heart of those who seek him is only affected with so sensible a joy, then how ravishing and intense must theirs needs be, who not only seek but *find* him? I will therefore seek your face constantly, zealously, incessantly, so that at length *the gate of righteousness may be opened*, and I may go into the joy of my Lord. *This is the gate of the Lord, the righteous shall enter into it* (Psa 118.19, 20).

CHAP. 17. **A Concluding Prayer to the Holy Trinity.**

O HOLY, blessed, and glorious Three, co-eternal and co-equal persons and one true God; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; you who alone inhabit eternity, and that light to which no mortal can approach; who has founded the earth by your power, and rule all the kingdoms of it by your wisdom; holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth!

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Strong and terrible, merciful and just, worthy to be praised, admired, and loved above all things, by every creature capable of paying you this tribute; power, wisdom, and goodness, one undivided Trinity, look down with pity, and give ear to the calling of your poor servant, who humbly begs admission into the gates of righteousness, that he may render due thanks to your glorious name.

Behold, great Master of the house, a needy beggar knocking at the door of your mercy; O let him by his own experience prove the truth of that gracious promise, *Knock and it shall be opened to you* (Mat 7.7). For what is knocking, if the inward groan — the sounding of my depths, the vehement desires, the doleful lamentations, and moving tears, and importunate cries with which my heart now seeks you — do not deserve that name? Nor can any of these most inward griefs be lost upon an all-seeing God; for you observe my most secret thoughts, and my heaviness is not hidden from you. *Do not then turn your face any longer from me, nor cast away your servant in displeasure* (Psa 27.9). Hear, O Father of mercies, hear the loud complaints of your desolate child, and stretch out your right hand to help me. Draw me out of the mire of misery and corruption, and save me from the deep waters, the overflowings of ungodliness, so that I do not sink; you cannot help but see my danger and my calamity; and shall I be allowed to perish while mercy itself looks on? Call up your compassion, your tender and unspeakable affection, of which I have already had so many instances. Let these commiserate my present distress, and work out for me a mighty deliverance — that I may be conducted safe to you, my God, and see the riches of your kingdom, and the beauties of your glorious presence; and sing praises incessantly to your name, *O Lord, who does wondrous things* (Psa 72.18).

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You refresh my soul with glad remembrances of your goodness; and have enlightened my younger years with the brightness of your truth. Do not forsake me, I beseech you, in my old age and grey hairs; but make my feeble body rejoice, and renew my youth as the eagle's (Psa 71.18; 103.5); and in your due time, command these dry bones to live again, by a blessed resurrection to immortal life and glory (Eze 37.4-5).

Book IV. AUGUSTINE'S MANUAL

The Preface.

THE multitude and vast variety of enslaving objects with which we are everywhere beset in this life, divert our thoughts and cool our love of heaven. It is therefore necessary to fortify and rouse ourselves, that we may wake out of our deluding dream; and when we feel our soul rove and fall off, we may be able to bring them back speedily to God, our true and chief good. This consideration, and my fervent love of my God — not any rash presumptuous conceit of my own abilities — put me upon compiling this little book. It was to have some pious reflections always about me, collected from the choicest sayings of holy fathers, the fervent reading of which might warm me afresh with Divine love, whenever I feel that holy fire begin to languish in my heart. Assist me, therefore, O my God, in this well-intended undertaking; for it is You, even *You*, I seek, and love, and praise, and adore, with heart, and mouth, and every faculty I have.

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My mind entirely dedicates itself to you, gasps and pants after you, and covets no other bliss than the sight of her Beloved. It tastes no other pleasure, but that which results from speaking, hearing, writing, conferring, and perpetually dwelling upon the meditation of you and your glory — expecting from these sweet remembrances, some refreshment and inward calm, in the midst of a tempestuous world. To you, therefore, O joy and desire of my heart, I cry aloud, and from the bottom of my heart. I call within, because I know you there; for were you not in me, I would not be at all; and were not I in you, you would not be in me. But you *are* in me, whenever you are in my memory; from there I know you, and there I find you, when I call to mind, and delight myself in recounting your glorious perfections, from, and by, and in whom all things subsist.

CHAP. 1.

The Excellences of the Divine Essence.

HEAVEN and earth, O Lord, are full of the majesty of your glory (Isa 6.3). You sustain all things, and yet feel no burden; fill all, and are circumscribed by none (Heb 1.3); always in action, yet always at rest. You seek and gather, but want not; love without passion, are jealous without pain (Exo 20.5); repent without remorse, are angry without commotion. You alter your measures, but not your mind; you recover what you had never lost, rejoicing in gain, and yet never poor; expecting your own with interest, and yet never covetous; bountiful, paying those to whom you are not indebted; and placing those good actions *to their account*, which are *your due* — that by a marvellous condescension, you may become your faithful servant's debtor (Mat 20.28; 25.21).

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For who has anything which is not yours? (1Cor 4.7). You pay and owe nothing, you remit your dues and lose nothing. You are in every place, and in each place you are entire; you are to be perceived, but not with eyes of flesh (Pro 15.3; Mat 5.8). Absent from none, yet far from the imaginations of the ungodly; but still not absent even from them; for where you are not by your grace, you are present by your observation and vengeance. We follow you, and yet you do not move; and what we pursue, we are not able to attain: for you possess, fill, comprehend, and sustain all things by your wonderful presence and power.

You teach the hearts of the faithful, without the help of articulate sounds (Isa 54.13); you are not extended with space, nor changed by time, nor nearer or more distant by motion; but inhabit the light, to which no mortal can approach, and which none has seen or can see (1Tim 6.16). Always at rest in yourself, and yet travelling through the universe, and each part of it. For you are so entirely one, as not to be divided; but are everywhere all in *all*.

CHAP. 2.

The inexpressible Perfection of the Divine Knowledge.

IF the whole world were filled with volumes on that subject, yet they could not declare the excellence of your immense knowledge; for this is above the power of pens or tongues to express, or finite minds to comprehend. You are the source of Divine light, transcendently great and good, and therefore exceeding all quantity and quality.

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With you, *to will* is *to do*, and to *intend* is to be able to *perform*. It was by the almighty efficacy of this will alone that you made all things out of nothing; and everything thus made, you possess without need, govern without trouble, and dispose without resistance or interruption. For neither in heaven above, nor in earth or hell beneath, is there anything that can disturb the peaceful order of your administration.

And yet, you are not the author of any evil; for your omnipotence, which can do all things good and great, does not extend to doing this; and therefore you, who can do everything, can yet do nothing to be repented of. Your goodness gave us being; your justice punishes our misdeeds; your mercy spares us from the punishments we deserve. When we say that all things are full of your power and presence, our meaning is not that they contain you, but are contained in you; not that you fill them by parts and measure, so that each creature receives such proportions of you as it is capable of, some more, some less; but you are entire in each of them, and every one of them entirely in you. For all things are within the compass and governance of your power; and whoever does not have the comfortable presence of this goodness and favour, has the terror of your angry justice ever present with him.

CHAP. 3.

The Thirst of the Soul after God.

BUT as for me, my dearest Lord, let the former of these, I beseech you, be my portion. Come in much mercy down into my soul, and take possession and dwell there.

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It is a homely mansion, I confess, for so glorious a Majesty; but a mansion you are fitting up for receiving you, by holy and fervent desires of your own inspiring. Enter then, adorn and make it such as you will not disdain to inhabit, because it is doubly the work of your hands: first by a natural creation to life, and second by a spiritual and better creation to righteousness and true holiness. Let me wear you upon my heart as a signet, and let nothing ever deface the impression. I beseech you, do not forsake your servant who calls on you; for before I called, you anticipated my desires; and that I call or seek you, comes from that grace which first of all sought and called *me*. And why was this, but that being sought by You, I might seek you in return, and so seek as to find you, and to so find as to unfeignedly love and delight in you? Love, I have sought; lo I have found my God, lo I desire to love you; O increase my desire; O grant that request, and give me yourself, without which — even if you were to give me all that you ever made — my desires could not be satisfied. Give, then, yourself to your own servant, for your servant loves you; and if he loves you yet too little, endeavour to supply that defect, that he may wish above all things to love you every day more and more. You have my whole heart; I know no rival passion; I burn with no other desire; I delight in the remembrance of no other object.

