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THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

Thomas à Kempis

For five hundred years, this gentle book, filled with the spirit of the love of God, has brought understanding and comfort to millions of readers in over fifty languages, and provided them with a source of heart-felt personal prayer. These meditations on the life and teachings of JESUS, written in times even more troubled and dangerous than our own, have become second only to the Bible as a guide and inspiration.

* * *

“One who follows Me, does not walk in darkness,” says the Lord. These are the words of Christ, by which we can be admonished how we ought to imitate His life and manners if we would truly be enlightened and delivered from all blindness of heart. . .

Thus the monk Thomas Haemerken, known as Thomas a Kempis, began his work of meditation and devotion. Drawing on his knowledge of the Bible and his vision of Christ in man, he created a beacon of spiritual insight and inspiration which has cast its warm light down half a thousand years.

*Updated language, corrections, revised and added notes (in blue), and formatting
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This text was originally published c. 1418, in Latin meter and rhyme, by German-Dutch Mystic Thomas à Kempis. It was intended for convent use. Over 2000 editions have been published over the last six hundred years. It has been highly influential throughout Christendom, including its effect on the conversions of John Wesley and John Newton.

Primary variances between Catholic and Protestant doctrine in this text regard the merit of good works, and of course: transubstantiation (4.2 – i.e. book 4, chapter 2), purgatory (4.9), and honoring Saints (1.13, 2.9, 3.6, 3.59). As to the merit of good works, good works are preferable to complacency. The incessant cry of “legalism” in today’s Protestant churches has greatly harmed our gospel testimony by discouraging obedience and self-control, and by undermining a diligent work ethic among Christians. The Reformers averred that we are saved by faith alone, but *not* by a faith which *is* alone. Our works cannot save us; nonetheless, they are the necessary proof of our faith (James 2:26). To the extent that this little work by Thomas à Kempis reminds us of our temporal duties, it is to be commended. To the extent that it reminds us of the labors and sacrifices of those who have gone before us in the Faith, it is to be commended. To the extent that it reminds us of the sacredness of the Communion Table, and of the Spiritual presence of God which infuses its elements, it is to be commended. And if it proclaims some things which have no Scriptural foundation, such as purgatory, or uniting ourselves to Christ at the Eucharist (as opposed to recognizing and enjoying the union we already have with Christ there), then let’s be forbearing. Consider that this was written a hundred years before Luther and Calvin. – WHG

Please note: references to “Cant.” (i.e. “cantic”, a song) refer to the Song of Solomon.

Textual Source: http://www.ccel.org/ccel/kempis/imitation/formats/imitation_Baker0.2.RTF

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PREFATORY NOTE

Although there are a multitude of English editions of *The Imitation of Christ*, the great majority follow a certain set tradition both in arrangement, phraseology, and index; the differences consisting chiefly in type and binding.

The present edition possesses the following new features:

1. The translation is absolutely faithful to the original Latin of Thomas Kempis. No word or phrase has been altered in the interests of any school or party.
2. The traditional arrangement into *verses* which rested on no authority whatever and dated only from the seventeenth century, has been abandoned in favor of an arrangement according to the original paragraphs of the manuscripts of Thomas Kempis, as distinguished in Hirsche's edition.
3. All direct quotations from Holy Scripture are in *italics*; [*omitted in this version, however*] footnotes are given not only for these, but for all allusions to or indirect quotations from the Bible.
4. The traditional index of subjects printed with some editions, which was very imperfect, has been much enlarged, and will be found extremely useful. [*omitted in this version*]
5. Indexes have also been added of direct Scriptural quotations, and of quotations from books other than the Bible. [*omitted in this version*]

October, 1900.

OF THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

Thomas à Kempis

Introduction

In 1392, when Thomas Haemerken was twelve years old, the Church was wracked by dissension and corruption. Popes and anti-Popes wrangled about the papal chair. Entire nations squabbled about who was the rightful spiritual leader. The faithful were confused if not thoroughly disillusioned.

The Hundred Years War was still being waged. The horror of the Black Death was recent history and would never be forgotten. Peasant revolts against rising taxes were spreading in terrifying proportions.

But then, as now, a few rays of hope glimmered through the darkness of unrest, rebellion, disillusion and corruption. A few years earlier, a Dutch street preacher named Gerhard Groote called the people in Deventer, Holland, back to God and the Bible. He was not a priest, but as he trudged through the streets and preached, the townspeople let their meals get cold to run out and listen. "Turn away from sin, live like JESUS, read God's Word," he told them.

Some of his followers joined together to study the Bible and to copy it for others. Soon they became known as the Brothers of the Common Life. Humble people, they patterned their lives after the early Christians and especially after JESUS Himself.

In despair with the state of the world, the parents of Thomas Haemerken decided to send their boy to live with the Brothers in Deventer. The blacksmith father and schoolteacher mother had raised Thomas to be a pious boy, to struggle with sin, and they were concerned for his future.

At first, Thomas à Kempis (so called because he came from Kempen), thought that the new life style of the Brotherhood would bring him salvation, but soon he learned that it was of no help to copy a pattern of good works. He must trust in Christ alone for his salvation.

He seemed to hear JESUS say to him, "Let the worthless one draw near to Me, that he may be made worthy, the wicked one that he may be converted, the imperfect one that he may be made perfect, let all draw near to Me, and taste the living waters of salvation "

When a monastery was begun at Zwolle by those associated with the Brotherhood, Thomas à Kempis went there to live as a monk. It is not known exactly when *Of the Imitation of Christ* was written. Some scholars even question whether Thomas à Kempis wrote it, since the earliest copies are unsigned. But most believe that he did write it, in the 1420's, during some of the most agonizing experiences of his life.

Angry citizenry had evicted the monks from the monastery after the Pope had forbidden the sacraments to the people. In the wake of the violence, Thomas à Kempis had to stand by and watch, as his brother, also a monk, slowly wasted away and died.

Of the Imitation of Christ has been described as "the most influential book in Christian literature." It has been translated into more than fifty languages. Few books have found such universal acceptance among both Protestants and Catholics. Perhaps because its language is very simple and forcefully direct. Or because Scripture is woven so intricately into every page. One scholar claims that more than a thousand Bible passages are alluded to in the text.

Or it may be so popular because of such quotations as “God takes into account not so much the thing we do as the love that went to the doing of it.” At any rate, this powerful little book has become part of the lives of millions who refer to it constantly for guidance, consolation, spiritual strength and inspiration.

- **WILLIAM J. PETERSEN**

THE FIRST BOOK

Admonitions, Useful for a Spiritual Life

CHAPTER 1 - The Imitation of Christ, and Contempt of the World's vanities

“One who follows Me, does not walk in darkness,”¹ says the Lord. These are the words of Christ, by which we are admonished how we ought to imitate His life and manners, if we will be truly enlightened, and be delivered from all blindness of heart.

Let therefore our chiefest endeavor be to meditate upon the life of JESUS Christ.

2. The doctrine of Christ exceeds all the doctrines of holy men; and one who has the Spirit, will find therein a hidden manna.² But it falls out, that many who often hear the Gospel of Christ, are yet but little affected, because they are void of the Spirit of Christ. But whoever would fully and feelingly understand the words of Christ, must endeavor to conform his life wholly to the life of Christ.

3. What will it avail you to dispute profoundly of the Trinity, if you are void of humility, and are thereby displeasing to the Trinity? Surely high words do not make a man holy and just; but a virtuous life makes him dear to God. I had rather *feel* contriteness, than understand the definition of it. If you knew the whole Bible by heart, and the sayings of all the philosophers, what would all that profit you without the love of God³ and without grace? Vanity of vanities; all is vanity,⁴ except to love God, and to serve Him only. This is the highest wisdom, by contempt of the world to tend towards the kingdom of Heaven.

4. It is vanity therefore to seek after perishing riches, and to trust in them. It is also vanity to hunt after honors, and to climb to high degree. It is vanity to follow the desires of the flesh, and to labor after that for which you must afterwards suffer grievous punishment. It is vanity to wish to live long, and yet to be careless whether we live well. It is vanity to mind only this present life, and not to foresee those things which are to come. It is vanity to set your love on what speedily passes away, and not to hasten to where everlasting joy abides.

5. Call often to mind that proverb, “The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.”⁵ Endeavor therefore to withdraw your heart from the love of visible things, and to turn yourself to the invisible. For those who follow their sensuality, stain their own consciences, and lose the favor of God.

CHAPTER 2 - The Humble Conceit of Ourselves

ALL men naturally desire to know;⁶ but what does knowledge avail without the fear of God? Surely, a humble husbandman that serves God is better than a proud philosopher that, neglecting himself, labors to understand the course of the heavens. Whoever knows himself well, grows poorer in his own conceit, and

¹ John 8:12.

² Rev 2:17

³ 1Cor 13:2.

⁴ Eccles. 1:2.

⁵ Eccles. 1:8.

⁶ Eccles. 1:13; Arist. Met. I. 1.

does not delight in the praises of men. If I understood all things in the world, and were not in charity, what would that help me in the sight of God, who will judge me according to my deeds?

2. Cease from an inordinate desire of knowing, for in that there is much distraction and deceit. The learned are well-pleased to seem so to others, and to be accounted wise.¹ There are many things, which to know them, profits the soul little or nothing: And one is very unwise, who is intent upon things other than those that may avail him for his salvation. Many words do not satisfy the soul; but a good life comforts the mind, and a pure conscience gives great assurance in the sight of God.

3. The more you know, and the better you understand, the more grievously you shall therefore be judged, unless your life is also more holy. Therefore do not be extolled in your own mind for any art or science, but rather let the knowledge given you make you more humble and cautious. If you think that you understand and know much, know also that there are many more things which you do not know. Do not show yourself to be overwise, but rather acknowledge your own ignorance.² Why will you prefer yourself ahead of others, seeing there are many more learned, and more skilful in the Scripture than you are? If you will know or learn anything profitably, desire to be unknown, and to be little esteemed.

4. The highest and most profitable gain, is the true knowledge and consideration of ourselves. It is great wisdom and perfection to esteem nothing of ourselves, and to think always well and highly of others. If you should see another openly sin, or commit some heinous offense, you ought not to esteem the better of yourself; for you do not know how long you shall be able to remain in good estate. We are all frail,³ but you ought to esteem none more frail than yourself.

CHAPTER 3 - The Doctrine of Truth

HAPPY is he whom truth teaches by itself,⁴ not by figures and words that pass away; but as it is in itself. Our own opinion and our own sense often deceive us, and they discern but little. What good does it avail to cavil and dispute extensively about dark and hidden things,⁵ when if we were ignorant of them we would not even be reprov'd at the Day of Judgment? It is a great folly to neglect the things that are profitable and necessary, and give our minds to what is curious and hurtful: we have eyes and see not.⁶

2. And what have we to do with *genus* and *species*, the dry notions of logicians? The one to whom the Eternal Word speaks is delivered from a world of unnecessary conceptions. From that one Word are all things, and all things speak that one Word; and this which is the Beginning, also speaks to us. No man without that Word understands or judges rightly. He to whom all things are one, he who reduces all things to one, and sees all things in one, may enjoy a quiet mind, and remain peaceable in God. God, you who are the truth, make me one with you in everlasting charity. It is tedious to me to often read and hear many things: In you is all that I would have and can desire. Let all doctors hold their peace; let all creatures be silent in your sight;⁷ you alone speak to me.

¹ 1Cor. 8:1.

² Rom. 12:16.

³ Gen. 8:21.

⁴ Ps. 94:12.

⁵ Eccles. 3:9-11.

⁶ Ps. 115:5.

⁷ Hab. 2:20

3. The more a man is united within himself, and becomes inwardly simple and pure, so much more and higher does he understand things without labor, for he receives intellectual light from above.¹ A pure, sincere, and stable spirit is not distracted, even though it is employed in many works, for it works all to the honor of God; and being inwardly still and quiet, it does not seek itself in any thing it does. Who hinders and troubles you more than the unmortified affections of your own heart? A good and godly man disposes within himself those things beforehand which he is to act outwardly later. Nor do these things entice him according to the desires of an inordinate inclination, but instead he orders them according to the prescript of right reason. Who has a greater battle than one who labors to overcome himself? This ought to be our endeavor: to conquer ourselves, and to wax stronger daily, and to further grow in holiness.

4. All perfection in this life has some imperfection mixed with it; and no knowledge of ours is without some darkness. A humble knowledge of yourself is a surer way to God than a deep search after learning. Yet learning is not to be blamed, nor is the mere knowledge of any thing to be disliked, it being good in itself, and ordained by God; but a good conscience and a virtuous life is always to be preferred before such knowledge. But because many endeavor to get knowledge rather than to live well, they are therefore often deceived, and either reap no fruit, or but a little.

5. O, if men bestowed as much labor in rooting out vices, and planting virtues, as they do in moving² questions, there would not be so much hurt done, nor would so great a scandal be given in the world, nor so much looseness be practiced in Religious Houses. Truly, at the Day of Judgment we shall not be examined as to what we have read, but what we have done,³ not how well we have spoken, but how religiously we have lived. Tell me now, where are all those Doctors and Masters, with whom you were well acquainted while they lived and flourished in learning? Now others possess their livings and perhaps scarcely ever think of them. In their lifetime they seemed something, but now they are not spoken of.

6. O, how quickly the glory of the world passes away!⁴ O that their life had been answerable to their learning! Then their study and reading would have been to good purpose. How many perish by reason of vain learning in this world,⁵ those who take little care in serving God: And because they choose to be great rather than humble, they become vain in their imaginations.⁶ He is truly great who is great in charity. He is truly great who is little in himself, and makes no account of any height of honor.⁷ He is truly wise who accounts all earthly things as dung, so that he may gain Christ.⁸ And he is truly learned who does the will of God, and forsakes his own will.

CHAPTER 4 - Wisdom and Forethought in our Actions

WE must not give ear to every saying or suggestion,⁹ but ought to warily and leisurely ponder things according to the will of God. But alas, such is our weakness, that often we would rather believe and speak

¹ Matt. 11:25; Luke 10:21.

² Referring to parliamentary procedure in which the motive is to gain an advantage for oneself, or to defeat another's ploy.