The power of this affection is so sensible, that while my mind is soaring up to you, it finds itself in some degree released from this clog of flesh that hangs about it. A peaceable calm composes all my thoughts; the load of mortality and misery grows lighter, and all the tumult of worldly cares and troubles are hushed in silence and profound tranquillity. I feel my heart glow, my mind ravished with ecstasies of pleasure, my memory grows vigorous and strong, my intellectual

powers clearer and brighter, and my whole soul inflamed with eager love and earnest longings for invisible joys.

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O that I had wings like an eagle, that my towering flight might never falter, never rest, till I had mounted up to the glories of your heavenly habitation, and was filled with the pleasures of your beauteous presence, and taste the sweets, and feast upon the rich delicacies which the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem perpetually feed upon. You are our hope, our salvation and redemption, and exceeding great reward. Be also our glory and our joy. Let my soul ever seek you, and let me persist in seeking, till I have found, and am in full possession of you.

CHAP. 4.

The Misery of those who do not seek and love God,

FOR wretched is that soul whose endeavours and desires are fixed on any other object, by a thirst that is always tormenting, but never refreshed, never satisfied. The end of living is lost to those who do not love God; and he who desires life for the sake of anything besides you, is nothing, and aims at vanity and nothing. The one who will not live to you, who is wise for any other purpose, is no better than a fool. To you, therefore, gracious Lord, I commit, bequeath, devote myself, from whom alone my whole being, life, and knowledge are derived. In you are all my trust and confidence, the one from whom I expect my second and better life. I desire, and love, and worship you, with whom I hope to dwell and reign, and be happy to all eternity. The soul which does not seek and love you, dotes on the world, and is a slave to sin; always in bondage, never at ease, never secure. Let my soul, gracious Lord, be ever employed in your service, my present sojourning tend ever to you, and my heart be ever inflamed with the desire and love of you alone.

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Let this be my rest, and let the contemplation of it be my joy and comfort in the days of my pilgrimage. Let me be sheltered under the shadow of your wings from the storms of anxious and worldly cares; and when the winds blow and the waves swell, let this be my harbour and soft repose. O God, rich in goodness, and the bountiful giver of heavenly delights, sustain me in my faintings, relieve my hunger, break the bonds of my captivity, heal my wounds, and repair my breaches. *Behold, I stand at the door and knock* (Mat 7.7) — let that tender mercy which has visited us from on high, command the door to be opened, that I may go in to you, and rest in you, and be refreshed abundantly with your heavenly sustenance. For you are the bread and the fountain of life; you are the brightness of everlasting light; you are everything by which those pious spirits are supported and comforted, who love and live to you.

CHAP. 5.

Prayer for Grace to love God above all Things.

O GOD, the light of every heart that sees you, the life of every soul that loves you, the strength of every mind that seeks you, grant me ever to continue steadfast in your holy love. Pour yourself into my heart, and let it overflow, and be so entirely filled with your pleasures, that there may be no room left for the trifling vanities here below. I am ashamed and tired of living in the way of the world; the very sight and hearing of transitory objects is troublesome: help me, my God, against the insinuations of such things, and be the joy of my heart: take it all to yourself, and keep your continual residence there.

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The house, I confess, is strait; enlarge it; ruinous, but repair it; full of pollutions which might be a nuisance to eyes so pure; I know, and with grief I confess it: but whose help would I implore in

cleansing it, except yours alone? To you, therefore, I cry instantly, begging that you will *purge me from my secret faults, and especially keep your servant from presumptuous sins, that they never get dominion over me* (Psa 19.12, 13).

Enable me, sweet Jesus, I beseech you, to lay aside the weight of fleshly lusts, and exchange my worldly desires and affections for those of you and heaven. Let my body be in constant subjection to my soul, my senses to reason, and my reason to your grace — so that both the outward and inward man may be ever obedient, and disposed to do your will. Fill my heart, my mouth, and all my bones with your praise. Enlighten my understanding, and exalt my affections, that I may soar upwards to you; and set me free from those fetters which fasten me down, and are an incumbrance to me, that I may leave all here below, and serve, and fix, and dwell upon you alone.

CHAP. 6.

The Happiness of Souls delivered from their earthly Prisons.

AND surely happy beyond imagination, is that blessed soul which, making its escape out of this earthly prison, wings its way to heaven without any restraint; which sees its dearest Lord face to face; and no longer enslaved to the fear of death, it triumphs in the enjoyments of everlasting glory. Possessing you, the object of its love and long pursuit, it sings hymns of never-ceasing praise to the honour of her King and Redeemer — satiated with the plenteousness of your house, and drunk with the rivers of your overflowing pleasures.

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O happy company of heavenly citizens! O glorious pomp of souls returning from their toilsome pilgrimage, to the excellence of the beauty, and splendour, and majesty of your courts! O the ravishing entertainment of those harmonious hymns, the melody of angels, and sweet notes of songs in consort, of which every member of the heavenly choir bears his part! No mixture of bitterness pollutes those holy joys, no malice or wickedness, no want or disgrace, no railing or reviling, or angry disputes, no fear or disquiet, no doubt or uneasiness, or mutual distrust; nor force or discord — but perfect peace and love, eternal praise and thanksgiving, uninterrupted rest, and joy everlasting in the Holy Ghost. My God, how happy should I be to hear that transporting music, and those Divine compositions, which publish the mysteries and glories of the blessed Trinity; my God, how much happier and more honoured, if I am not only admitted to hear, but if I join in concert with those sons of God, who sing to their Christ and King one of the pleasant songs of Zion,

O life, truly worthy of that name; because it is everlasting, ever blessed. A life of joy unpolluted with sufferings or sorrow; rest without labour or disturbance; honour without fear or envy; riches without robbery or loss; health without decay, plenty without lack, happiness without disasters. Where all good things are enjoyed in perfect charity. Where God is seen face to face, and the mind is feasted and fully satisfied with knowledge, ever seeing and ever desiring to see more; but desiring without uneasiness, and satisfied so as never to be cloyed.²⁴ Where the Sun of Righteousness sheds the refreshing beams of his excellent beauty upon every head; and the original Light is so diffused that every inhabitant of those blissful regions shines by its reflection.

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For being constantly united to the Deity, they are transformed into the likeness of the Divine immortality and perfections; thus receiving the full effect of their holy Lord's promise, *Father, I will that those whom you have given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold the*

²⁴ *Cloyed*: filled to excess; bloated and overfull.

glory which you have given me; and all be one in us, as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us (Joh 17.21, 24).

O glorious kingdom, to the inheritance of which we are advanced, without the melancholy forms of death and succession, and whose possession knows no change or end; but one perpetual day, subject to no revolution of time; and never-fading laurels upon the head of each triumphant soldier, who has fought manfully, and weathered all the toil and hardships of this spiritual warfare! How I long for that most blessed time, when this poor unworthy creature, the last and least of all my Master's servants, shall be called upon to put off this load of sin and corruption, and thus disburdened, remove, and fix my habitation in the heavenly city, mingling with that harmonious host above, and doing homage with them in the blessed presence of my glorious Lord. I long to be released not only from the sense, but even the sorrowful remembrances of death and suffering, ignorance and infirmity, diseases and temptations, decays and pains, false pleasures and violent passions, which are our constant exercise and misery while we continue our journey through this valley of tears.

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CHAP. 7.

Of the Comforts afforded good Men under their present Trouble.

SUCH are the frailties, such the incumbrances of a wretched mortal state; wretched indeed, if considered, either with regard to the weight laid upon it, or its own inability to sustain the heavy load. But blessed and forever magnified be the mercy of our God who, while he afflicts and disciplines by his providence, does not leave us destitute of the powerful assistances and sweet consolations of his grace! I feel myself indeed oppressed, and pierced through with many sorrows and anxious fears. My life, I know, must shortly have an end; the guilt of my sins strikes me with horror and shock. For death, I am sensible, consigns me over to judgment; and the torments of hell are the due reward for my evil deeds; and I cannot tell what defence to make for myself in that day when every action, and word, and thought will undergo a scrutiny more exact and severe than I am able to conceive at present.

These are such mortifying reflections, that they must of necessity sink me into despair, if my Lord, according to his usual goodness, did not interpose; and in the midst of my lamentations and deep distress, support my drooping soul, and assuage my anguish with the prospect of mercy, when I will stand most in need of it.

By these exalting my hopes, and carrying my troubled mind to the tops of the everlasting hills, to the serene and peaceful regions of bliss; strengthening my faith, and refreshing me in the pleasant pastures of the rivers of waters; showing me the plenteous provision made for the entertainment of wearied and famished souls —

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this glorious sight makes me forget my sufferings; it softens and even recommends my present troubles; it leaves me no longer grovelling in the dust, but leaves earth and its vain objects behind. So that I then look down with disdain upon the tumults and dangers, the follies and miseries of this world, and with a mind perfectly composed, I can rest myself upon you, the true, the holy, the undisturbed peace of every truly pious and devout Christian.

CHAP. 8.

An Act of Love and Devotion.

I LOVE you, O my God, and desire to love you more fervently every day. For you are beautiful and amiable above the sons of men, and you deserve an affection equal to your own adorable and incomprehensible excellences; equal to the marvellous instances of goodness, of which your

tender care for, and your unspeakable condescension in working out the eternal salvation of mankind, has given such plentiful, such astonishing proofs. O let that fire descend into my heart, which burns with a bright and holy flame, never languishing, never to be quenched. May every part of me feel the kindly heat; may it expand itself and burn up every other passion, that all the dross of vain and polluted passions and desires being entirely consumed, I may be turned all into love, and know no other object of that love but you alone, my dearest, sweetest, and most lovely Saviour.

By that most holy, that most precious blood which you were content to shed upon the cross for our redemption, grant me, I beseech you, the grace of a truly contrite and devout heart at all times; but especially when I approach your Majesty in prayers and praises, and in thankful commemorations of the mysterious methods of man's redemption, that most stupendous, most conspicuous, and everlasting monument of the Divine mercy;

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and when I (unworthy, I confess, of so high a privilege) prostrate myself before your altar, and assist in that heavenly sacrifice which you, my undefiled high priest, has instituted for a memorial and pledge of your love; and for the daily repair of those breaches which sin and frailty make upon our souls, by these frequent and lively representations of that death and passion, by virtue of which alone we are, or *can* be saved.

While I attend upon these holy mysteries, let my mind, I most humbly pray you, be sensibly comforted, and my faith confirmed with the joys of your blessed presence. Let me find you near at hand, and be affected as becomes one who justly values the honour and happiness of such a union with you. Let my spiritual delights be ravishingly sweet, my love of you exceeding strong and ardent, my inward hungerings for you refreshed. For you are the bread of life, every day eaten, yet still whole and never consumed. Lord, grant me evermore this nourishment; you are the light eternal, never eclipsed, never extinct. O shine in my heart; warm, enlighten and sanctify me, that I may be a chosen vessel for your use, purged from all wicked filth, filled with all grace, and ever preserving that fulness. So shall I spiritually feed upon your flesh, and feel my soul effectually sustained in the strength of this heavenly repast;²⁵ so shall I be nourished unto life indeed, and living *of* you and *by* you, at last be conducted *to* you, and forever rest *in* you.

O banquet of love, heavenly sweet, let my bowels be refreshed by you, my inward part overflow with the nectar of your love, and my soul burst out with zealous expressions of your praise continually.

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My God is love itself, sweeter than honey to my mouth — sustenance and joy. Make me live and grow in you, and correct my vitiated ²⁶ palate, that I may truly relish your heavenly delights, and lose all taste, all appetite for any other. You are the soul of my life, the staff of my hope, the end and sum of all my desires. O, possess my whole heart; preside over every faculty; direct my understanding, exalt my affections, and quench the thirst of my longing soul, with those rivers of pleasures which flow at your right hand forevermore. Let every fleshly and turbulent desire be awed into silence, and all imaginations of things in heaven, and air, and earth, flee from before You. Let dreams and fancied revelation, let every word, sign, and thought, give way; and even the soul itself stand mute, go out of itself, and be employed in the contemplation of you alone. For you are my hope and my only trust. And though the vileness of my own condition, and especially the infinite faults and frailties of my life, might reasonably shut me out from any hope — that so great and holy a God should admit so polluted a wretch into communion with him —

²⁵ *Repast*: a full meal.

²⁶ *Vitiated*: ruined in character or quality.

still more, that the Word of God has condescended to dwell in my flesh, and has united his Divine to our human nature — I can with confidence look up to that powerful intercessor at your right hand, and will not doubt but that one day I shall be exalted to the same blessed place where my flesh and blood already sit triumphant in my Jesus: to whom be praise and glory, honour and adoration, and thanksgiving forever. *Amen.*

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CHAP. 9. **The Pleasure of Meditating upon God.**

HOW sweet, O gracious Lord, who in wonderful kindness have so loved and saved, enlivened and sanctified, and exalted us; how inexpressibly sweet are the thoughts and the remembrance of you! The more I dwell on these reflections, the more I feel my soul exhilarated and transported with them. The excellences of your nature, and merciful dispensations of your providence, I contemplate with the most abstracted simplicity of thought that my present state is capable of; and I feel the delights resulting from them swell to a pitch, as high as this distance of a sojourner in a strange land admits. More I covet earnestly, and daily aspire after, and I can but covet and aspire after, during my confinement to a body of flesh and frailty. I am wounded with the darts of your love, and burn with the eager desire of seeing and being inseparably united to Him whom my soul longs to enjoy. I will therefore stand upon my guard, and take good heed to my ways; *I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding* (1Cor 14.15), and exert my utmost activity in setting forth the praises of Him who has made me his own by a double title: first by creating, and then by renewing and restoring my nature. My soul shall mount above the highest heavens, and in desire dwell with you continually; that however my bodily presence may detain me here below, yet in my inclinations and affections, I may reside above; and so my heart may be where you are: its best and most desirable treasure.

But pity, I beseech you, gracious Lord, the impotence and infirmities of your servant who, the more he contemplates your infinite majesty and goodness, the more conscious he is of his disability to rise up to the dignity of that subject.

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My heart is too narrow, and your unbounded excellences — your beauty, power, glory, and love — exceed the largest comprehensions of any human mind. As the brightness of your majesty is inconceivable, so are the depths of that everlasting mercy by which you adopt them for your own children, and received them to be one with yourself, whom you at first created out of nothing.

Consider, O my soul, the greatness of this love, and the noble privileges accruing to you from it: for if you have right notions of these things, you will be perfectly convinced that if the enduring daily pains and sickness — no, if the torments of hell itself — were for a season, made the condition of beholding Christ in his glory, and being received into the number and society of the blessed above, no sufferings could be so exquisite that they should not be gladly entertained, none which would not find themselves abundantly recompensed by obtaining a portion in that transcendent felicity. It matters not that the devils then lay in wait for us, and draw us into sharp trials of our virtue; that this body be macerated with fasting, fretted with sackcloth, fatigued with toil, and dried up with lack of sleep; that my enemy deride, rail against, or create me mischief and disquiet; that cold, or want, or pain, or sickness, wear out a tedious life in sighs and incessant complaints — let my strength be spent in heaviness, and my years in mourning; let me roar for the very anguish of my heart, and my body have no soundness or whole part in it — *provided that* I may find rest in the day of tribulation, and rejoice *at last in the felicity of your chosen, and give thanks with your inheritance* (Psa 106.5).