³ Matt. 25.

⁴ Eccles. 2:11.

⁵ Tit. 1:10.

⁶ Rom. 1:21.

⁷ Matt. 18:4; 23:11. *That is, he is easily unimpressed with honors, neither seeking them nor inflated by them - WHG.*

⁸ Phil. 3:8.

⁹ John 4:1.

evil of others than good. Those who are perfect men do not easily give credit to everything one tells them; for they know that human frailty is prone to evil,¹ and very subject to offending in words.²

2. It is great wisdom not to be rash in your proceedings,³ nor to stand stiffly in your own conceits. It is wisdom also not to believe everything which you hear, nor presently to relate again to others what you have heard or believe.⁴ Consult with him that is wise and conscientious, and seek to be instructed by one better than yourself, rather than follow your own inventions.⁵ A good life makes a man wise according to God,⁶ and it gives him experience in many things.⁷ The more humble a man is in himself, and the more subject he is to God, so much the more prudent he shall be in all his affairs, and enjoy greater peace and quietness of heart.

CHAPTER 5 - The Reading of Holy Scriptures

TRUTH, not eloquence, is to be sought after in Holy Scripture. Each part of the Scripture is to be read with the same Spirit with which it was written.⁸ We should rather search after our spiritual profit in the Scriptures, than subtlety of speech. We ought to read plain and devout books as willingly as high and profound ones. Do not let the authority of the writer put you off, whether he is of great or small learning; but let the love of pure truth draw you to read.⁹ Do not search for *who* spoke this or that, but mark *what* is spoken.

2. Men pass away, but the truth of the Lord remains forever.¹⁰ God speaks to us in a number of ways without respect of persons.¹¹ Our own curiosity often hinders us in reading the Scriptures, for when we should examine and discuss some things, we would rather pass over them without much ado. If you desire to reap profit, then read with humility, simplicity, and faithfulness; never desire the estimation of learning.¹² Enquire willingly, and hear with silence the words of holy men; do not dislike the parables of the Elders, for they are not recounted without cause.¹³

CHAPTER 6 - Inordinate Affections

WHENEVER a man desires anything inordinately, he is presently disquieted in himself. The proud and covetous can never rest. The poor and humble in spirit live together in all peace. The man that is not perfectly dead to himself is quickly tempted, and he is overcome in small and trifling things. The weak in

¹ Gen. 8:21.

² James 3:2.

³ Prov. 19:2.

⁴ Prov. 17:9.

⁵ Prov. 12:15.

⁶ Prov. 15:33.

⁷ Eccles. 1:16.

⁸ Rom. 15:4.

⁹ 1Cor. 2:4.

¹⁰ Ps. 117:2; Luke 21:33.

¹¹ Rom. 2:11; 10:12; Co. 3:11.

¹² [That is, never ask, "What do I get out of this? How am I going to use this? Why is it worth my time and effort?"](#)

¹³ Prov. 1:6; Eccles. 12:9.

spirit, and one who is still carnal in manners, and prone to sensual things, can hardly be able to withdraw himself from earthly desires completely. And therefore he is often afflicted when he tries to withdraw himself from them; and he easily succumbs to indignation when any opposition is made against him.

2. And if he has followed his appetite in these things, he is presently disquieted with the remorse of his conscience; for he yielded to his passion, which profits him nothing toward obtaining the peace he sought. True quietness of heart therefore is gotten by resisting our passions, not by obeying them. There is then no peace in the heart of a carnal man, nor in someone who is addicted to outward things, but only in the spiritual and fervent man.

CHAPTER 7 - Flying Vain Hope and Pride

HE is vain that puts his trust in man,¹ or in creations. Do not be ashamed to serve others for the love of JESUS Christ; nor to be esteemed poor in this world. Do not presume upon yourself, but place your hope in God.² Do what lies in your power, and God will assist your good affection. Do not trust in your own knowledge,³ nor in the subtlety of any living creature; but rather in the grace of God, who helps the humble, and humbles those who are proud.⁴

2. Do not glory in wealth if you have it, nor in friends because potent; but glory in God who gives all things, and above all, who desires to give you Himself. Do not extol yourself for the height of your stature or the beauty of your person, which may be disfigured and destroyed with a little sickness. Do not take pleasure in your natural gifts or wit, lest you thereby displease God to whom belongs whatever good you have by nature.⁵

3. Do not esteem yourself better than others,⁶ lest perhaps in the sight of God, who knows what is in man, you be accounted worse than they. Do not be proud of well-doing,⁷ for the judgment of God is far different from the judgment of men, and what pleases them often offends Him. If there is any good in you, believe that there is much more in others, so that you may conserve humility within you. It is no prejudice to you to debase yourself under all men: but it is very prejudicial to you to prefer yourself above any other man. The humble enjoy continued peace, but in the heart of the proud is envy, and frequent indignation.

CHAPTER 8 - Too much Familiarity is to be shunned

Do not lay your heart open to everyone; but share your affairs with the wise, and those who fear God.⁸ Do not converse much with young people and strangers.⁹ Do not flatter the rich nor willingly appear before great personages. Keep company with the humble and plain ones, with the devout and virtuous;

¹ Jer. 17:5.

² Ps. 31:1.

³ Jer. 9:23.

⁴ [Jam 4:6](#); [1Pet 5:5](#)

⁵ 1Cor 4:7

⁶ Exod. 3:11.

⁷ Job 9:20.

⁸ Eccles. 8:12.

⁹ Prov. 5:10.

and confer with them about those things which may edify. Do not be familiar with any woman, but in general commend all good women to God. Desire to be familiar only with God and with His Angels; avoid the acquaintance of men.

2. We must have charity towards all, but familiarity with all is not expedient. Sometimes it falls out that a person unknown to us is greatly esteemed, based on the good report given by others; but whose presence notwithstanding is not agreeable to the eyes of his beholders. We think sometimes to please others by our company, and we instead distaste them with those bad qualities which they discover in us.

CHAPTER 9 - Obedience and Subjection

IT is a great matter to live in obedience, to be under a superior, and not to be at our own disposing. It is much safer to obey, than to govern. Many live under obedience, rather for necessity than for charity; such are discontented, and easily complain. Nor can they attain freedom of mind, unless they willingly and heartily put themselves under obedience for the love of God. Go where you will, you shall find no rest except in humble subjection under the government of a superior. The imagination and change of places have deceived many.

2. It is true that everyone willingly does what agrees with his own sense, and is apt to mostly attract those who are of his own mind. But if God is among us, we must sometimes cease to adhere to our own opinion for the sake of peace. Who is so wise that he can fully know all things? Therefore do not be too confident in your own opinion, but be willing to hear the judgment of others. Even if what you think is not amiss, and yet you part with it for God, and follow the opinion of another, it shall be better for you.

3. I have often heard that it is safer to hear and take counsel, than to give it. It may also fall out that each one's opinion may be good; but refusing to yield to others when reason or a special cause requires it, is a sign of pride and stiffness.

CHAPTER 10 - Avoiding Excess in Words

FLY the tumultuousness of the world as much as you can;¹ for the talk of worldly affairs is a great hindrance, even though they may be discussed with sincere intention; For we are quickly defiled, and enthralled with vanity. Often I could wish that I had held my peace when I have spoken; and that I had not been in company. Why do we so willingly speak and talk one with another, when notwithstanding our willingness, we seldom return to silence without a hurt conscience?² The reason why we so willingly talk is that by discoursing with one another, we seek to receive comfort from one another, and we desire to ease our mind which is overwearied with sundry thoughts: And we very willingly talk and think of those things which we most love or desire; or those which we feel most contrary to us.

2. But alas, often this is in vain and to no end; for this outward comfort is the cause of no small loss of inward and divine consolation. Therefore we must watch and pray, lest our time pass away idly. If it be lawful and expedient for you to speak, speak those things that may edify.³ An evil habit and neglect of our own good gives too much liberty to inconsiderate speech. Yet religious discourses about spiritual things greatly further our spiritual growth, especially when persons of one mind and spirit are gathered

¹ Matt. 4:1; 14:23; John 6:15.

² Matt. 7:1; Rom. 2:1.

³ [Rom 14:19](#); [1Th 5:11](#)

together in God.¹

CHAPTER 11 - Obtaining Peace, and the Zealous Desire of Progress in Grace

WE might enjoy much peace if we would not busy ourselves with the words and deeds of other men, with things that have nothing to do with our charge. How can someone abide long in peace who thrusts himself into the affairs of others, who seeks such occasions outside his domain, who little or seldom considers himself within his own breast? Blessed are the single-hearted; for they shall enjoy much peace.

2. What is the reason why some of the Saints were so perfect and contemplative? Because they labored to wholly mortify themselves to all earthly desires; and therefore they could fix themselves upon God with their whole heart, and be free for holy retirement. We are led too much by our passions, and we are too desirous for transitory things. We also seldom overcome any one vice perfectly, and we are not inflamed with a fervent desire to grow better every day; therefore we remain cold and lukewarm.

3. If we were perfectly dead to ourselves, and not entangled within our own breasts, then we would be able to taste divine things, and have some experience of heavenly contemplation. The greatest, and indeed the whole impediment to this, is that we are not disentangled from our passions and lusts, nor do we endeavor to enter into that path of perfection which the Saints have walked before us; and when any small adversity befalls us, we are too quickly dejected, and turn ourselves to human comforts.

4. If we would endeavor like men of courage to stand in the battle, surely we should feel the favorable assistance of God from Heaven. For He who gives us occasion to fight (to the end that we may get the victory) is ready to succor those who fight manfully and trust in His grace. If we think that our progress in religious life consists only in some exterior observances, then our devotion will quickly be at an end. But let us lay the axe to the root, so that, being freed from our passions, we may find rest for our souls.

5. If every year we would root out one vice, we should sooner become perfect men. But now we often perceive that it goes contrary, and that we were better and purer at the beginning of our conversion than after many years of our profession. Our fervor and profiting should increase daily; but now it is accounted a great achievement if a man can retain only some part of his initial zeal. If we would only force ourselves a little at the beginning, then we would be able to perform all things afterwards with ease and delight.

6. It is a hard matter to put away what we are accustomed to, but it is harder to go against our own wills. Yet if you do not overcome the little and easy things, how will you overcome harder things? Resist your inclination in the very beginning, and unlearn evil habits, lest perhaps little by little they draw you to greater difficulty. If you only consider how much inward peace you would procure for yourself, and joy for others, by demeaning yourself well, I suppose you would be more careful of your spiritual progress.

CHAPTER 12 - The Profit of Adversity

IT is good that sometimes we have some troubles and crosses, for they often make a man contemplate, and consider that he is banished here, and ought not to place his trust in any worldly thing. It is good that we are sometimes contradicted, and have a painful or lesser opinion of ourselves, and this even though we do and intend to do well. These things often help us to attain humility, and they defend us from vain glory: for then we chiefly seek God for our inward witness, when outwardly we are despised by men, and

¹ Acts 1:14; Rom. 15:5, 6.

when no credit is given to us.

2. And therefore a man should settle himself so fully in God, that he need not seek many comforts from men. When a good man is afflicted, tempted, or troubled with evil thoughts, then he understands better the great need he has of God, without whom he perceives he can do nothing that is good. Then he also sorrows, laments, and prays, by reason of the miseries he suffers. Then he is weary of living longer, and he wishes that death would come so that he might be dissolved, and be with Christ. Then he also well perceives that perfect security and full peace cannot be had in this world.

CHAPTER 13 - Resisting Temptation

SO long as we live in this world, we cannot be without tribulation and temptation.¹ Accordingly, it is written in Job, "The life of man upon earth is a life of temptation."² Everyone therefore ought to be careful about his temptations, and to watch in prayer, lest the devil find an advantage to deceive him. The devil never sleeps, but goes about seeking those whom he may devour.³ No man is so perfect and holy as not to have temptations sometimes; and we cannot be completely without them.⁴

2. Nevertheless temptations are often very profitable to us, though they are troublesome and grievous; for in them a man is humbled, purified, and instructed. All the Saints passed through many tribulations and temptations, and profited thereby. And those who could not bear temptations, became reprobate, and fell away.⁵ There is no order so holy, nor place so secret, where there are not temptations, or adversities.

3. There is no man that is altogether free from temptations while he lives on earth: for in ourselves is their root, being born with an inclination to evil.⁶ When one temptation or tribulation goes away, another comes; and we shall ever have something to suffer, because we are fallen from our state of bliss. Many seek to flee temptations, and fall more grievously into them. By flight alone we cannot overcome them, but by patience and true humility we become stronger than all our enemies.

4. Someone who only avoids them outwardly, and does not pluck them up by the roots, shall profit little; indeed, temptations will all the sooner return to him, and he will feel he is in a worse case than before. Little by little, and by patience, with longsuffering, through God's help, you shall more easily overcome them than with force and your own importunity. Take counsel often in temptations, and do not deal roughly with someone who is tempted; but give him comfort, as you would wish to be done to yourself.

5. The beginning of all evil temptations is inconstancy of mind, and small confidence in God. For as a ship without a helm is tossed to and fro with the waves;⁷ so the man who is remiss, and apt to leave his purpose, is tempted in many ways. Fire tries iron, and temptation tries a just man. We do not know often what we are able to do, but temptations will show us what we are. Yet we must be watchful, especially in the beginning of the temptation; for the enemy is more easily overcome if he is not allowed to enter the door of our hearts, but is resisted outside the gate, at his first knock. This is why someone said,

¹ [Jn 16:33](#)

² Job 7:1 [Latin Version].

³ [1Pet 5:8](#)

⁴ [1Cor 10:13](#); [Heb 4:15](#)

⁵ [2Tim 3:8](#); [Tit 1:16](#); [Lk 8:13](#); [Heb 6:6](#)

⁶ [Gen 6:5](#)

⁷ [Jam 1:6-8](#)

“Withstand the beginnings, for an after-remedy often comes too late.”¹ For first there comes to the mind a bare thought of evil, then a strong imagination of it, afterwards delight, and an evil impulse, and then consent.² And so little by little our wicked enemy gains complete entrance, when he is not resisted in the beginning. And the longer a man is negligent in resisting, the weaker he becomes daily, and the enemy becomes stronger against him.

6. Some suffer great temptations in the beginning of their conversion; others towards the latter end. Others again are much troubled almost through the whole time of their life; some are easily tempted, each one in accord with the wisdom and equity of the Divine appointment, which weighs the states and rewards of men, and ordains all things for the welfare of His own chosen ones.

7. Therefore we should not despair when we are tempted, but so much the more fervently pray to God, so that He will deign to help us in all tribulations; according to the words of St. Paul, God will surely give with the temptation such provision that we may be able to bear it.³ Let us therefore humble our souls under the hand of God in all temptations and tribulations, for He will save and exalt the humble spirit.⁴

8. In temptations and afflictions, a man is proved how much he has profited; and his reward is thereby the greater, and his graces more eminently shine forth. Nor is it any such great thing if a man is devout and fervent only when he feels no affliction; but if in time of adversity he bears himself patiently, *then* there is hope of great proficiency in grace. Some are kept from great temptations, and are often overcome in small ones which occur daily; this is to the end that, being humbled, those who are baffled in such small things may never presume on themselves in great matters.

CHAPTER 14 - Avoiding Rash Judgment

TURN your eyes upon yourself, and beware that you do not judge the deeds of other men.⁵ In judging others, a man labors in vain, often errs, and easily sins;⁶ but in judging and discussing himself, he always labors fruitfully. We often judge things according to how we fancy them; for private affection easily deprives us of true judgment. If God were always the pure intention of our desire, we would not be so easily troubled through the repugnance of our carnal mind.

2. But often something lurks within, or else occurs from without, which draws us after it. Many secretly seek their own interests in what they do, and do not know it. They also seem to live in good peace of mind when things are done according to their will and opinion; but if things happen contrary to what they desire, they are immediately disturbed and greatly vexed. Diversities of judgment and opinion often cause dissension between friends and countrymen, even between religious and devout persons.⁷

3. An old habit is broken with difficulty,⁸ and no man is willing to be led farther than he can see himself. If you more rely upon your own reason or industry, rather than upon that power which brings you under

¹ Ovid. Lib. xiii. de Remed. Am.

² [Jam 1:14-15](#)

³ 1Cor. 10:13.

⁴ [1Pet. 5:6](#)

⁵ Matt. 7:1; Rom. 15:1.

⁶ Eccles. 3:16.

⁷ Matt. 12:25; Luke 12:51.

⁸ Jer. 13:23.

the obedience of JESUS Christ,¹ it will be a long time before you become illuminated; for God will have us perfectly subject to Him, so that, being inflamed with His love, we may transcend the narrow limits of human reason.

CHAPTER 15 - Works done in Charity

For no worldly thing, nor for the love of any man, is any evil to be done;² and yet, for the profit of one who stands in need, a good work is sometimes to be suspended without any hesitation, to be exchanged for a better one. For by doing this, a good work is not lost, but changed into a better work. Without charity, the exterior work profits nothing;³ but whatever is done out of charity, be it never so little and contemptible in the sight of the world, it becomes wholly fruitful. For God weighs more with how much love a man works, than how much he does. He does much, who loves much.

2. He does much, who does a thing well. He does well, who serves the community rather than his own will.⁴ Often it seems to be charity, but it is carnality instead; that is because natural inclination, self-will, hope of reward, and desire for our own interest, will seldom be missing.

3. One who has true and perfect charity, seeks himself in nothing,⁵ but only desires in all things that the glory of God should be exalted. He also envies no one, because he intends no private good; nor will he rejoice in himself, but wishes above all things to be made happy in the enjoyment of God.⁶ He attributes nothing that is good to any man, but wholly refers it to God, from whom all things flow as from the fountain, and in whom all the Saints finally rest as in their highest fruition. One who has but one spark of true charity, would certainly discern that all earthly things are full of vanity.

CHAPTER 16 - Bearing with the Defects of Others

THOSE things that a man cannot amend in himself or in others, he ought to suffer patiently, until God orders things otherwise. Think that perhaps it is better so for your trial and patience, without which all our good deeds are not to be esteemed much. Notwithstanding, you ought to pray when you have such impediments, so that God would deign to help you, and so that you may bear with others kindly.⁷

2. If one that is once or twice warned will not give over, do not contend with him,⁸ but commit all to God, so that His will may be fulfilled,⁹ and His name honored in all His servants, who well knows how to turn evil into good. Endeavor to be patient in bearing with the defects and infirmities of others, of what ever sort they may be; for you also have many failings which must be borne with by others.¹⁰ If you cannot make yourself as you would have them be, how can you expect to have someone else be to your

¹ [Jn 15:5](#)

² Matt. 18:8.

³ 1Cor. 13:3; Luke 7:47.

⁴ Phil. 2:17.

⁵ Phil. 2:21; 1Cor. 13:5.

⁶ Ps. 17:15; 24:6.

⁷ Matt. 6:13; Luke 11:4.

⁸ [Matt. 18:17](#); [Tit 3:10](#).

⁹ [Matt. 6:10](#)

¹⁰ 1Thess. 5:14; Gal 6:1.

liking in all things? We would willingly have others perfect, and yet we do not amend our own faults.

3. We will have others severely corrected, and yet will not be corrected ourselves. The large liberty of others displeases us; and yet we will not have our own desires denied us. We will have others kept under the thumb by strict laws; but in no way will we allow ourselves to be restrained. And thus it appears how seldom we weigh our neighbor in the same balance as ourselves. If all men were perfect, what should we have to suffer from our neighbor for God's sake?

4. But now God has ordered it thus: that we may learn to bear one another's burdens;¹ for no man is without fault; every man has his burden; no man is sufficient of himself; no man is wise enough of himself; but we ought to bear with one another, comfort one another, help, instruct, and admonish one another.² Occasions of adversity best disclose how great the virtue or strength each one of us has. For occasions do not make a man frail, but they show what he is.

CHAPTER 17 - A Retired Life

YOU must learn to break your own will in many things if you will have peace and concord with others.³ It is no small matter to dwell in a religious community, or a congregation, to converse in it without complaint, and to persevere in it faithfully unto death.⁴ Blessed is one who has lived there well, and ended happily. If you will: persevere in grace as you ought to do, and grow in it, and consider yourself as an banished man, and a pilgrim on earth.⁵ You must be contented for Christ's sake to be considered as a fool in this world, if you desire to lead a religious life.⁶

2. Wearing a religious robe and shaving the crown of the head profit little; but a change of manners, and the perfect mortification of passions, make a true religious man. One who seeks anything beyond God and the salvation of his soul, will find nothing but tribulation and sorrow.⁷ Nor can someone remain long in peace who does not labor to be the least, and subject to all.⁸

3. You came to serve, not to rule.⁹ Know that you were called to suffer and to labor, not to be idle, or to spend your time in talk. Here therefore men are proved, as gold is proved in the furnace. Here no man can stand unless he humbles himself with his whole heart for the love of God.

CHAPTER 18 - The Examples of the Holy Fathers

CONSIDER the lively examples of the holy Father, in whom true perfection and religion shined;¹⁰ and then you shall see how little it is, almost nothing, which we do these days. Alas! What is our life if it is

¹ Gal. 6:2.

² 1Thess. 5:14; 1Cor. 12:25.

³ Phil 2:3; 1Cor 9:17

⁴ Acts 20:18-35.

⁵ 1Pet. 2:11.

⁶ 1Cor 1:25-31; 1Cor 3:18

⁷ Eccles. 1:17-18

⁸ Matt. 20:26; Mark 9:35; Eph 5:21

⁹ Matt 20:28

¹⁰ Heb. 11; 1Cor 10:11

compared to them! The Saints and friends of Christ served the Lord in hunger and in thirst, in cold and nakedness, in labor and weariness, in watching and fasting, in prayer and holy meditation, in many persecutions and reproaches.

2. O how many and grievous tribulations were suffered by the Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, and all the rest who endeavored to follow the steps of Christ! For they hated their lives in this world, that they might keep them unto eternal life.¹ How strict and self-renouncing a life was led by those holy Fathers in the wilderness!² How long and grievous were the temptations they suffered! How often were they assaulted by the enemy! What frequent and fervent prayers they offered to God!³ What rigorous abstinences they used! How great were the zeal and care they had for their spiritual proficiency! How strong a combat they had to overcome their lusts! How pure and upright were the intentions they kept towards God! In the day they labored, and in the night they attended to continual prayer: although when they labored also, they did not cease from mental prayer.⁴

3. They spent all their time with profit; every hour seemed short for the service of God. And by reason of the great sweetness they felt in contemplation, they forgot the necessity of corporeal refreshments. They renounced all riches, dignities, honors, friends, and kinsfolk;⁵ they desired to have nothing which appertained to the world;⁶ they scarcely took things necessary to sustain life; they grieved to serve their bodies even in necessity. Therefore they were poor in earthly things, but very rich in grace and virtues. Outwardly they were destitute, but inwardly they were refreshed with grace and divine consolation.⁷

4. They were strangers to the world, but near and familiar friends to God.⁸ They seemed to themselves as nothing, and despicable to this present world; but they were precious and beloved in the eyes of God. They were grounded in true humility, lived in simple obedience, walked in love and patience: and therefore they profited daily in the Spirit, and obtained great grace in God's sight. They were given for an example to all religious men;⁹ and they should provoke us to endeavor after spiritual proficiencies more than the number of lukewarm professors should provoke us to be remiss in that.

5. O how great was the fervor of all religious persons in the beginning of their holy institution! How great was their devotion to prayer! What ambition to excel others in virtue! How exacting was the discipline that flourished then! What great reverence and obedience they observed in all things under the rule of their superiors! Their footsteps still remain to testify that they were indeed holy and perfect men, who fighting so valiantly, trod the world under their feet. But now, we take great account of someone who merely does not break the law, and who can endure with patience what he has undertaken.

6. O the lukewarmness and negligence of our times! We so quickly decline from the ancient fervor. We have now come to that pass, that very sloth and lukewarmness of spirit, which makes our own life tedious to us. Would to God that the desire to grow in virtues did not wholly sleep in you, for you have often seen the many examples of devout and religious persons!

¹ John 12:25.

² [Heb. 11:37-40](#)

³ [Col 4:12](#)

⁴ [Luke 18:7](#); [Acts 2:42](#); [1Thess 5:17](#)

⁵ Matt. 19:29.

⁶ [1Jn 2:15](#)

⁷ [2Cor 4:16](#)

⁸ [Jn 15:15](#); James 4:4.

⁹ [Phil 3:17](#); [1Tim 4:12](#); [Heb 6:12](#); [Heb 13:7](#); [1Pet 5:3](#)

CHAPTER 19 - The Exercises of a good Religious Person

THE life of a good religious person ought to be adorned with all virtues,¹ so that he may be inwardly as he appears outwardly to men. And with good reason there ought to be much more within than is perceived without. For God beholds us;² we are bound most highly to reverence Him wherever we are, and to walk in purity,³ like Angels in His sight. We ought to renew our purposes daily, and provoke ourselves to greater fervor, as though this were the first day of our conversion. We ought to say, “Help me, my God in my good purposes, and in your holy service; and grant that I may now begin this day perfectly, for what I have done up to now is nothing.”

2. The success of our spiritual profiting will be according to our purpose; and great diligence is necessary to someone who would profit greatly. And if someone who firmly purposes often fails, then what will someone do who seldom purposes anything, or with little resolve? It may fall out any number of ways that we depart our purpose; yet the light omission of our spiritual exercises seldom passes without some loss to our souls. The purpose of just men does not depend upon their own wisdom, but upon God’s grace, the One on whom they always rely for whatever they take in hand. For man purposes, but God disposes;⁴ nor is the way of man found in himself.⁵

3. If an accustomed exercise is sometimes omitted, either for some act of piety, or to profit a brother, it may easily be recovered again. But if we lightly forsake the same exercise out of a slothful mind, or out of carelessness, it is a great offense against God, and it will be found to be prejudicial to ourselves. Even if we do the best we can, we will still too easily fail in many things.⁶ Yet we must always purpose some certain course, and especially against those failings which molest us most of all. We must diligently search into, and set in order, both the outward and the inward man, because both of them are of importance to our progress in godliness.

4. If you cannot continually recollect yourself, then at least do it regularly, at least once a day, namely, in the morning or at night. In the morning fix your good purpose; or at night examine yourself as to what you have done, how you have behaved in word, deed, and thought;⁷ for in these things perhaps you have often offended both God and your neighbor. Gird up your loins like a man against the vile assaults of the devil; bridle your riotous appetite, and you shall be better able to suppress all the unruly motions of the flesh. Never be entirely idle; but either be reading, or writing, or praying, or meditating, or endeavoring something for the public good. As for bodily exercises, they must be used with discretion, nor are they to be practiced by all men alike.

5. Those devotions which do not belong to the community are not to be exposed to public view; private things are more safely practiced at home. Nevertheless, you must beware that you do not neglect those common devotions, simply because you are more ready for what is private. But having fully and faithfully accomplished all which you are bound and enjoined to do in common, if you have any spare time, take to

¹ Matt. 5:48; [2Pet 1:5-7](#)

² Ps. 33:13; Heb. 4:12-13.

³ [Ps. 15:2-5](#); [Ps 84:11](#)

⁴ Prov. 16:9.

⁵ [Jer 10:23](#)

⁶ Eccles. 7:20.

⁷ [Deut. 4:4-9](#).

yourself as your devotion desires. All cannot use one kind of spiritual exercise, but one is more useful for this person, and another for that. Also, various exercises are more fitting according to the seasonableness of times; some suit better with us on working days, and others on holy days. In the time of temptation, we have need of some exercises, and of others in time of peace and quietness. Some we mind when we are pensive, and others when we rejoice in the Lord.

6. About the time of the main festivals, good exercises are to be renewed, and the prayers of holy men are more fervently to be implored. From festival to festival we should make some good purposes, as though we were about to depart out of this world and come to the everlasting feast. Therefore, we ought to carefully prepare ourselves at holy times, and live more devoutly, and keep more exactly all those things that we are to observe, as though we were shortly to be at God's hands to receive the reward of our labors.