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For how can we esteem that glory according to its worth, or what can be a purchase equivalent to that happiness, in which the face of every righteous man will shine as the sun in its strength? When the Lord reckons up his people, and distributes them into their respective ranks, and the degrees of bliss differing from each other, is proportionate to the good they have done in their respective bodies. When He puts the faithful in possession of those promises they so long depended upon; and in exchange for earthly goods, He gives them heavenly, for temporal and transitory, eternal and never-fading goods; and He makes those who have acquitted themselves well in very little, rulers over much (Luk 19.17). Surely nothing can be added to the happiness of that day, when the Lord introduces his holy ones into his Father's presence, and makes them sit down with himself in heavenly places, that God may be all in all.

O bliss inexpressible, to see the saints, to be with them, to be one of them; to see God as he is, and to possess him for ever and ever! O let this bliss be often in our thoughts, always uppermost, — no, only in our *desires*: for it deserves the whole of us, and this is the method of insuring it for ourselves. For, if the greatness of the prize puts you (as well it might) upon inquiring how you can ever hope to compass it, which way you can deserve it, or what assistances are necessary for this purpose, the answer is short and ready. For God has so ordained that it is in every man's power to be happy, for the kingdom of heaven suffers violence ²⁷ (Mat 11.12). To desire and resolve, and endeavour and strive, is to be qualified, and no man ever failed in his attempt, who was willing to take it by force.

This kingdom is indeed an invaluable treasure; yet every man is capable of being a purchaser, because the only price God expects for it is a man's self.

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Give but yourself, and this will be looked upon as a sufficient consideration. And therefore, never be discouraged at the disproportion between what you can pay, and what you can hope to receive: for the purchase is paid by another hand to the utmost farthing (Mat 5.26). This was done when Christ gave himself; and he gave himself that he might ransom you, and make your heart a kingdom for his Father to reign in. Therefore, deliver yourself into his possession, that sin may no longer reign in your body unto death (Rom 6.12), but that God may dwell and reign in you by his Spirit, for the attainment of everlasting life.

How eager then, my soul, should we be to return to that heavenly city where our home and our privileges are, where we are free denizens, and have our names enrolled in the book of God?

Since, therefore, we are fellow-citizens with the saints, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, (Rom 8.17), let us very diligently represent to ourselves the glorious advantages of these characters, and the bliss of our native place, in the best light our present thoughts can set them. Let us cry out with the prophet of old, how *excellent things are spoken of you, O city of God*; (Psa 87.3); all your inhabitants are like those who sing, *Beautiful are you for your situation, and the joy of the whole earth* (Psa 48.2). Into your gates enter neither old age, nor decay, nor misery; no lame or maimed, no deformity or defect; but all *grow up into a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ* (Eph. 4.13).

²⁷ That is, to forcefully possess the kingdom of God in all its glory, requires our heart, mind, soul, and strength — our *all*. “Behold some, enduring with you here below a great flight of afflictions and temptation, take heaven by storm and force. Others you may see — after many assaults, repulses, and rallyings of their faith and patience — have gotten upon the walls of heaven, *conquerors*. From there, they look down, as it were, and call you, their fellow-brethren on earth, to march up the hill after them, crying aloud: ‘Press on, and the city is your own, as it is now ours, who for a few days’ conflict are now crowned with heaven’s glory, one moment’s enjoyment of which has dried up all our tears, healed all our wounds, and made us forget the sharpness of the fight, with the joy of our present victory.’” (William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armor*, vol. I, 1657). **Mat 11.12:** Even so, from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven forces, and men of force lay hold of it.

What can be wanting, what can be added, to the happiness of that life which is never threatened with poverty or sickness, never molested with wrongs or violence, with anger or envy, or exorbitant desire: where all the present necessities of nature cease; and the restless ambition of honour and power, and riches find no place;

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where we are no longer in fear of any devil, nor in danger of his temptations, or in so much as a possibility of his torments: where neither body nor soul can die, but both are endued with a life everlasting, ever delightful: no casualties, no malice, no quarrels or factions, but universal agreement, profound peace, and perfect love; where the day never declines, but has a light as perpetual as it is glorious? For *that city has no need of the sun, nor of the moon to shine in it; but the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is its light* (Rev 21.23). Indeed, the saints too, *will shine as the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever* (Dan 12.3).

Hence, there is no night; nor darkness, nor clouds, no extremities of heat and cold, but such a happy temper in all respects, *as no eye has seen, or ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of any man to conceive* (1Cor 2.9), except those happy souls whom their own experience shall instruct, and whose names are written in the Book of Life. To all this, we may add the honour and happiness of associating with patriarchs and prophets, of conversing with apostles, and martyrs, and saints, and all those dear relations and friends, who went there before us. These are very glorious advantages. But that which far excels them all, is, that we shall see the face of God, and ever admire and gaze upon, and rejoice in his excellent glory. O happiness inestimable, when we shall see God as he is in himself; when we shall see him, and enjoy him ourselves, and when this sight and fruition shall never have any interruption, any end.

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CHAP. 10.

Of loving God, and the Advantages of doing so.

THE soul — which is stamped with the image of God, and is glorious in proportion to her conformity with His holiness — has an innate principle from her Maker, which reminds her of her duty, and enables her either to persevere steadfastly with God, or to quickly return to him if at any time she is drawn aside, through the violence of her passions or any other imperfections. Nor does she only have hopes of preserving a spiritual life, by the reviving prospect of mercy and pardon; but she is allowed to aim at higher matters, and aspire to enter into strict bonds of inviolable amity with God, and to be yoked in love with the King of angels.

Love is of such a mighty efficacy, if it brings our will to a resemblance of God, and assimilates us into that object by *inclination*, who we already resemble by *nature* — all of which is done, when we love as we are beloved. For love is the only motion and affection of the soul which can qualify a creature to meet the ends of its Creator, and to make, if not a full, yet an acceptable and thankful compensation for all His goodness to it. Where love takes place, it quickly gets dominion, and brings over all the rest of the affections in subjection to itself. Love is sufficient of itself, and it pleases for its own sake. This is reputed *merit*; this is both the duty and the reward, the cause and the effect, of doing well — by love we are reconciled and intimately united to God.

Love makes two minds become one; it inspires the same inclinations and the same aversions; it is the standard and rule by which we frame our actions and dispositions; it considers things present as though they were not; and it looks upon heavenly and spiritual things with a pure unprejudiced view.

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It first prevails with men to behave themselves decently in matters of this world; and then raises their thoughts above *this* world, so as to despise all below, and at last to fix men's view on those of *another*, and to dwell with delight upon the mysterious excellences of God himself. It lets us into those beauties of the Divine nature, which are otherwise too high and dark for us to behold; and it helps us to *imitate* what it helps us to see and to admire!

God the Father is love; God the Son is love; God the Holy Ghost is the Father's and the Son's love. This love requires the production of something like it in ourselves — I mean, such a mutual affection that it may unite us to, and render us nearly related to, love itself. Love is an enemy to distance and formal respect; it gives us confidence in approaching God, aspires to a friendly and familiar conversation with him, and emboldens us to speak to Him without fear or doubting. He lives to no purpose, who lives without this grace. But he that keeps his eye always fixed upon God as the supreme, as the *sole* object of his thoughts and desires, *meditates* upon him, *delights* in him, and is *fed and nourished* by him.