7. But if it is deferred, let us think within ourselves that we are not sufficiently prepared, and we are yet unworthy of so great a glory which shall be revealed in us in due time;¹ and let us endeavor to better prepare ourselves for our departure. "Blessed is that servant (says the Evangelist St. Luke) whom his Lord when He comes shall find watching: Truly, I say to you, He will make him ruler over all His goods."²

CHAPTER 20 - The Love of Solitude and Silence

SEEK a convenient time to retire into yourself, and meditate often upon God's lovingkindness. Do not meddle with curiosities; but read things that may yield contriteness to your heart rather than occupation to your head. If you will withdraw yourself from speaking vainly, and from flitting about aimlessly, and also from listening to novelties and rumors, then you will find leisure enough, and suitable for meditation on good things. The greatest Saints avoided the society of men,³ when they could conveniently, and they rather chose to live to God in secret.

2. One said, "As often as I have been among men, I returned home less a man than I was before."⁴ And this we find is true, when we talk too long together. It is easier not to speak a word at all than not to speak more words than we should. It is easier for a man to keep at home than to keep himself well when he is abroad. Whoever therefore intends to attain to the more inward and spiritual things of religion, must with JESUS depart from the multitude and the press of people.⁵ No man safely appears abroad, except the one who can gladly abide at home, out of sight. No man speaks securely, except the one who holds his peace willingly.⁶ No man rules safely, except the one who is willingly ruled. No man securely commands except the one who has learned to readily obey.⁷

3. No man rejoices securely, unless he has within him the testimony of a good conscience. And yet the security of the Saints was always full of the fear of God. Nor were they any less anxious and humble in themselves, despite shining outwardly with grace and great virtues. But the security of bad men arises

¹ Rom. 8:18.

² Luke 12:43-44; Matt. 24:46-47.

³ Heb. 11:38; Mark 1:35; Mark 6:31 – Monastic isolation for extended periods is not what is advocated by these Scriptures; but we must first draw apart with God, submissively meditating on His Word, before we may productively come together with others. We contemplate so that we may congregate, for the love of Christ cannot be practiced in isolation - WHG

⁴ Seneca, Ep. 7.

⁵ Matt. 5:1; Matt. 14:23

⁶ Prov. 11:12; 17:28; Job 33:33

⁷ Matt. 10:24-25; Jn 5:19; Jn 13:15

from pride and presumption, and in the end it deceives them. Although you seem to be a good religious man, or a devout and solitary man, yet never promise yourself security in this life.¹

4. Often those who have been held in the greatest esteem and account among men, have fallen into the greatest danger by too much self-confidence. Which is why for many it is more profitable not to be free from temptations, but to be assaulted often; otherwise, they might be too secure, and so perhaps be puffed up with pride; or else too freely give themselves to worldly comforts. How good a conscience would someone keep if he never sought transitory joy, and never entangled himself in the things of this world! How great a peace and quietness someone would possess if he cut off all vain anxiety, and thought only about divine things, and things profitable for his soul, and if he placed all his confidence in God.

5. No man is worthy of heavenly comfort, unless he has diligently exercised himself in holy contriteness. If you desire true contrition of heart, enter into your secret chamber, and shut out the tumults of the world; as it is written, “In your chambers be grieved.”² In your chamber you will find what you too often lose abroad. The more you visit your chamber, the more you will like it; the less you come into it, the more you will loathe it. If in the beginning of your conversion, you are content to remain in it, and keep to it well, it will be a dear friend to you afterwards, and a most pleasant comfort.

6. In silence and in stillness a religious soul advantages herself, and learns the mysteries of Holy Scripture. There she finds rivers of tears in which she may wash and cleanse herself every night;³ the further she lives from all worldly disquiet, the more familiar she will be with her Creator. Whoever therefore withdraws himself from his acquaintances and friends, God will draw near to him with His holy Angels. It is better for a man to live privately, and to take care of himself, than to neglect his soul, even though he could work wonders in the world. It is commendable in a religious person to seldom go abroad, and to be unwilling to see or to be seen.⁴

7. Why are you desirous to see what it is unlawful for you to have? The world passes away and the lust of it. Our sensual desires draw us to rove abroad; but when the time is past, what do you carry home with you but a burdened conscience and distracted heart? Going out merrily often brings a mournful return home; and a joyful evening often makes a sad morning.⁵ So all carnal joy enters gently, but in the end it bites and stings to death. What can you see elsewhere which you cannot see here?⁶ Behold the heaven and the earth and all the elements: for all things are created of these.

8. What can you see anywhere that can long continue under the sun?⁷ You think perhaps to satisfy yourself, but you can never attain it. If you were to see all things present before your eyes, what would it be but a vain sight?⁸ Lift up your eyes to God in the highest,⁹ and ask Him to pardon your sins and negligences. Leave vain things to the vain; but you be intent upon those things which God has commanded you. Shut your door after you,¹⁰ and call unto you JESUS, your Beloved. Stay with Him in

¹ [2Kgs 20:19; Isa 39:8](#)

² Psalm 4:4 [Latin Version]: “be punctured”

³ Ps. 6:6.

⁴ [Here we find another distinction between Roman Catholics and Protestants: monastic withdrawal vs. social engagement.](#)

⁵ Prov. 14:13.

⁶ Eccles. 1:10.

⁷ [Ecc 2:11](#)

⁸ Eccles 3:11.

⁹ Ps. 121:1.

¹⁰ Matt. 6:6.

your closet; for you will not find so great a peace anywhere else. If you had not gone abroad and listened to idle rumors, you would have better preserved a happy peace of mind. But since you delight sometimes to hear novelties, it is only fitting that you should suffer some disquietude of heart for it.

CHAPTER 21 - Contriteness of Heart

IF you would make any progress in godliness, keep yourself in the fear of God,¹ and do not display too much liberty. Restrain all your senses under discipline, and do not give yourself over to foolish mirth. Give yourself to contriteness of heart, and you will gain much devotion from it. Contriteness lays open much good, which immorality is likely to destroy, and quickly. It is a wonder that any man can ever perfectly rejoice in this life if he duly considers and thoroughly weighs his state of banishment, and the many perils which surround his soul.

2. Through levity of heart, and small care for our failings, we become insensible to the real sorrows of our souls; and so often we laugh vainly when we have just cause to weep. There is no true liberty nor right joy except in the fear of God, accompanied with a good conscience. Happy is he who can cast off all distracting impediments, and bring himself to the one single purpose of holy contrition. Happy is he who can abandon all that may defile his conscience or burden it. Resist manfully; one habit overcomes another. If you can let others alone in their matters, they likewise will not hinder you in yours.

3. Do not busy yourself in matters which pertain to others, nor entangle yourself with the affairs of your betters. Keep an eye first to yourself, and more especially, be sure to admonish yourself before all your beloved friends. If you do not have the favor of men, do not be grieved by it,² but take this to heart: that perhaps you are not behaving yourself so warily and circumspectly as becomes the servant of God and a devout religious man. It is often better and safer if a man does not have many consolations in this life,³ especially those regarding the flesh. But if we do not have any divine consolations, or very seldom taste them, then the fault is ours, because we do not seek after a contrite heart, nor do we altogether forsake the vain and outward comforts of this world.

4. Know that you are unworthy of divine consolation, and that you have rather deserved much tribulation. When a man has perfect contrition, then the whole world is grievous and bitter to him.⁴ A good man always finds sufficient cause for mourning and weeping. For whether he considers his own estate or his neighbor's estate, he knows that none lives here *in this world* without tribulation. The more painstakingly a man looks into himself, the more he sorrows. Our sins and wickedness in which we lie so enwrapped, that we can seldom apply ourselves to Heavenly contemplations, administer to us these matters of just sorrow and inward contriteness.

5. If you had thought more often of your death⁵ than of living long, there is no question but you would be more zealous to amend. If also you only considered the infernal pains in the other world,⁶ I believe you would willingly undergo any labor or sorrow in this world, and not be afraid of the greatest austerity. But because these things do not enter into the heart, and we still love only those things that delight us, we

¹ Prov. 19:23.

² Gal. 1:10.

³ Ps. 76:5.

⁴ Judges 2:3-5; 20:24-26; 2 Kings 13:1-7; perhaps 2Sam. 12:13-18 (David's plea for his child by Bathsheba).

⁵ Ps 90:4-6,12

⁶ Matt. 25:41.

remain cold and very dull in religion.

6. It is often our lack of spirit which makes our miserable body complain so easily. Pray therefore to the Lord with all humility, that He will deign to give you the spirit of contriteness. And say with the Prophet, “Feed me, O Lord, with the bread of tears, and give me plenty of tears to drink.”¹

CHAPTER 22 - The Consideration of Human Misery

YOU are miserable wherever you are, or wherever you turn, unless you turn yourself to God. Why are you troubled when things do not succeed as you want or desire? For who has all things according to his mind?² Neither I, nor you, nor any man on earth has them. There is none in this world, even though he may be King or Bishop, *who has everything he wants* without some tribulation or perplexity. Who then is in the best situation? The one who is able to suffer something for God.

2. Many weak and infirm persons say, “Behold! What a happy life such a person leads:³ How wealthy, how great he is, with such power and dignity!” But lift up your eyes to the riches of Heaven, and you will see that all the goods of this life are to be accounted as nothing.⁴ They are very uncertain, and life becomes more burdensome than it would be otherwise, for they are never possessed without anxiety and fear. A man’s happiness does not consist in having an abundance of temporal goods;⁵ rather, a moderate portion is sufficient for him. Truly it is misery even to live upon the earth.⁶ The more spiritual a man desires to be, the more bitter this present life becomes to him, because he sees more clearly and perceives more sensibly the defects of human corruption. For to eat and drink, to sleep and watch, to labor and rest, and to be subject to other necessities of human nature, is doubtless a great misery and affliction to a religious man, who would gladly be set loose from them, and set free from all sin.

3. For the inward man is greatly weighed down with these outward and corporal necessities while we live in this world. Therefore the Prophet prays with great devotion to be enabled to be free from them, saying, “Bring me, O Lord, out of my necessities.”⁷ But woe to those who do not know their own misery; and a greater woe to those who love this miserable and corruptible life!⁸ For there are some who doat so much upon this world that, although they can scarcely get necessities by labor or begging, yet if they were able to live here forever, they would care nothing at all for the Kingdom of God.

4. O how senseless these men are, and unbelieving in heart. They lie so deeply sunk in the earth that they can relish nothing but carnal things!⁹ But miserable as they are, in the end they will feel how costly, how vile, and how empty the earthly things they loved were. Whereas the Saints of God and all the devout friends of Christ did not value those things which pleased the flesh, nor those which flourished in this life, but they longed after everlasting riches¹⁰ with their whole hope and earnest intention. Their whole desire

¹ Ps. 80:5.

² Eccles. 6:2.

³ Luke 12:19.

⁴ Isa 40:17; Dan 4:35; 1Jn 2:15

⁵ Prov. 19:1.

⁶ Job 14:1; Eccles. 2:17.

⁷ Ps. 25:17.

⁸ Rom. 8:22.

⁹ Rom. 8:5.

¹⁰ 1Pet. 1:4; Heb. 11:26.

was transported upward to things which are durable and invisible, so that the desire of visible things might not draw them to the things below.

5. O my brother, do not lose your confidence of making progress in godliness; there is still time; the hour is not yet past.¹ Why will you defer your good purpose from day to day? Arise and begin in this very instant, and say, “Now is the time to be doing, now is the time to be striving, now is the fit time to amend myself.” When you are ill at ease and greatly troubled, that is the time of deserving best. You must pass through fire and water² before you come to the place of refreshing. Unless you earnestly force yourself, you will never get the victory over sin. So long as we carry about us this frail body of ours, we can never be without sin, or live without weariness and pain. We would gladly be quiet and freed from all misery; but seeing that we have lost our innocence by sin, along with it we have also lost true felicity.³ Therefore it becomes us to have patience, and to wait for the mercy of God till this iniquity passes away, and mortality is swallowed up by life.⁴

6. O how great human frailty is, which is always prone to evil.⁵ Today you confess your sins, and tomorrow you commit the very ones you confessed. Now you are purposed to look well to your ways, but within a short while you behave yourself as though you never had any such purpose at all. We have good cause therefore to humble ourselves,⁶ and to never have any great conceit of ourselves since we are so frail and so inconstant. Besides, that humility may quickly be lost by our own negligence, which by the grace of God, and with much labor, we have barely obtained at length.

7. What will become of us in the end if we begin to wax lukewarm so early? Woe to us if we give ourselves to ease, as if everything was in peace and safety, when there still appears no sign of true holiness in our life! Like young beginners, we have great need to be newly instructed in good living, if there is to be any hope of future amendment, and of greater proficiency in spiritual things.

CHAPTER 23 - Meditation on Death

VERY quickly there will be an end of you here:⁷ look what will become of you in another world. Today the man is here; tomorrow he is gone. And when he is out of sight, he is also quickly out of mind. Oh the stupidity and hardness of man’s heart, which thinks only about the present, and does not instead care about what is to come! You ought to order yourself in all your thoughts and actions, as if you were about to die today.⁸ If you had a good conscience, you would not greatly fear death.⁹ It would be better to avoid sin than to fly death.¹⁰ If you are not prepared today, then how will you be prepared tomorrow?¹¹ Tomorrow is uncertain, and how do you know that you will live until tomorrow?

¹ Rom. 8:11; Heb. 10:35.

² Ps. 46:12.

³ Rom. 7:24; Gen 3:17.

⁴ 2Cor. 5:4.

⁵ Gen. 6:5; 8:21.

⁶ Mac. 9:11.

⁷ Job 9:25, 26; 14:1, 2; Luke 12:20; Heb. 9:27.

⁸ Matt. 25:13.

⁹ Luke 12:37.

¹⁰ Wisd. 4:16. – [Book of Wisdom, or Wisdom of Solomon, or simply Wisdom, is one of the Apocrypha.](#)

¹¹ Matt. 24:44; 25:10.

2. What does it avail to live long, when there is so small an amendment in our practice? Alas! The length of our days more often makes our sins greater than to make our lives better. Oh that we had spent just one day in this world thoroughly well! There are many who count how long it is since their conversion, and yet often the fruit of the amendment of their life is so slender. If dying is considered dreadful, then to live long may perhaps prove more dangerous. Happy is the man who always has the hour of his death before his eyes,¹ and daily prepares himself to die. If at any time you have seen another man die, take note that you must also pass the same way.²

3. When it is morning, think that you may die before night. And when evening comes, do not dare to promise yourself the next morning. Therefore always be ready, and so lead your life that death may never take you unprepared.³ Many die suddenly and when they are not looking for it; for the Son of man will come at an hour when we do not expect him.⁴ When that last hour comes, you will begin to have a far different opinion of your whole life that is past, and you will be exceedingly sorry that you have been so careless and remiss.

4. O how wise and happy is the one who labors now to be such a person during his life, as he wishes to be found at the hour of his death! A perfect contempt of the world,⁵ a fervent desire to go forward in all virtue, the love of discipline, the painfulness of repentance, the readiness of obedience, the denying of ourselves, and the bearing any affliction whatever for the love of Christ, will give us great confidence that we will die happily. While you are in health you may do much good; but when you are sick, I do not see what you will be able to do. Few grow better and more reformed by sickness; so too, those who wander abroad seldom become holy by that.

5. Do not trust to friends and kindred, nor should you put off the care of your soul's welfare till hereafter; for men will forget you sooner than you are aware. It is better to look to it quickly, and do some good beforehand, than to trust to other men's help.⁶ If you are not careful for yourself now, who will be careful for you hereafter? The time that is now present is very precious: now are the days of salvation; now is the acceptable time.⁷ But alas that you should spend your time so idly here, when you might invest your time to live eternally hereafter. The time will come, when you will desire one day or one hour to amend your ways, and I cannot say that it will be granted to you.

6. O beloved, from how great a danger you might deliver yourself, from how great a fear you might free yourself, if you would be ever fearful and mindful of death! Labor now to live in such a way, that at the hour of death you may rejoice rather than fear. Learn now to die to the world, so that you may then begin to live with Christ.⁸ Learn now to forsake all things,⁹ that you may then freely go to Christ. Chastise your body now by repentance,¹⁰ so that you may then have assured confidence.

¹ Eccles. 7:1.

² Heb. 9:27.

³ Luke 21:36.

⁴ Matt. 24:44; Luke 12:40.

⁵ Eccles. 41:1.

⁶ Isa. 30:5; 31:1; Jer. 17:5; 48:7; Matt. 6:20.

⁷ [2Cor 6:2](#)

⁸ Rom. 6:1.

⁹ Luke 14:33.

¹⁰ 1Cor. 9:27.

7. Ah! fool, why do you think to live long when you cannot promise yourself one day.¹ How many have been deceived and suddenly snatched away! How often do you hear these reports, that such a man is slain, another man is drowned, a third breaks his neck with a fall from some high place, this man died eating, and that man playing! One perished by fire, another by the sword, another of the plague, another was slain by thieves. Thus, death is the end of all men, and man's life suddenly passes away like a shadow.²

8. Who will remember you when you are dead? And who will pray for you? Do it, do it now, my beloved, whatever you are able to do; for you do not know when you will die, nor what will befall you after your death. Now, while you have time, heap up for yourself everlasting riches.³ Think about nothing but the salvation of your soul; care for nothing but the things of God. Make friends to yourself now by honoring the Saints of God and imitating their actions, so that when you fail in this life, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.⁴

9. Keep yourself as a stranger and pilgrim upon the earth,⁵ and as one to whom the affairs of this world hold no attraction.⁶ Keep your heart free, and lifted up to God, because you have no abiding city here.⁷ Send your daily prayers and sighs there, together with your tears, so that after death your spirit may be found worthy with great happiness to pass to the Lord. *Amen.*

CHAPTER 24 - Judgment, and the Punishment of Sinners

IN all things have a special aim to your end, and how you will be able to stand before that severe Judge⁸ to whom nothing is hidden, and who is not pacified with gifts, nor admits any excuses, but who will judge according to right and equity. Oh wretched and foolish sinner, who sometimes fears the countenance of an angry man, what answer will you make to God who knows all your wickedness?⁹ Why do you not provide for yourself against that great Day of Judgment, when no man can excuse or answer for another, but everyone will have enough to answer for himself? Now your pains are profitable, your tears acceptable,¹⁰ and your groans audible; your grief pacifies God and purges your soul.

2. The patient man has a great and wholesome purgatory;¹¹ though he receives injuries, yet he grieves more for the malice of another than for the wrong he suffers; he prays willingly for his adversaries,¹² and he forgives their offenses from his heart; he does not delay to ask forgiveness of whomever he has offended; he is sooner moved to compassion than to anger; he often beats himself down, and labors to bring his body wholly into subjection to the spirit.¹³ It is better to purge out our sins, and cut off our

¹ Luke 12:20.

² Job 14:2.

³ Matt. 6:20; Luke 12:33; Gal. 6:8.

⁴ Luke 16:9; Heb. 11.

⁵ 1Pet. 2:11.

⁶ 1Cor 7:33-34

⁷ Heb. 13:14.

⁸ Heb. 10:31.

⁹ Job. 9:2.

¹⁰ 2Cor. 6:4.

¹¹ James 1:4; *that is, a place in which to purge our sins – he seems to refer to this world and not the next - WHG.*

¹² Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60.

¹³ 1Cor. 9:27

here, than to keep them to be punished hereafter. Truly, we only deceive ourselves through an inordinate love of the flesh.

3. What is there for the infernal fire to feed upon but your sins? The more you spare yourself now and follow the flesh, the more severe your punishment will be hereafter, and the more fuel you store up for that flame. In what things a man has sinned, in the same he will be more grievously punished. There the slothful will be prodded forward with burning goads, and the glutton will be tormented with extreme hunger and thirst. There the luxurious and lovers of pleasures will be bathed in burning pitch and stinking brimstone, and the envious, like mad dogs, will howl for grief. ¹

4. There is no sin that will not have its own proper torment. There the proud will be filled with all confusion; the covetous will be pinched with miserable penury; One hour of pain there will be more bitter than a thousand years of the sharpest penance here! There is no quiet, no comfort for the damned there;² yet here we have some intermission between our labors, and enjoy the comfort of our friends. Be solicitous and sorrowful now because of your sins, so that at the Day of Judgment you may be secure with the company of blessed souls. For then the righteous with great boldness will stand against those who have vexed and oppressed them.³ Then the who now humbly submits himself to the censures of men will stand to judge them,. Then the poor and humble will have great confidence, but the proud man will be compassed with fear on every side.

5. Then it will appear that the one who learned to be a fool and despised for Christ's sake was wise in this world. Then every affliction we have patiently undergone will delight us, when the mouth of all iniquity will be stopped.⁴ Then all the devout will rejoice, and all the profane will mourn. Then the one who beat down his own flesh will rejoice more than the one who abounded in all pleasure and delight.⁵ Then the attire of the poor will shine gloriously, and the precious robes of the rich will seem vile and contemptible. Then the poor cottage will be more commended than the gilded palace. Then constant patience will avail us more than all earthly power. Then simple obedience will be exalted above all worldly wisdom.⁶

6. Then a good and clear conscience will rejoice a man more than all the learning of philosophy. Then the contempt of riches will weigh more than all the worldling's treasure. Then you will be more comforted that you prayed devoutly than having fared daintily. Then will you be more glad that you kept silence, than having talked much. Then good works will avail more than many goodly words. Then a strict life and severe repentance will be more pleasing than all earthly delights. Accustom yourself now to suffer a little, so that you may then be delivered from more grievous pains. Prove first here what you can endure hereafter. If now you can endure so little, how will you then be able to sustain eternal torments? If now a little suffering makes you so impatient, what will hell-fire do hereafter? Assure yourself you can not have two paradises: it is impossible to enjoy delights here in this world, and hereafter reign with Christ.

7. Suppose you have up to how lived in honors and delights; what would all this avail you if you were to die at this instant?⁷ All therefore is vanity,⁸ except to love God and serve Him only. For the one who loves God with all his heart, is not afraid of death, or punishment, or judgment, or hell; for perfect love

¹ These sections mirror Dante's *Divine Comedy* (Inferno, Purgatory, Paradise) written pre-1321 - WHG.

² Job 40:12; 41.

³ Wisd. 5:1.

⁴ Ps. 107:42.

⁵ 2Cor. 4:17.

⁶ Isa. 29:19.

⁷ Luke 12:20.

⁸ Eccles 1:2.

gives secure access to God.¹ But for the one who takes delight in sin, is it any wonder that he is afraid of both death and judgment? Yet it is good, even if love does not yet have enough force to withhold you from sin, that at least the fear of hell will restrain you. But the one who lays aside the fear of God can never continue long in good estate; he falls quickly into the snares of the devil.

CHAPTER 25 - The Zealous Amendment of our whole Life

BE watchful and diligent in the service of God,² and often think to yourself why you came here, and why you have left the world. Was it not that you might live to God, and become a spiritual man? Be fervent then in going forward,³ for shortly you will receive the reward of your labors; there will not then be any more fear or sorrow within your coasts.⁴ Labor now but a little, and you will find great rest, indeed, perpetual joy.⁵ If you continue faithful and fervent in your work, no doubt God will be faithful and liberal in rewarding you.⁶ You ought to have good hope⁷ of getting the victory; but you must not be secure, or you may wax either negligent or proud.

2. If someone who is anxious, often wavering between fear and hope, and oppressed with grief, would humbly prostrate himself in a church before the altar in prayer, and say to himself, “O if I knew that I would yet persevere!” he would presently hear within himself an answer from God which says, “What if you did know it. What would you do? Do now what you would do then, and you will be secure.” And being comforted and strengthened with this, he commits himself wholly to the will of God; that noisome anxiety will cease. He did not intend to search any farther out of curiosity, in order to know what would befall him; rather he labored to understand what was the perfect and acceptable will of God⁸ needed to begin and accomplish every good work.⁹

3. “Hope in the Lord, and do good,” says the Prophet, “and inhabit the land, and you will be fed in the riches of it.”¹⁰ There is one thing that draws many back from spiritual progress and the diligent amendment of their lives; *specifically*, extreme fear of the difficulty, or the labor of the combat. However, those who endeavor most to overcome those things which are most grievous and contrary to them, will most improve above others in all virtue. For a man improves most and obtains greater grace where he most overcomes himself and mortifies himself in spirit.

4. But all men do not have the same amount to overcome and mortify. Yet one who is zealous and diligent, even though he has more passions, will profit more than another who is of a more temperate disposition, if the moderate one is less fervent in the pursuit of all virtue. Two things especially further our amendment: withdrawing ourselves forcefully from what our nature is viciously inclined toward, and laboring earnestly for that good which we most want. Also, be careful to avoid with great diligence those things in yourself which usually displease you in others.

¹ Rom. 8:39.

² 2Tim. 4:5.

³ Matt. 5:48.

⁴ Rev. 21:4; 22:3.

⁵ Eccles. 41:27; Rev. 21:4; 22:3.

⁶ Matt. 25:23.

⁷ Rom. 5:5.

⁸ Rom. 12:2.

⁹ 2Tim 3:16-17

¹⁰ Ps. 37:3.

5. Profit your soul wherever you are. So if you see or hear of any good examples, stir yourself up to imitate them. But if you observe anything worthy of reproof, beware you do not do the same thing. And if at any time you have done it, labor quickly to amend yourself. Just as your eye observes others,¹ so others note you in turn. How sweet and pleasant a thing it is, to see brothers who are fervent and devout, well-mannered and well-disciplined!² And on the contrary, how sad and grievous a thing it is to see them live in an immoral and disordered way, not applying themselves to what they are called for! How hurtful a thing is it, when they neglect the good purposes of their vocation, and busy themselves in what is not committed to their care!

6. Be mindful of the profession you have made. Always have before the eyes of your soul the remembrance of your Savior crucified. You would have good cause to be ashamed in looking at the life of JESUS Christ, if you have not yet endeavored to conform yourself more to Him, even though you have been in the way of God a long time. A religious person who exercises himself seriously and devoutly in the most holy life and passion of our Lord, will find there in abundance whatever is necessary and profitable for him;³ nor will he need to seek anything better outside of JESUS. If the sight of JESUS crucified would come into our hearts,⁴ how quickly and fully we would be taught!

7. A fervent religious person takes and bears all that is commanded of him well. But one who is negligent and lukewarm has tribulation upon tribulation, and on all sides he is afflicted; for he is void of inward consolation, and he is forbidden to seek external comforts. A religious person who does not live according to discipline, opens himself to great mischief to the ruin of his soul. One who seeks liberty and ease will always live in disquiet; for one thing or another will displease him.

8. O that we had nothing else to do but always, with our mouth and with our whole heart, to praise our Lord God! O that you might never have need to eat, or drink, or sleep; but might always praise God, and only employ yourself in spiritual exercises. Then you would be much happier than you are now, when you are constrained to serve your body for so many necessities! Pray to God that there were none of these necessities, but only the spiritual refreshments of the soul, of which, alas, we taste too seldom!

9. When a man comes to that estate in which he does not seek his comfort from any creature, then he begins to relish God perfectly. Then he will be content with whatever befalls him in this world. Then he would neither rejoice in great matters, nor be sorrowful in small.⁵ But he would entirely and confidently commit himself to God, who will be all in all to him;⁶ to him, nothing perishes or dies, but all things live to Him, and serve him at his calling without delay.

10. Always remember your end,⁷ and how lost time never returns. Without care and diligence you will never get virtue. If you begin to be lukewarm,⁸ it will begin to be evil with you. But if you give yourself to fervor of spirit, you will find great peace and feel less labor through the assistance of God's grace, and the love of virtue. The fervent and diligent man is prepared for all things. It is harder work to resist vices

¹ Matt. 7:3.

² Eph. 5 [perhaps 6:10-17]; 1Cor. 12:18; Eccles. 3:1.

³ 1Pet 1:3

⁴ Gal. 2:20; 6:14.

⁵ Phil 4:11

⁶ Rom. 11:36; 1Cor. 8:6; 12:6; 15:28.