A man thus devoted to Him, sings his praises, pours out his prayers, reads his word, performs every part of his duty, and demeans himself in every action of his life with such care and circumspection, as if his bodily eyes saw God present with him (as in truth He *is*), in everything he says or does. His prayers are so fervent, and his mind so exalted in them, as if it were no longer in the body, but translated and rapt into that glorious place where *thousand thousands of angels prostrate themselves* before the throne of the Majesty on high, and *ten thousand times ten thousand minister to him* (Dan 7.10).

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The soul which is visited by love is effectually awakened out of its sleep; it is softened and instructed, and smitten with its force. This turns darkness into light, opens that which was shut, warms and fires that which was frozen, smooths the rough, and angry, and impatient — chases away vicious affections and subdues carnal ones, corrects the temper, and renews the spirit of the inner man. It is an effectual check to the follies and levities of youth, and a strong guard against spiritual danger and temptations. So sensible, so strong is the power of love, when cherished and present with us — but when this cools or quite goes out, our good dispositions languish and die; they can no more be preserved than fire without fuel, or a boiling pot when the heat is taken from under it.

Great are the advantages of this virtue, which gives the soul immediate access with confidence to God, and stands in no need of any introducer; which preserves a close union with Him, and consults him freely upon any emergency that requires His counsel and help. A soul thus affected, has God continually in his thoughts and discourse; and it despises, *disdains* everything besides; so entirely is the man possessed of it, that all its reflections, all its conversation, relish this love. The way to know God truly, is to love him. It is to very little purpose that we read, or meditate, that we hear, or preach, or pray, if this is not at the bottom of our religious exercises: for by loving *God*, we come to love our own souls, and to be solicitous for their safety and true happiness. The end of God's loving *us*, is that we may love him in return; and requiring this at our hands, is a fresh instance of His favour, because he knows that those who love him are sure to be happy on that very account.

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The soul that loves, renounces all its other appetites, and attends to this only, so that it may answer the end of being loved, by loving in return. And though in our payment of this tribute, we are ever so profuse, yet, alas! what is this in comparison to that unexhausted source of love, ever running over, ever flowing in upon us? For we greatly mistake, if we have the vanity to imagine it, that what we pay and what we receive, the soul and God, the creature and the Creator — can ever meet on equal terms. But if a man loves with his whole heart, though this is nothing as to

any intrinsic value of its own, yet it is not esteemed to be defective, just because the man is capable of no more. Do not, then, let the soul that thus loves God be discouraged: the only just cause for fear, is when we do not love Him as we may and should.

The soul that loves in this manner, is eager in her wishes, fixed in her desires, lays no stress upon her best actions, but thinks all she can do is too little; it is not terrified by the majesty of God, but ravished with delight in the contemplation of His mercy, takes sanctuary in His goodness, and converses with Him frequently and freely. This, as it were, carries the man out of himself, and makes him act separately from his bodily senses, so that he seems to no longer have any regard to himself, but is entirely swallowed up in God. Nor are these airy and romantic notions; but they are such that each one's own experience will confirm to him, when transported with the unspeakable sweetness of heavenly meditations. As it were, then, he makes an escape from every other object, so that he may be diverted and interrupted by no other thoughts, but enjoy perfect happiness, and give himself up entirely to God. Nothing could add to this ravishing satisfaction, were the *continuance* but equal to the *intensity* of it.

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For the love of God contracts an intimate acquaintance with him; that acquaintance begets an assurance; that assurance creates a sensible delight; and that delight breeds a desire for more and greater intimacies. A soul thus inflamed, is full of longings and thirstings, and often cries out with the psalmist, *As the hart pants after the water-brooks, so pants my soul after you, O God* (Psa 42.1).

Love brought God down to men; this induced him to dwell among men; this moved him to be made man himself. In his nature, He is invisible; but this rendered Him not only visible, but in wonderful condescension, made Him like his own servants. It was love that wounded him for our transgression — incomprehensible, unexampled love, that made his soul heavy unto death, and poured out his heart's blood upon the cross; love that provided a sure retreat for miserable sinners, by opening that passage to their Saviour's heart. For now I can take myself there; and what I lack in merit of myself, supply out of the depths of my pierced Redeemer — there I find a perpetual spring of mercy; and through the orifice in his body, I can approach the recesses of his soul. These wounds unlock the mystery of godliness, and show me that tender compassion of my Lord, by which the *Dayspring from on high visited* lost wretches, *when they sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death* (Luk 1.78, 79).

The wounds of Christ are full of pity, full of virtue, full of sweetness and kindness inexpressible. They pierced his hands and his feet, and thrust through his side with a spear. By these passages I can taste and see how gracious my Lord has been; for he is indeed gentle, and long-suffering, and of great pity to all those who call upon him faithfully, to all who seek him diligently, to all who love him, the one who so wonderfully first loved them.

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In the wounds of our blessed Saviour we have plenteous redemption; and there we may find abundant goodness, ravishing delight, fulness of grace, and perfection of virtue.

CHAP. 11.

The good Effects of meditating on Christ's Death and Sufferings.

WHEN any sinful imagination solicits me, I directly take sanctuary in my Saviour's wounds. When the flesh weighs down my soul, the remembrance of his sufferings breaks all my fetters, and sets me free by returning heavenly thoughts. When the devil lays his snares to entrap and destroy me, I flee for help to the tender mercies of my dying Lord, and the enemy soon feels himself disappointed and draws off. If lust is kindled in my breast, and stirs my body to rebellion, I reflect on the agonies of the Son of God for my sake, and immediately those impure

fires are quenched. In any sort of suffering or distress, I find no comfort, no relief comparable to the consideration of my afflicted Saviour. In his wounds I can lie down and sleep securely; these are my defence and the support of my soul in any temptation that assaults me, in any affliction that befalls me.

Christ died for us; surely then, the bitterness of death is past, and nothing can be so grievous to human nature, that it may not be mollified by this consideration. All my hope and trust is in that death of his; I plead no other merit; I ask no other refuge. This is my health, my life — no, my second and better life, my resurrection from the dead. His mercies are great, immeasurably great; and however worthless I may be in myself, while I am looked upon as having a share in these, I cannot be rejected or despised. For his mercies prove him willing to save; and therefore, his power is no longer a terror, but my best security.

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I am indeed a very grievous sinner, and my conscience upbraids me with numberless and heinous transgressions against God and his most righteous laws. But notwithstanding that these reproaches of my own breast sometimes make me uneasy and afraid, yet do I not despair; because *where sin has abounded, there grace has much more abounded* (Rom 6.1). Indeed, I must not, I *dare* not despair; for this would be to bind one fault upon another, and to aggravate all the wickedness I had ever been guilty of before. For he that despairs of forgiveness for his offences, in effect declares that God is not merciful; and by distrusting, robs Him of his beloved attribute, which is the highest outrage and injustice that any man can possibly commit against God. In so doing, he bears testimony in contradiction to that love, and truth, and power, which are the only foundation on which all hopes are built. For how could I hope if His love had not adopted me, if his truth had not promised, if his power had not redeemed me? Then let my foolish misgivings murmur within me ever so importunately; let them ask me ever so insultingly, what can I pretend to, or how dare I presume to suppose that, any deserts of mine should procure me so excellent, so very disproportionate a reward — *still* my hope stands firm. And I will reply with assurance, as St. Paul left me a pattern: *I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded* (2Tim 1.12), that he who made me his own Son by adoption, loves me exceedingly; that he who is true, will be as good as his word; and that he who is Almighty can lie under no temptation *not* to make it good. He can perform his promise to the uttermost, and the very promising, shows him as *willing* as he is *able* to do it.

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My sins are not only great, but many; but neither their quality nor their number terrifies me, when the death of my Saviour comes into my mind; because I know they cannot in either respect outweigh his sufferings on my account. The nails and spear proclaim my deliverance, and attest my reconciliation with Christ, provided I sincerely love him. The soldier opened for me an entrance into his side, and I can retreat into the clefts of those wounds with safety. If any man is afraid of his condition, let him learn to love; for this love will be sure to cast out all anxious and desponding fear. Our Redeemer stretched out his arms upon the cross, to signify by that posture his readiness to receive sinners into his embraces, when they flee to him for succour. In those dear arms I delight to live, and in them I desire to die. There I can with a light and joyful heart sing with the prophet, *I will magnify you, O Lord, for you have set me up, and not made my foes triumph over me* (Psa 30.1). Our kind Saviour bowed his head when he gave up the Ghost, and in so doing, stooped down to meet and to kiss his beloved ones. And every one of us may be properly said to kiss our Lord, every time we feel our hearts sensibly wounded, and devoutly affected with his love.

And shall this not be the constant effect of our meditations upon it? Yes, surely my soul, since you are honoured by the impress and character of your great Maker, since you are ransomed

with the most precious blood of your Redeemer, since you are betrothed to this Divine spouse by faith, endowed with his Spirit, adorned with his graces, and advanced to the dignity of angels in his gracious designs for your everlasting felicity; do your diligence to love him, who has so wonderfully loved you.

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Set your heart upon Him who sets his upon you; seek Him who has so solicitously sought you; whose goodness has preserved you, and is the cause of yours. He is the merit, he the reward, he the fruit and the end of your love. Conform yourself, therefore, in all things to him; let his care excite yours, his leisure entertain yours, be clean with the clean, and holy with the holy. How you present yourself before God, makes it plain how you entertain such apprehensions concerning him. If you believe He is full of meekness, goodness, and mercy, you cannot help but conclude that He expects all his children to be gentle and kind, compassionate and humble. Strive to be like him, then, and let this likeness prove (for nothing else can prove it) that you truly love him, whose compassion brought you out of the mire and clay, and drew you back from the bottomless pit of destruction.

Choose Him for your friend, and prefer him before all other friends; when all other confidences forsook and betrayed you, He was the only one that stuck close to you in your extremity. In the day of your death, when no other friend will or can do you service, He will not desert you: then this kind Saviour will be sure to stand by you, and save you from the reproof of the one who would eat you up; deliver your soul from those roaring lions that wait ready to tear it in pieces; He will carry it up on high, through unknown ways, bring you to the heavenly Jerusalem, and place you among angels in his own presence, where you will hear that heavenly song, *Holy, holy, holy*, etc. THERE is the voice of joy and health, of thanksgiving and praise, and never-ceasing *hallelujahs*. THERE is the perfection of happiness, and glory, and gladness, and everything desirable and good.

Pant eagerly, my soul, and let all your desires loose after this blessed place: that you may come into that city above, of which such glorious things are spoken.

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And love will carry you there, however steep the ascent may seem. For this surmounts all difficulties, and leaves nothing impossible to the person actuated by it. This takes frequent flights there, even while on earth, and walks with great freedom through the streets of Jerusalem above; it visits the patriarchs and prophets and apostles, beholds with wonder the regular armies of martyrs and confessors, and the beauty of chaste and holy virgins. In short, both heaven and earth, and everything in each, are ever inculcating this duty that I ought to *love the Lord my God with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength* (Mat 22.37).

But if this were not necessary in point of duty, it is still absolutely necessary in point of interest and prudence. For when the heart of man is not fixed upon this object, it is never fixed anywhere! But it roves about perpetually from one thing to another, seeking rest where it is never to be found. Now, the reason why it can never meet with satisfaction in any of these frail and transitory matters which captivate its affections, is because the soul is above them all; it is of a condition so excellent, that no good but the supreme good can answer its desires, or prove its adequate happiness. For God has endued it with such a principle of liberty, that it cannot be compelled to the commission of any sin. And therefore, every man's salvation or damnation turns at last upon his own choice. Hence, no man can bring a richer present to God, than an honest and good heart. This brings God down to us, and carries us up to him. By this we love God, and choose God, and arrive at him, and attain to the enjoyment of him.

This is the thing that, by the assistance of Divine grace, renews us and restores our primitive likeness to God. This is of so great an account with him, that his Spirit will not dwell with those who do not have it.

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This engages him to be with us, and reigns in us, and makes the soul a receptacle for the majesty of the whole Trinity. The wisdom of God enlightens it to the knowledge of the truth. The love of God inflames it with a desire of his goodness; and the fatherly affection of God preserves his own creature, that the holy motions He inspires, and the person inspired by them, should not perish.

CHAP. 12.

Of the Knowledge of the Truth.

BUT what is it to know the truth, and by what steps do we come to it? The first is for a man to be thoroughly acquainted with himself; to make it his business to be what he ought to be; and to correct and reform whatever he finds amiss in himself. The next is to know and to love the God who made him: for this is the *whole*, the duty and the happiness of *man*. Now, in order for this, we will do well to observe how exceeding good God has been to us, and what obligations we have to love him in return. He made us out of nothing, when we had no being — and all we have received ever since we came into being, is his gift. But because we are degenerated in our affections, and loved the gift more than the Giver, the creature more than the Creator, we fell into the snare of the tempter, and became the servants of sin and the devil. When we were reduced to this miserable condition, God looked upon us with an eye of pity, and sent his Son to break our chains, and release us from our slavery. He sent his Holy Spirit too, the Spirit of adoption, and exalted his servants to the dignity of sons. He gave his Son to be our ransom, and his Holy Spirit to be the pledge of his love; and he reserves the whole of himself for our future reward and inheritance.

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Thus God, in infinite compassion and kindness, for the exceeding tenderness he bore toward mankind, has not only been liberal in his blessings, but has even laid himself out for our advantage, that he might restore lost man — not so much to God, who could not suffer by that loss, but as to man himself, who must have been otherwise irreparably undone by it. That men might be born of God, God condescended to be born of man. And what heart is so insensible, so hard and flinty, as not to be softened with such astonishing advances of love — a love which began entirely on God's part, and was so strangely great, that he granted to become man — purely for the sake and benefit of man? Who can hate any other man, whose nature and likeness he sees in the Son of God made man? It is certain that he who hates his brother, by necessary consequence hates God; and he who hates God, will find that all his pretended good works are worth nothing.

Now, God was made man for our sakes, that he who had been our Creator might be our Redeemer also, and that the human nature might contribute to its own redemption. Again, God appeared in the likeness of man, that by His condescension, man might be better acquainted with God, and love him with a more free and tender affection, whom he saw stoop down to the same level, in a sort of equality with himself. Thus all the faculties of our souls are made happy in the contemplation of him. Those of the rational faculties, in his Divine perfections, and those of the sensitive, in his human body. So admirably contrived is this mystery of godliness to engage our affections, that man in every capacity might meet with objects suitable to him; and whether he goes in or out, he might find pasture in his God and Saviour.

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Such are the benefits of the Son of God in our flesh, all of which are more complete by the mission of the Holy Spirit. The Son was born, and crucified, and died for us, that by his death he might destroy the death which before had dominion over us. Now, when the grape of flesh was squeezed in the winepress of the cross, the Spirit of grace was sent to cleanse our hearts that we might be vessels prepared, and fit for our Master's use, and *new wine might be put into new bottles*. This was necessary, first, that our hearts being purged, the liquor put into them might not be tainted; and then, that being sealed up, what they contained might not be lost. They are cleansed when they cease to rejoice in, and no longer have any relish for sin; and they are sealed up when fortified against temptations, and the seducements of vain and worldly delights. For that which is good could not be received by them, till that which was evil was first taken away.