⁷ Eccles. 7:36.

⁸ Rev. 3:16.

and passions, than it is to toil in bodily labors. One who does not avoid small faults, little by little falls into greater ones.¹ You will always rejoice in the evening if you spend the day profitably. Be watchful over yourself; stir yourself up; admonish yourself; and whatever is becoming in others, do not neglect them in yourself. The more aggressive you are with yourself, the greater your profit will be. *Amen.*

¹ Ecclus. 19:1.

THE SECOND BOOK

ADMONITIONS TENDING TO THINGS INTERNAL

CHAPTER 1 - The Inward Life

“THE Kingdom of God is within you,”¹ says the Lord. Turn with your whole heart² to the Lord and forsake this wretched world, and your soul shall find rest. Learn to despise outward things, and to give yourself to inward things, and you will perceive the Kingdom of God has come into you. “For the Kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost,”³ which is not given to the unholy. Christ will come to you and show you His consolation if you prepare for Him a worthy mansion within you. All His glory and beauty is from within,⁴ and there He delights Himself. He often visits the inward man, and has with him sweet discourses, pleasant solace, great peace, and familiarity that is exceedingly wonderful.

2. O faithful soul, make your heart ready for this Bridegroom, so that He may deign to come to you and to dwell within you. For He says, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My words, and We will come to him, and make our abode with him.”⁵ Therefore, give entrance to Christ and deny entrance to all others. When you have Christ you are rich and you have enough. He will be your faithful and provident helper in all things, so that you will not need to trust in men. For men soon change and quickly fail; but Christ remains forever,⁶ and stands by us firmly to the end.

3. No great trust is to be put in a frail and mortal man,⁷ even though he is profitable and dear to us. Nor should we be greatly grieved if sometimes he crosses and contradicts us. Those who take your part today, may be against you tomorrow; often they turn right around like the wind. Put all your trust in God;⁸ let Him be your fear and your love: He will answer for you, and do what is best for you in all things. You do not have an abiding city here;⁹ and wherever you may be, you are a stranger and a pilgrim; nor shall you ever have rest unless you are most inwardly united to Christ.

4. Why do you gaze at things here, since this is not the place of your rest? Your home ought to be in Heaven;¹⁰ all earthly things are to be looked at as if they were on the way there. All things here pass away,¹¹ and you with them. Beware that you do not cling to them, lest you be ensnared and perish. Let your thoughts be on the Highest, and your prayer for mercy directed to Christ without ceasing. If you cannot contemplate high and heavenly things, then rest yourself in the passion of Christ, and dwell willingly in His sacred wounds. For if you devoutly fly to the wounds and precious marks of the Lord

¹ Luke 17:21.

² Joel 2:12.

³ Rom. 14:17.

⁴ Ps. 14:13.

⁵ John 14:25.

⁶ John 7:34.

⁷ Jer. 17:5.

⁸ Pet. 5:7.

⁹ Heb. 13:14.

¹⁰ Phil. 3:20.

¹¹ Wisd. 5:9.

JESUS, you will feel great comfort in tribulation. Nor will you care much for the slights of men; you will easily bear words of detraction.

5. Christ was also in the world: despised of men and in greatest necessity, forsaken by His acquaintances and friends in the midst of slanders.¹ Christ was willing to suffer and be despised; do you then dare to complain of any man? Christ had adversaries and backbiters; do you wish to have all men your friends and benefactors? From where will your patience attain her crown² if you have no adversity? If you are not willing to suffer opposition, how will you be the friend of Christ? Suffer with Christ, and for Christ, if you desire to reign with Christ.

6. If you had just once perfectly entered into the secrets of the Lord JESUS, and tasted a little of His ardent love, then you would not care about your own convenience or inconvenience. Rather, you would rejoice at slanders if they were thrown at you; for the love of JESUS makes a man despise himself. A lover of JESUS and of the truth, and a true inward Christian, and someone who is free from inordinate affections, can freely turn himself to God and lift himself above himself in spirit, and remain at rest with joy.

7. Someone who judges all things as they are, and not as they are said or esteemed to be, is truly wise, and is taught by God rather than men.³ Someone who can live inwardly and make small reckoning of things outside himself, does not require places or exact times to perform religious exercises. A spiritual man quickly recollects himself because he never entirely spends himself on outward things. He is not hindered by outward labor or business which may be necessary for the time being. But as things fall out, he accommodates himself to them. Someone who is well-ordered and disposed within himself, does not care for the strange and perverse behavior of men. A man is hindered and distracted in proportion to how much he draws external matters to himself.

8. If it were going well with you, and you were well-purified from sin, all things would happen to you for good,⁴ and to your advancement. But many things displease and often trouble you because you are not yet perfectly dead to yourself, nor are you separated from all earthly things. Nothing so defiles and entangles the heart of man as the impure love of created things. If you refuse outward comfort, then you will be able to contemplate the things of Heaven, and receive internal joy often.

CHAPTER 2 - Humble Submission

Do not regard too much who is for you or against you;⁵ but mind what you are about, and take care that God may be with you in everything you do. Have a good conscience, and God will well defend you.⁶ For no man's perverseness will be able to hurt those whom God helps. If you can be silent and suffer, then without doubt you will see that the Lord will help you. He knows the time and manner of delivering you, and therefore you ought to resign yourself to Him. It belongs to God to help, and to deliver us from all confusion. It is often very profitable, in order to keep us humble, that others know and rebuke our faults.

¹ Matt. 12:24; 16:21; John 15:20.

² 2Tim. 2:5.

³ Isa. 54:13.

⁴ Rom. 8:28.

⁵ Rom. 8:31; 1Cor. 4:3.

⁶ Ps. 28:7.

2. When a man humbles himself for his failings, then he easily pacifies others, and quickly satisfies those who are offended by him. God protects the humble and delivers him;¹ the humble He loves and comforts;² to the humble man He inclines Himself;³ to the humble He gives great grace,⁴ and after his humiliation, He raises him to glory. To the humble He reveals His secrets⁵ and sweetly draws and invites him to Himself. The humble person, though he suffers confusion, is still tolerably well in peace – because he rests on God and not on the world. Do not think that you have made any progress unless you esteem yourself inferior to all.

CHAPTER 3 - A Good Peaceable Man

FIRST, keep yourself in peace, and then you will be able to pacify others, A peaceable man does more good than someone who is well-learned, A short-tempered man draws even good men into evil, and easily believes the worst about everything. A good peaceable man turns all things to good. Someone who is well at peace is not suspicious of anyone.⁶ But someone who is discontented and troubled is tossed with various suspicions: he is not quiet himself, nor will he allow others to be quiet. He often says what he ought not to say, and he omits what would be more appropriate. He considers what others are bound to do,⁷ and neglects what he is bound to do himself. First, therefore, be zealous to care over yourself,⁸ and then you may justly be zealous of your neighbor's good.

2. You know well how to excuse and color your own deeds, but you are not willing to receive the excuses of others. It would be more just to accuse yourself and excuse your brother. If you want to be borne up by one another, then also bear with one another.⁹ Behold how far you still are from true charity and from humility; for charity does not know how to be angry with anyone, or be moved with indignation against another, but only against one's self. It is no great matter to associate with the good and the gentle; for this is naturally pleasing to all; everyone willingly enjoys peace and loves best those who agree with him. But to be able to live peaceably with hard and perverse persons, or with the disorderly, or with those who are contrary to us, is a great grace and a most commendable and manly thing.

3. There are some who keep themselves in peace and are also in peace with others. And there are some who are neither in peace themselves, nor will they allow others to be in peace: they are troublesome to others. But they are always more troublesome to themselves. And there are others who keep themselves in peace and study how to bring others to peace. Nevertheless, our whole peace in this miserable life consists in humble patience, rather than in not feeling adversities. Someone who can best tell how to suffer, will best keep himself in peace. That man is a conqueror of himself, lord of the world, the friend of Christ, and an heir of Heaven.

¹ Jam 4:6

² 2Cor 7:6

³ Ps 10:17

⁴ 1Pet 5:5

⁵ Matt. 11:25.

⁶ 1Cor. 13:5.

⁷ Matt. 7:3.

⁸ Acts 1 [perhaps 22:3].

⁹ Gal. 6:2; 1Cor. 13:7.

CHAPTER 4 - A Pure Mind, and Simple Intention

BY two wings, a man is lifted up from earthly things, namely, by Simplicity and Purity. Simplicity ought to be in our intention; Purity in our affections. Simplicity tends towards God; Purity apprehends and tastes Him. No good action will hinder you, if you are inwardly free from inordinate affection. If you intend and seek nothing else but the will of God and the good of your neighbor, you will thoroughly enjoy internal liberty. If your heart were sincere and upright, then every creature would be a mirror of life to you, and a book of holy doctrine. There is no creature so small and abject, that it does not represent the goodness of God.¹

2. If you were inwardly good and pure,² then you would be able to see and understand all things well without impediment. A pure heart penetrates Heaven and hell. As each is inwardly, so he judges outwardly. If there is joy in the world, surely a man of a pure heart possesses it. And if there is tribulation and affliction anywhere, an evil conscience knows it best. Just as iron put into the fire loses its rust, and becomes red hot, so one who wholly turns himself to God puts off all slothfulness and is transformed into a new man.

3. When a man begins to grow lukewarm, then he is afraid of a little labor, and willingly receives external comfort. But once he begins to overcome himself perfectly, and to walk manfully in the way of God, then he esteems things light which seemed grievous to him before.

CHAPTER 5 - The Consideration of One's Self

WE cannot trust ourselves much,³ because grace is often lacking in us, and understanding also. There is but little light in us, and what we have we quickly lose by our negligence. Often too we do not perceive how great our own inward blindness is. We often do evil, and worse, we excuse it.⁴ We are sometimes moved with passion and we think it is zeal. We reprehend small things in others, and pass over greater matters in ourselves.⁵ We feel and weigh what we suffer at the hands of others quickly enough; but we pay no mind to what others suffer from us. One who considers his own works well and rightly, will find little cause to judge another harshly.

2. The inward Christian prefers amending himself before all other cares.⁶ One who diligently attends to himself, can easily keep silent concerning others. You will never be inwardly religious in this way unless you pass over other men's matters with silence, and look especially to yourself. If you attend wholly to God and yourself, you will be little moved with whatever you see abroad.⁷ Where are you when you are not with yourself? And when you have run over all others, what have you then profited if you neglected yourself? If you desire peace of mind and true unity of purpose, then you must put all other things behind you, and look only at amending yourself.

3. You will then make great progress, if you keep yourself free from all temporal care. You will greatly

¹ Rom. 1:20.

² Prov. 3:3, 4; Ps. 119:100.

³ Jer. 17:5.

⁴ Ps. 141:4.

⁵ Matt. 7:5.

⁶ Matt. 16:25-27.

⁷ 1Cor. 4:3; Gal. 1:10.

fall back if you value any temporal thing. Let nothing be great to you, nothing high, nothing pleasing, nothing acceptable, except God Himself, or what is of God. Esteem all comfort which you receive from any creature to be vain¹. A soul that loves God despises all things that are inferior to God. God alone is everlasting, and of infinite greatness, filling all creatures, the soul's solace, and the true joy of the heart.

CHAPTER 6 - The Joy of a Good Conscience

THE glory of a good man, is the testimony of a good conscience.² Have a good conscience, and you shall ever have joy. A good conscience is able to bear very much, and is very cheerful in adversities. An evil conscience is always fearful and unquiet.³ You will rest sweetly, if your heart does not reprehend you. Never rejoice unless you have done well. Sinners have never true joy, nor feel inward peace, because "There is no peace for the wicked," says the Lord.⁴ And if they say, "We are in peace, no evil will befall us,"⁵ and who will dare to hurt us?" do not believe them; for all of a sudden the wrath of God will arise, and their deeds will be brought to nothing, and their thoughts will perish.⁶

2. To glory in tribulation is no hard thing for the one who loves; for to glory this way, is to glory in the Cross of the Lord.⁷ That glory which is given and received from men is short.⁸ Sorrow always accompanies the world's glory. The glory of the good is in their consciences, and not in the tongues of men. The gladness of the just is of God,⁹ and in God; and their joy is of the Truth. One who desires true and everlasting glory, does not care for what is temporal. And the one who seeks temporal glory, or does not despise it from his soul, shows himself to have little esteem of the glory of Heaven. One who cares neither for the praises of men, nor their dispraises, enjoys great tranquility of heart.

3. One whose conscience is pure will easily be content and pacified. You are not more holy for being commended; nor more worthless for being found with fault. What you are, you are; words cannot make you greater than what you are in the sight of God. If you consider what you are within you, you will not care what men speak of you. Man looks at the countenance, but God looks at the heart.¹⁰ Man considers deeds, but God weighs our intentions. To always be doing well, and to esteem little of one's self, is the sign of a humble soul. To reject the idea of finding true comfort from any creature, is a sign of great purity, and inward confidence.

4. One who seeks no testimony for himself from without, shows that he has wholly committed himself to God. "For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, (says Saint Paul), but the one whom God commends."¹¹ To walk inwardly with God, and not to be kept away by any outward affection, is the state of a spiritual man.

¹ Eccles. 1:14.

² 1Cor. 1:31.

³ Wisd. 17:11.

⁴ Isa. 57:21.

⁵ Luke 12:19; Ecc. 9:12.

⁶ [Ps 146:3-4](#)

⁷ Rom. 8 [perhaps 5:3]; Gal. 6:14.

⁸ John 5:44.

⁹ 2Cor. 3:5.

¹⁰ Sam. 16:7.

¹¹ 2Cor. 10:18.

CHAPTER 7 - The Love of Jesus above All Things

BLESSED is the one who understands¹ what it means to love JESUS, and to despise himself for JESUS' sake. You ought to leave your beloved for your Beloved,² so that JESUS will be loved alone, above all things. The love of creatures is deceitful and inconstant; the love of JESUS is faithful and persevering. One who cleaves to a creature will fall, along with what is subject to falling; one who embraces JESUS will stand firmly forever. Love Him, and keep Him for your friend who, when all others go away, will not forsake you nor allow you to perish in the end. Some time or other you must be separated from all things, whether you want to or not.