The love of sin pollutes the wine; the love of vanity spills the wine — the former fouls the vessel, the latter makes it leaky. The love of sin makes us delight in that which is evil: the love of vanity engages our affections to things that are unprofitable and of no continuance. Therefore, put away the evil, that you may make room for the good: pour out the bitter and the vapid, that you may be filled with the generous and delicious. The Holy Ghost is joy and love: cast out the spirit of the devil and of this world, and you shall receive the Spirit of God. The spirit of the devil disposes us to love sin; the spirit of this world disposes us to delight in empty and imaginary joys. These are both evil, for the former is directly vicious, and the other has a tendency to vice. But when these spirits are dispossessed, the Spirit of God will succeed into their place. He will enter into the tabernacle of your heart, and produce holy joy and holy love.

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The love of the world allures, deceives, and betrays; the love of sin defiles and destroys; and therefore, these must be expelled by their contraries: and such is the love of God. For this enlightens the understanding, purifies the conscience, instills the soul with true joy, and leads us to the sight and knowledge of God, and his glorious perfections.

CHAP. 13. **The Marks and Fruits of true Love.**

THE man who truly loves God, is always thinking of when he will be so happy as to be with Him, when he will leave the world, and make an escape out of this prison of corruption, so that his soul may be free, and find perfect ease and peace. And even while in the flesh, he does not live for the flesh, but sends his thoughts and desires up to heaven before him, sitting or standing, in motion or at rest, in every posture, in every action, he keeps God continually in his mind. He is very zealous in persuading others to love God, and representing to them the duty and advantage of doing so. He endeavours to convince them how pleasant this is, and how unsatisfactory and tormenting the love of the world is. And to prove that all this is not mere cant ²⁸ and affectation, his temper, his whole conversation, speak of his very good earnest, and confirm the truth of his arguments.

The honours and riches of this present life he looks down upon with a just disdain; pities or despises the misery of those who take such pains about them; shows how extremely foolish it is to place one's confidence in things that are continually flying away; wonders at the blindness and stupidity of the wretches who dote upon them; and wonders that everybody does not see so little in them, as to quit these for something more substantial.

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He is satisfied that if they would only submit to make the experiment without prejudice or passion, the all the world would approve his better choice, find inexpressible pleasure in what he

²⁸ *Cant*: as in "incantation" — a cliché or stock phrase that loses meaning by constant repetition.

loves, and be fully satisfied in the truth of what, to him, is evident beyond a doubt. He frequently entertains himself with contemplations of God, and feels a wonderful comfort and refreshment from them; the more they are repeated, the more sensible and sweet they become to him. For what is always worthy of our praise and love, must always be delightful to our thoughts.

This is indeed the true peace of the soul: when it gets loose from all distraction of thought, and compresses all its desires into God alone, as their proper centre. This leaves no vacant space for other inclinations, but all is full of that which employs it, and entirely contented with the pleasure resulting from that. And if at any time it happens (as sometimes during this frail state it will) that any trifling thought, or a multiplicity of business, comes in-between, all this is looked upon as a digression or impertinence; and the man makes all the haste he possibly can, back to his main point. To dwell upon anything else, he looks upon as a punishment like being banished from one's own country. For just as there is no moment of our lives, in which we do not taste some fresh instance of God's goodness, so there should not be any in which this great Benefactor, who is continually present by his mercies, should not also be present in our thoughts and thankful remembrances.

This consideration must make the fault of those men very great, who when they come to and converse with God in prayer, quickly dismiss all their devout affections, and behave as though He neither saw nor heard them.

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And this is what everyone does who pursues his own sinful or worldly designs, and who prefers some worthless creature, by which his mind is easily diverted from better and more important considerations. Whoever employs more of his pains and thoughts upon these, than he does upon God, prefers such things *before* God — before the one who ought to be perpetually there, and be constantly remembered as our Creator, adored as our Redeemer, waited for as our Saviour, and feared as our Judge.

Therefore, consider when the world begins to get within you, what you are doing, and where this course will end. Withdraw yourself by degrees from this business and noise; and run away from the confusion and perplexity of a distracted mind. Unload your cares, and give a little of your time to God; enter into your chamber and commune with your own heart; let none be admitted into these retirements besides Him, and those assistants which may be useful in the search after him. Then let your heart sincerely profess with the prophet, *You have said, seek my face — your face, Lord, will I seek* (Psa 27.8.) Yes, Lord, I covet you earnestly; but it is all in vain, unless you teach my heart where and how to seek, where and how to find you. For if you are not here, where shall I go to look for you? And if you are not only here, but everywhere, how does it come to pass that I do not discern you? I am told that you dwell *in the light, to which no man can approach*: and how vain is the attempt to go in quest of a person so inaccessible? Or who shall conduct me to that place, that I may see you there, where it seems no human power can come? By what marks should I distinguish you, having never seen your face? What shall this miserable stranger do, who longs impatiently to behold you, laments his distance, and does not know how to shorten it — who would gladly find you, but cannot tell where you dwell; who desires to possess you, yet does not know your face?

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Lord, you are my God, and I am your creature — *doubly* your creature, by nature first, and afterward by grace. All I ever had, and all I hope for, is by your hand alone; and yet I have not seen you at any time, nor do I know you. Indeed, I was created for this very end: that I might see you; and all this while, I have not attained the intent of my creation — a hard fate of those who do not answer the end for which they existed at all! Yet such is now the case of miserable man; he has fallen from the happiness to which he was designed, into the misery which was never

intended for him. That has departed from him, without which there can be no happiness; and that remains with him, which in its own nature is exquisitely miserable. Man once ate that angel's food which he now hungers for; but now he eats the bread of affliction, with which he was then utterly unacquainted.

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? (Psa 13.1). When will you turn again and hear us? When, O when, will you enlighten our eyes, and show us the light of your countenance, and restore yourself to us? O turn to us again, that it may be well with us; for without You, we must of necessity be miserable. Call us, and help us to come near to you, we beseech you; our heart is overwhelmed with bitterness and anguish, because of its forlorn and desolate condition. O, let us be refreshed with the sweetness of your consolations. I hunger after you; let me not be sent away empty; but gratify the appetite which you have approved, which you yourself have infused.

I am bowed down with my infirmities, and not able to lift up my eyes to heaven: O loose me from this bond, and make me straight, that I may see and seek after you. *My wickednesses have gone over my head, and become a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear* (Psa 38.4).

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O let your mighty hand take off this weight, lest I sink under it, and the pit shut her mouth upon me. Teach me how to seek you; for even this I cannot do without your guidance. Nor can I find you, till you are pleased in mercy to show yourself to me. Let me so seek as to desire; and so desire as to diligently seek you; so love as to find you; and so find as to entirely love you.

CHAP. 14. **The exquisite Goodness of God.**

I ACKNOWLEDGE, O Lord, with all due thankfulness, that goodness of yours which created me in your own likeness, that I might contemplate, love, and copy my great original. But, alas! this image of yours is so sullied with sin, so darkened with the fumes of sensual lusts, that it can no longer attain to the resemblance you intend it for, unless you please to take it back into your hands, and refresh the impression. Grant me, therefore, gracious Lord, not only a steadfast faith, but a right understanding, that I may know as much of you as you see necessary for my purpose; for you are such in yourself, as you have taught us to believe concerning you. And we are taught to believe you are a Being to whom nothing can be imagined superior in greatness or in goodness. Now, what Being can this be, except such a one who has all perfection in itself, who only exists from itself, and gave existence to all other things by creating them out of nothing? What goodness, then, can be lacking in the supreme and original Cause of good in all besides? You must therefore be just, and true, and happy, and every other perfection which is more desirable to be, than not to be.