2. Keep close to JESUS both in life and in death, and commit yourself to His trust. He is the only one who, when all others fail, can help you. The nature of your Beloved is such that He admits no rival, but will have your heart alone, and sit on His own throne as King. If you could completely empty yourself of all created things, JESUS would willingly dwell with you. Whatever you repose in men, outside of JESUS, is little better than lost. Do not trust or lean upon a reed full of wind, for all flesh is grass, and all its glory will wither like the flower of the field.³

3. You will quickly be deceived if you look only to the outward appearance of men. For if you seek your comfort and profit in others, you will too often experience loss.⁴ If you seek JESUS in all things, you will surely find JESUS. But if you seek yourself, you will also find yourself, but to your own destruction. For, if a man does not seek JESUS, he hurts himself more than the whole world and all his adversaries.

CHAPTER 8 - Familiar Converse with Jesus

WHEN JESUS is present, all is well, and nothing seems difficult; but when JESUS is absent, everything is hard. When JESUS does not speak inwardly to us, all other comfort is worth nothing; but if JESUS speaks just one word, we feel great consolation. Did not Mary Magdalene rise immediately from the place where she wept when Martha said to her, "The Master has come, and calls for you"?⁵ It is a happy hour when JESUS calls us from tears to spiritual joy! How dry and hard you are without JESUS! How foolish and vain if you desire anything outside of JESUS! Is this thing which you desire not a greater loss to you than if you were to lose the whole world?⁶

2. What can the world profit you without JESUS? To be without JESUS is a grievous hell; and to be with JESUS is a sweet paradise. If JESUS is with you, no enemy will be able to hurt you.⁷ One who finds JESUS, finds a good treasure,⁸ indeed, he finds a Good above all good. And one who loses JESUS, loses much

¹ Ps. 119:1, 2.

² Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37.

³ Isa. 40:6.

⁴ [Phil 3:7-8](#); [1Tim 6:5-7](#)

⁵ John 11:28.

⁶ Matt. 16:26.

⁷ Rom. 8:35.

⁸ Matt. 13:44.

indeed, in fact, more than the whole world! The one who lives without JESUS is most poor;¹ and the one who lives well with JESUS is most rich.

3. It is a matter of great skill to know how to conduct our lives with JESUS; and it is a point of great wisdom to know how to keep JESUS. Be humble and peaceable, and JESUS will be with you.² Be devout and quiet, and JESUS will stay with you. You may soon drive away JESUS and lose His favor if you turn aside to outward things. And if you should drive Him from you, and lose Him, then to whom will you flee? And whom will you seek for your friend? Without a friend you can not live well; and if JESUS is not above all a friend to you, then you will indeed be sad and desolate. You act like an idiot if you trust or rejoice in any other.³ It is preferable to have all the world against us, than to offend JESUS. Therefore, among all that is dear to us, let JESUS alone be specially beloved.

4. Love all for JESUS, but love JESUS for Himself. JESUS Christ alone is to be singularly beloved, for he alone is found Good and Faithful above all friends. For Him, and in Him, let foes be as dear as friends to you; and all these are to be prayed for, so that He might make all of them know and love Him.⁴ Never desire to be singularly commended or beloved, for that pertains only to God who has none like Himself. Nor should you desire that anyone's heart be set on you, nor should you set your heart on the love of anyone; but may JESUS be in you, and in every good man.⁵

5. Be pure and free within, and do not entangle your heart with any created thing. You ought to be naked and open before God, carrying your heart ever pure towards Him, if you would be free to consider and see how sweet the Lord is. Truly, unless you are constrained and drawn by His grace, you will never attain that happiness which comes from forsaking and taking leave of everything, so that you, alone, may be united to Him, alone. For when the grace of God comes to a man, he is able to do all things.⁶ And when grace has withdrawn, he is poor and weak, left only for the lash and the scourge, as it were. In such a case, do not be dejected or despairing, but at God's will, stand steadily. Whatever comes upon you, endure it all for the glory of JESUS Christ. For after winter follows summer; and after night the day returns; and after a tempest, there is a great calm.

CHAPTER 9 - The Lack of all Comfort

IT is not hard to despise human comfort when we have divine comfort. It is much harder, and very much, to be able to lack both human and divine comfort,⁷ and yet, for God's honor, to be cheerfully willing to endure the banishment of our heart, and seek our benefit in nothing, and disregard our own merit. What does any of this matter if, at the coming of Grace, we are cheerful and devout? This hour is wished for by all men. For the one who is carried by the grace of God rides easily enough. Thus, is it any wonder that someone who is borne up by the Almighty, and led by the Sovereign Guide, does not feel his burden?

¹ Luke 12:21.

² Prov. 3:17.

³ Gal. 6:14.

⁴ Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27, 28.

⁵ Thomas is not suggesting that only good men may receive Christ, for none is good: Ps 14:3; Rom 3:12; Mat 19:17; and yet in Mat 12:35, Christ says, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things..." Luke writes of Barnabas, in Act 11:24, "For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith." He was a good man *because* he was full of the Holy Spirit (i.e. *filled with Christ*) and of faith, as every good man should be. Thus Thomas expresses his hope that Christ might be evident in his good people, because he has become the chief object of their love and devotion. - WHG

⁶ Phil 4:13

⁷ Phil. 2:12.

2. We always want to have something for our comfort, for a man does not strip himself of self without difficulty. The holy martyr Laurence along with his priest overcame the world, because he despised whatever seemed delightful in the world; for the love of Christ he patiently suffered God's chief Priest Sixtus, whom he most dearly loved, to be taken away from him. He therefore overcame the love of man by the love of the Creator; and he chose what pleased God, rather than human comfort. So also you learn to part even with a near and dear friend for the love of God. Nor do you take it hard when you are deserted by a friend, knowing that in the end we all must be separated one from another.

3. A man must strive long and mightily within himself before he can fully learn to master himself, and to draw his whole heart into God. When a man trusts in himself, he easily slides toward human comforts. But a true lover of Christ, and a diligent follower of all virtue, does not fall back on comforts, nor does he seek such sensory sweetness; rather, he prefers hard exercises, and to sustain severe labors for Christ.

4. Therefore, when spiritual comfort is given from God, receive it with thankfulness; but understand that it is the gift of God, not anything you deserve. Do not be puffed up, or too joyful, or vainly presumptuous; rather be more humble for that gift. Be more wary too, and cautious in all your actions, for that hour will pass away and temptation will follow. When consolation is taken from you, do not immediately despair; but with humility and patience wait for the heavenly visitation; for God is able to give you back again more ample consolation. This is nothing new or strange to those who have experience in the way of God; for the great Saints and ancient Prophets often experienced these kinds of vicissitudes.

5. For which reason, one who was enjoying divine Grace, said, "I said in my prosperity, I will never be moved."¹ But in the absence of this Grace, he goes on to speak of what he found in himself thus, "You turned your face from me, and I was troubled." Yet in the midst of all this he does not by any means despair, but he beseeches the Lord more earnestly, and says, "To you, O Lord, I will cry, and I will pray to my God." At length, he receives the fruit of his prayer, and testifies that he was heard, saying, "The Lord has heard me, and taken pity on me; the Lord has become my helper." But in what? "You have turned," he says, "my sorrow into joy, and you have surrounded me with gladness." If great Saints were dealt with this way, then we who are weak and poor ought not to despair if we are sometimes fervent and sometimes cold; for the Spirit comes and goes according to the good pleasure of His own will.² Which is why blessed Job says, "You visit him early in the morning, and suddenly you test him."³

6. Upon what then can I hope, or in what should I trust, except in the great mercy of God alone, and in the only hope of heavenly grace? For if I have good men with me, whether religious brothers or faithful friends; or if I have holy books and beautiful treatises, or sweet psalms and hymns; all these are little help and have little savor when God forsakes me and I am left in my own poverty. At such times, there is no better remedy than patience, and denying myself according to the will of God.⁴

7. I never found anyone so religious and devout that he did not sometimes sense grace being withdrawn, or did not feel some decrease of zeal. There was never a Saint so highly rapt and illuminated, who at first or at last was not tempted. For one who has not been exercised with some tribulation for God's sake is not worthy of the high contemplation of God. For temptation that goes before us is likely to be a sign of ensuing comfort. For heavenly comfort is promised to those who are proved by temptations. "To the one

¹ Ps. 30:6-11; also subsequent quotes from this psalm.

² John 3:8.

³ Job 7:18.

⁴ Luke 9:23.

who overcomes,” He says, “I will give the Tree of life to eat from.”¹

8. Divine consolation is given so that a man may be bolder to bear adversities. But then follows temptation as well, lest he grows proud of any good he has done. The devil does not sleep,² nor is the flesh dead yet; therefore do not cease to prepare yourself for the battle; for on your right hand and on your left are enemies who never rest.

CHAPTER 10 - Gratitude for the Grace of God

WHY do you seek rest, since you are born to labor?³ Dispose yourself to patience rather than comfort, and to bearing the Cross rather than gladness.⁴ What secular person is there who would not willingly receive spiritual joy and comfort if he could always have it? For spiritual comforts exceed all the delights of the world and all the pleasures of the flesh. For all worldly delights are either vain or unclean; but spiritual delights are entirely pleasant and honest, sprung from virtue, and infused by God into pure minds. But no man can always enjoy these divine comforts as he would like, for the time of temptation is not far off.

2. False freedom of mind and great confidence in ourselves are contrary to heavenly visitations. God does well for us in giving the grace of comfort; but man does evil in not returning everything back to God with thanksgiving. Therefore the gifts of Grace cannot flow in us, because we are unthankful to the Giver, and we do not return them completely to the Head fountain.⁵ For Grace always attends the one who is duly thankful; but from the proud will be taken what is likely to be given to the humble.

3. I do not desire the kind of consolation that takes contriteness from me; nor do I display the kind of contemplation which leads to haughtiness. For all that is high is not holy; nor is all that is sweet, good; nor is every desire pure; nor is everything that is dear to us, pleasing to God. I willingly accept that grace, by which I may be found ever more humble, and more affected with fear, and more ready to renounce myself. One who is taught by the gift of Grace, and schooled by the scourge of its withdrawal, will not dare attribute any good to himself; rather he will acknowledge that he is poor and naked. Give to God what is God's,⁶ and ascribe to yourself what is your own; that is, give thanks to God for His grace; and acknowledge that sin is to be attributed to yourself alone, and the punishment due to sin.

4. Always set yourself in the lowest place⁷ and the highest place shall be given to you; for the highest cannot stand without the lowest. The best Saints before God are the least in their own judgments; and the more glorious they are, so much the humbler they are within themselves. Those who are full of truth and heavenly glory do not desire to boast. Those who are firmly settled and grounded in God can in no way be proud. And those who ascribe everything to God, whatever good they have received, do not seek glory from one another, but seek that glory which comes from God alone. They desire above all things that God may be praised in Himself, and in all His Saints; they always tend toward this very thing.

¹ Rev. 2:7.

² 1Pet. 5:8.

³ Job. 5:7.

⁴ Luke 14:27.

⁵ Ecclus. 1:5.

⁶ Matt. 22:21.

⁷ Luke 14:10.

5. Therefore be thankful for the least gift, so you will be fit to receive greater gifts. Let the least be like the greatest to you, and the most contemptible gift like one of special value. If you consider the worth of the Giver, no gift will seem little or too lowly to esteem. For what is given by the Most High God cannot be little. Indeed, if He were to give punishment and lashes, it ought to be matter for thankfulness; because He always does it for our welfare, whatever He allows to happen to us. Let the one who desires to keep the grace of God be thankful for the grace given to him, and patient if it is being withdrawn. Let him pray that God's grace may return: let him be cautious and humble, lest he lose it.

CHAPTER 11 - How Few are the Lovers of the Cross of Jesus

JESUS now has many who love His heavenly kingdom, but few who bear His Cross. He has many who desire consolation, but few who want tribulation. He finds many companions at His table, but few who share His abstinence. All desire to rejoice with Him, but few are willing to endure anything for Him, or with Him. Many follow JESUS to receive their bread; but few follow to drink the cup of His Passion.¹ Many reverence His miracles, few follow the ignominy of His Cross. Many love JESUS so long as no adversities befall them. Many praise and bless Him, so long as they receive consolations from Him. But if JESUS hides Himself, and leaves them just a little while, they either fall into complaining, or into excessive dejection.

2. But those who love JESUS for the sake of JESUS, and not for some special comfort of their own, bless Him in all tribulation and anguish of heart, as well as in the state of highest comfort.² Indeed, although He might never be willing to give them comfort, they would nonetheless ever praise Him, and always wish to give thanks.

3. O how powerful is the pure love of JESUS when not mixed with self-interest or self-love! Are not those who always seek compensation called mercenaries? Do not those who always think of their own profit and advantage show themselves to love self rather than Christ?³ Where will one be found who is willing to serve God for nothing?

4. Rarely is anyone found who is so spiritual as to be stripped of all things. Where is anyone to be found who is indeed poor in spirit, and thoroughly void of all affection for created things? His "value is from afar, indeed from the ends of the earth."⁴ If a man were to give all his substance, it is still nothing. And if he were to practice great repentance, it is still little. And if he were to attain all knowledge, he is still afar off. And if he were of great virtue and fervent devotion, there is still much lacking, and especially the one thing which is most needed. What is that? That leaving behind else everything, he also forsake himself entirely,⁵ retaining nothing out of self-love. And when he has done all that can be done, as far as he knows, let him think he has done nothing.

5. Let him not give much weight to what might be esteemed; but let him pronounce himself, in truth, an unprofitable servant. As the Truth Himself says, "When you have done everything that has been

¹ Luke 9:14; 22:41, 42.

² [Phil 4:11-12](#)

³ Phil. 2:21.

⁴ Prov. 31:10 [Latin version].

⁵ Matt. 16:24.

commanded of you, then say, ‘We are but unprofitable servants.’”¹ Then he may be truly poor and naked in spirit, and say with the Prophet, “I am alone and poor.”² Yet there is no man richer, no man more powerful, no man more free than he is; for he is able to leave himself behind with all other things, and to set himself in the lowest place.