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But if justice in perfection is your essence and nature, then how does it come to pass that you do not exert it to the uttermost upon the wicked who provoke it? Is it because perfect and incomprehensible goodness is equally natural and essential to you? This is a difficulty wrapped up in that light which no man can approach. In the impenetrable abyss of your goodness, there rises, it seems, a spring from which issue the streams of your mercy. For there is a most exact harmony between all your glorious attributes; and being so sovereignly and perfectly *just*, as to be sovereignly and perfectly *good* at the same time, your compassion toward sinners has no inconsistency between these seemingly contradictory excellences. For your goodness, it is evident, would be less, if no bad men had any experience of it; and he is more perfectly good who extends his kindness to good and bad men both, than he who confines it only to the good. And so is He who exercises his goodness in sparing and punishing too, than he who exerts it in

no other instance, but that of punishing. This, therefore, gives a rational account of your mercy to those who least deserve it: that being perfectly good, you cannot help but, in consequence of that, to be merciful.

O inexhaustible unmeasurable goodness, which so far surpasses our largest conceptions, let me also partake of your mercy, which is so rich, and so unbounded. Let your clemency spare and prevent the vengeance which I have cause to dread from your angry justice. Let that mercy which is ever flowing out of you, shed itself upon me. Rouse yourself, my soul, and stretch your intellectual powers to their utmost, that you may have the most sublime and worthy apprehensions of the Divine goodness, that this imperfect dim state will admit.

If each good thing we see and desire below is delightful singly, then consider well, how exquisitely that good must be, which is universal, and contains in itself the charms of all the good things that are, and ever were, or shall be.

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And those are not such charms as we find (and are fond of) in created beings, but are as much above them as infinite excels finite, and the Creator the creature. If life derived from another is good, then how excellent is that life by which all else lives? If our wisdom is so pleasant and desirable — which reaches no further than the consideration of objects that present themselves to us — then how lovely, how adorable is that wisdom by which those objects were so admirably contrived — no, *commanded* — out of nothing? In short, if different objects, according to their vast variety, yield so very transporting, so very different delights, think how inexpressibly full of delight He is, who communicated to each out of his own fulness, and so both *made* all these objects, and made them *delightful*? O the inestimable bliss of those who will possess this good! What will they have? What will they *not* have? They will have nothing, to be sure, which they would rather not have. They will be secure from everything that can make both soul and body happy: so great, so manifold, so perfect a bliss, *as eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive* (1Cor 2.9).

CHAP. 15. The Happiness of the Saints hereafter.

WHY, then, deluded creature, do you let your desires run wild upon a variety of objects, and vainly expect from these, that soul and body should be happy? Love that *one* good, in which all others centre, and this will answer all your wishes. Whatever can contribute to the perfection of your outward or inward man, is to be met there with in abundance.

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If beauty delights you, the righteous are promised to *shine as the sun* (Mat 13.43). If it is activity, or strength, or freedom of operation which no resistance can obstruct, remember they shall be *as the angels of God*; and *what is sown a natural body shall be raised a spiritual body* (1Cor 15.44) — that is, it will resemble those spirits in its activity, penetration, and powers, though not in nature and substance.

If length of days, and a sound constitution are your desire, there will be health unimpaired, and immortality; for *the just shall live forever*, and their health is of the Lord. If it is gratification of your desires to the full, they *shall be satisfied when they wake up in their Lord's likeness* (Psa 17.15). If musical entertainment, there the angels never cease their melodious praises to God. If any chaste pleasures, God *shall give them such to drink, as out of a river* (Psa 36.8). If wisdom, the most wise God shall then unlock his treasures, and let them into the knowledge of his own mysterious nature and providence. If friendship, there they shall love God above themselves, and one another as themselves; and God shall love them more than they love themselves. It must be so, since they love him and one another, by and for him, and he loves himself and them

by and for himself. If perfect agreement, there shall be but one soul and one will, for they shall all have no will but God's. If power, they shall be absolute masters of their own will, as God is of his — for as God can do whatever he pleases by his own power, so they shall be enabled to do whatever they please, by and through him — for as they shall will nothing but what he wills, so he wills whatever they will; and therefore, whatever they will must be accomplished. If honour and riches, God shall make his *faithful and good servants rulers over many things* (Luk 19.17). — no, they shall be dignified with the title of gods, and the *sons of God*, and shall be actually *heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*.

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If it is secure possession, they shall have as much assurance as they can have, that no part of their happiness will ever forsake them; that they can never consent to part with it; and that God who loved them so as to vest them in it, can never take it away from those he loves so dearly against their consent; knowing that nothing is stronger than God, or can separate him and them (Rom 8.38, 39). And who can conceive the excellency and greatness of that joy which must result from so inconceivably excellent and great a good?

O heart of man — ever wanting something to make up your satisfaction, every day exercised with pains and sorrows, and almost quite oppressed with the mighty weight and uninterrupted succession of miseries — how would you exult should all these blisses flow in upon you? Ask your most secret recesses whether they could so expand themselves, as to receive the joy which must spring up from such exquisite happiness, considered purely as your own alone. But further yet, consider that if any other person, equally dear to you as yourself, should enjoy the same happiness, this would double your joy, because you would be as glad for his sake as for your own. Again, if two, or three, or more who are thus dear to you, were in the same blessed condition, this joy would be multiplied equally for every one of these. Now, according to this way of arguing, what can we suppose will be the rejoicing in heaven, where innumerable angels and saints partake of the happiness which I have been but very imperfectly describing; and every one of these united in a charity so fervent, that none of them loves any of the rest less than himself, and consequently will rejoice for each of them as much as for himself?

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If, then, the heart of man is scarce large enough to contain his joy for his own single happiness, how will it find room for so many joys so vastly increased, so often multiplied? Again, in that regard we naturally rejoice in the felicity of another in proportion to the love we bear to that person. It will follow from this, that since in that state God is incomparably more dear to every saint, than that saint is to himself, and all his brethren to him — every saint will consequently feel more satisfaction, and exult incomparably more in the glory and blessedness of God, than he will in his own and all his brethren's put together. And if they so *love* God with all their heart, and all their mind and soul, that even *with* all their heart and mind and soul, it still lacks room for the largeness of their affection — they will also certainly *rejoice* with all their heart and mind and soul so exquisitely, that even *with* all their heart and mind and soul, it will overflow and still be too narrow to contain the fulness of their joy.

Tell me then, O my God and my Lord, my hope and the delight of my heart, whether this is the joy meant by your blessed Son, when he says to his disciples. *Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full* (Joh 16.2). For I have here discovered a joy that seems not only full, but even more than full: since, after all our faculties are filled, there still remains fresh matter for rejoicing; matter that is more than can be comprehended, more than can ever be exhausted. And therefore, the whole of that joy can never enter into the persons partaking in it, but they may very properly be said to *enter into the joy of their Lord* (Mat 25.21).

Say then. Lord, and inform your servant, whether this is the joy, into which your faithful servants shall enter, whose diligence in improving their Lord's talents shall be commended and rewarded at the great day of account. But that, I am told, is a joy never yet seen, or heard, or so much as conceived by any human mind; and consequently I have not yet, either in words or thoughts, come near to the excellence of that joy prepared for your chosen.

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In short, their joy shall be equal to their love, and their love equal to their knowledge of you. And certainly the perfection of their love and knowledge of you in the *next* life, must exceed all that eye has ever seen, or ear heard, or the heart of man conceived.

Grant me then, even me, my dearest Lord, to know you, and love you, and rejoice in you. And if I cannot do these perfectly in this life, let me at least advance to higher degrees every day, till I can come to do them in perfection. Let the knowledge of you increase in me here, that it may be full hereafter. Let the love of you grow every day more and more here, that it may be perfect hereafter; that my joy may be great in itself, and full in You. I know, O Lord, that you are a God of truth, O make good your gracious promises to me, that my joy may be full. And till it is so, let my mind meditate, my tongue speak, my heart desire and love, my soul hunger, my flesh thirst after it, and my whole nature gasp and pant most earnestly, till I actually enter into the joy of my Lord, there to remain for ever and ever, *Amen*.

The End of the Manual.