CHAPTER 12 - The King’s High Way of the Holy Cross

TO many this seems a hard saying: “Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow JESUS.”³ But it will be much harder to hear that last word: “Depart from Me you cursed, into everlasting fire.”⁴ For those who now willingly hear and follow the word of the Cross, will not then fear to hear the sentence of everlasting damnation.⁵ This sign of the Cross will be in the Heavens when the Lord comes to judge. Then all the servants of the Cross, who during their lifetime conformed themselves to Christ crucified, will draw near to Christ the Judge with great confidence.

2. Why therefore do you fear to take up the Cross which leads you to a kingdom? In the Cross is salvation; in the Cross is life; in the Cross is protection against our enemies; in the Cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness; in the Cross is strength of mind; in the Cross is joy of spirit; in the Cross is the height of virtue; in the Cross is the perfection of sanctity. There is no salvation of the soul, nor hope of everlasting life, but in the Cross. Therefore take up your Cross and follow JESUS,⁶ and you will go into life everlasting. He went before, bearing His Cross,⁷ and died for you on the Cross, so that you may also bear your Cross, and desire to die on the Cross with Him. For if you are dead with Him, you shall also live with Him.⁸ And if you are His companion in suffering, you will also partake with Him in glory.⁹

3. Behold! All originates in the Cross, and all lies in our dying on it; for there is no other way to life and to true inward peace except the way of the holy Cross, and of daily mortification. Go where you will, seek what you will, you will not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below, than the way of the holy Cross. Dispose and order all things according to your will and judgment; yet you will always find that of necessity you must suffer somewhat, either willingly or against your will. And so you will always find the Cross. For you will either feel pain in your body, or you will suffer tribulation in your soul.

4. Sometimes you will be forsaken by God; sometimes you will be troubled by your neighbors; and what is more, you will often be wearisome to yourself. Nor can you be delivered or eased by any remedy or comfort; for as long as it pleases God, you will have to bear it. For God would have you learn to suffer tribulation without comfort; and to subject yourself wholly to Him, and to become more humble by tribulation. No man has so sincere a feeling of the Passion of Christ, as one who has suffered like him. The Cross is therefore always ready, and waits for you everywhere. You cannot escape it wherever you run; for wherever you go, you carry yourself with you, and you will ever find yourself. Both above and below, without and within, whichever way you turn, everywhere you will find the Cross; and everywhere,

¹ Luke 17:10.

² Ps. 25:16.

³ Matt. 16:24.

⁴ Matt. 25:41.

⁵ Ps. 112:7-8; Mat 25:21

⁶ Luke 14:27.

⁷ John 19:17.

⁸ [2Tim 2:11](#)

⁹ 2Cor. 1:5.

by necessity, you must hold fast to patience if you would have inward peace, and enjoy an everlasting crown.

5. If you bear the Cross cheerfully, it will bear you and lead you to the desired end, namely, where there will be an end of suffering, even though here there will not be an end to it. If you bear it unwillingly, you make for yourself a burden, and increase your load; and yet, notwithstanding, you must bear it. If you cast away one cross, without doubt you shall find another, and that perhaps a more heavy one.

6. Do you think to escape what no mortal man could ever avoid? Which of the Saints in the world was ever without crosses and tribulation? Not even our Lord JESUS Christ was one hour without the anguish of His Passion as long as He lived. “Christ” (He says) “must suffer and rise again from the dead, and so enter into His glory.”¹ And so how do you seek any way other than this royal way, which is the way of the holy Cross?

7. Christ’s whole life was a Cross and Martyrdom: and do you seek rest and joy for yourself? You are deceived – *you are deceived* – if you seek anything other than suffering tribulations; for this whole mortal life is full of miseries,² and signed on every side with crosses. The higher a person advances in the Spirit, the heavier he will often find the crosses, because the requirements of his banishment³ increase with his love toward God.

8. Nevertheless, this man [*who advances in the Spirit*], though afflicted in so many ways, is not without refreshing comfort; for he perceives that very great benefit accrues to him by enduring his own cross. While he willingly puts himself under it, all the burden of tribulation is turned into the confidence of Divine comfort. The more his flesh is wasted by affliction, the more his spirit is strengthened by inward grace. Sometimes he is so comforted with the desire of tribulation and adversity, and for the love of conformity to the Cross of Christ, that he would not wish to be without grief and tribulation.⁴ This is because he believes he will be that much more acceptable to God the more that he suffers for him, and the more grievous things that he suffers for Him.⁵ This is not the power of man. It is the grace of Christ which can and does do so much in his frail flesh, so that what his flesh always abhors and flees from naturally, it encounters and loves by his fervor of spirit.

9. It is not man’s inclination to bear the Cross, to love the Cross, to chastise the body and bring it into subjection,⁶ to flee honors, to willingly suffer abuse, to despise himself and wish to be despised, to endure all adversities and damages, and desire no prosperity in this world. If you look only to yourself, you will not be able to accomplish anything of this kind.⁷ But if you trust in the Lord, fortitude will be given to you from Heaven, and the world and the flesh will be made subject to your command. Nor will you fear your enemy the devil, if you are armed with faith, and signed with the Cross of Christ.

¹ Luke 24:26.

² Job 7:1.

³ Original translation, “brief of his banishment” – a brief is a list of instructions or a case to be made; the banishment refers to the banishment of the heart (Chapter 9, page 38) from its love for the things of this world, and its comfort from them.

⁴ 1Cor. 4:16; 11:23-30.

⁵ This sounds like a Roman Catholic view of penance and works. Yet Rom 12:1 tells us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. Rom 14:17-19 “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. Peter affirms this in 1Peter 2:5, “you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” We are saved by faith alone, but not by a faith which is alone. Visible righteousness is the witness to our invisible faith; it is not meritorious, but evidentiary (i.e. “signed”). - WHG

⁶ 1Cor 9:27

⁷ 2Cor. 3:5.

10. Set yourself therefore, like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to manfully bear the Cross of your Lord who was crucified for you out of love. Prepare yourself to bear many adversities and various kinds of troubles in this miserable life. For the cross will be with you wherever you are; and you will surely find it wherever you hide. So it must be, and there is no remedy or means to escape from tribulation and sorrow, but only to endure it. Drink of the Lord's cup¹ with hearty affection if you desire to be His friend, and to have a part with Him. As for comforts, leave them to God; let Him do as best pleases Him. But set yourself to suffer tribulations, and to consider them the greatest comforts; for the sufferings of this present time, even if you alone could suffer them all, cannot worthily deserve the glory which is to come.

11. When you come to the point that tribulation² seems sweet, and you relish it for Christ's sake, then it will be well with you, for you have found a Paradise on earth. As long as suffering grieves you, and you desire to flee it, you will be ill at ease, and the desire to escape tribulation will follow you everywhere.

12. If you do set yourself to suffering and to death as you should, then it will soon be better for you, and you will find peace. Even if you had been carried to the third heaven with Paul,³ you would still not be secured from adversity. "I will show him" (says JESUS) "how great are the things he must suffer for My Name."⁴ It remains, therefore, that you suffer – if it pleases you to love JESUS and to serve Him perpetually.

13. O that you were worthy to suffer something for the Name of JESUS!⁵ How great the glory would be that remains for yourself; what joy would arise to all God's Saints; also how great the edification to your neighbor! For all men recommend patience; few, however, are willing to suffer. For great reason you ought to cheerfully suffer a little for Christ's sake, since many suffer more grievous things for the world.

14. Know for certain, that you ought to lead a dying life.⁶ The more a man dies to himself, the more he begins to live to God. No man is fit to comprehend Heavenly things, unless he submits himself to bear adversities for Christ's sake. Nothing is more acceptable to God, nothing is more wholesome to you in this world, than to suffer cheerfully for Christ. If you could choose, you ought to suffer adversities for Christ, rather than be refreshed with consolations, because you would be more like Christ, and more conformable to all the Saints. For our worthiness, and the proficiency of our spiritual estate, does not consist in sweetness and comforts, but in thoroughly enduring great afflictions and tribulations.

15. Indeed, if there had been anything better and more profitable to man's salvation than suffering, surely Christ would have showed it by word and example. For He plainly exhorts the disciples who followed Him, and also those who desired to follow Him, to bear their Cross. He says, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me."⁷ So when we have thoroughly read and searched out all of this, let this be the final conclusion: "That we must enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations."⁸

¹ Matt. 20:23; John 18:11.

² Rom. 5:3; Gal. 6:14.

³ 2Cor. 12:4.

⁴ Acts 9:16.

⁵ Acts 5:41.

⁶ Ps. 44:22.

⁷ Luke 9:23.

⁸ Acts 14:22.

THE THIRD BOOK

OF INTERNAL CONSOLATION

CHAPTER 1 – Christ Speaks inwardly to the Faithful Soul

“I WILL listen to what the Lord God will speak in me.”¹ Blessed is the soul which hears the Lord speaking within her, and receives from His mouth the word of consolation.² Blessed are the ears that gladly receive the pulses of the Divine whisper,³ and give no heed to the many whisperings of this world. Blessed indeed are those ears which listen not after the voice which is sounding without, but for the Truth teaching inwardly. Blessed are the eyes which are shut to outward things, but intent on things eternal. Blessed are those who enter far into inward things, and endeavor to prepare themselves more and more, by daily exercises, for the receiving of Heavenly secrets. Blessed are those who are glad to have time to spare for God, and shake off all worldly impediments.

2. Consider these things, O my soul, and shut the door of your sensual desires, that you may hear what the Lord your God would speak in you.⁴ Thus says your Beloved, “I am your Salvation,⁵ your Peace, and your Life: keep yourself with Me, and you shall find peace. Let go of all transitory things, and seek those that are everlasting. What are all temporal things but seducing snares? And what can all creatures avail you, if you are forsaken by the Creator? Bid farewell therefore to all other things, and labor to please your Creator, and to be faithful to Him, so that you may be able to attain true blessedness.”

CHAPTER 2 - The Truth speaks inwardly without Noise of Words

SPEAK, O Lord, for your servant hears.⁶ I am your servant; grant me understanding, that I may know your testimonies.⁷ Incline my heart to the words of your mouth: let your speech distill like the dew. The children of Israel in times past said to Moses, “Speak to us, and we will hear: Do not let the Lord speak to us, lest we die.”⁸ Not so, Lord, not so, I beg you: but rather with the prophet Samuel, I humbly and earnestly entreat, “Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.” Do not let Moses speak to me, nor any of the prophets, but rather you speak, O Lord God, Inspirer and Enlightener of all the Prophets; for you alone, without them, can perfectly instruct me, but they without you can profit me nothing.

2. They may indeed sound out words, but they cannot give the Spirit. They speak most beautifully, but if you are silent, they do not inflame the heart. They teach the letter, but you open the sense. They bring forth mysteries, but you unlock the meaning of sealed things. They declare your commandments, but you help us to fulfil them. They point out the way, but you give strength to walk in it. What they can do is

¹ Ps. 85:8.

² Zech 1:13.

³ Matt. 13:16, 17.

⁴ Ps. 85:8.

⁵ Ps. 35:3.

⁶ 1Sam. 3:9.

⁷ Ps. 119:125.

⁸ Ex. 20:19.

only without, but you instruct and enlighten the heart within. They water outwardly, but you give fruitfulness. They cry aloud in words, but you impart understanding to the hearing.

3. Do not let Moses therefore speak to me, but You, O Lord my God, the Everlasting Truth. Otherwise, if I am only warned outwardly, and not inflamed within, I die and prove unfruitful. Otherwise, it turns to my condemnation – the word is heard and not fulfilled, known and not loved, believed and not observed. Speak therefore, Lord, for your servant hears: for you have the words of eternal life.¹ Speak to me, to the comfort of my soul however imperfect, and to amend my whole life, and to your praise and glory and honor everlasting.

CHAPTER 3 - The Words of God are to be heard with Humility, and many do not weigh them

MY son, hear My words, words of greatest sweetness, surpassing all the knowledge of the philosophers and wise men of this world. “My words are Spirit and Life,”² and not to be weighed by the understanding of man. They are not to be pulled out for vain approval, but to be heard in silence, and to be received with all humility and great affection. And I said, “Blessed is the man whom you instruct, O Lord, and teach out of your Law, so that you may give him rest from the evil days,”³ and so that he is not desolate on the earth.

2. I TAUGHT the Prophets from the beginning,⁴ (says the Lord,) and does not cease even to this day to speak to all; but many are hardened, and deaf to My voice. Most people more willingly listen to the world than to God; they sooner follow the desires of their own flesh than God’s good pleasure. The world promises temporal and worthless things, and yet it is served with great eagerness. I promise things that are most high and eternal, and yet the hearts of men remain torpid and insensible to Me. Who is there that serves and obeys Me in all things with as great care as the world and its lords are served? “Be ashamed, O Sidon, says the sea.”⁵ And if you ask why, hear the reason: a long journey is undertaken for a small income; many will scarcely lift a foot from the ground for everlasting life. The most pitiful reward is sought after; indeed, for a single bit of money there is sometimes shameful contention; and for a worthless matter and a slight promise, men do not fear to toil day and night.

3. But, alas! For an unchangeable good, for an inestimable reward, for the highest honor, and glory without end, they begrudge even the least fatigue. Be ashamed, therefore, you slothful and complaining servant, that these others are found more ready for destruction than you are for life. They rejoice more in vanity than you do in the truth. Sometimes, indeed, they are frustrated in their hope; but My promise deceives no one,⁶ nor does it send anyone away empty-handed who trusts in Me. What I have promised, I will give; what I have said, I will fulfil – if only a man remains faithful in My love, even to the end. I am the Rewarder of all good men,⁷ and the strong Approver of all who are devoted to Me.

4. Write My words in your heart, and diligently meditate on them; for in time of temptation they will be very necessary for you. What you do not understand when you read, you will know in the day of my

¹ John 6:68.

² John 6:63.

³ Ps. 94:12, 13.

⁴ Heb. 1:1.

⁵ Isa. 23:4.

⁶ Rom. 1:16; Matt. 24:35.

⁷ Rev. 2:23; Matt. 5:6; 25:21.

visitation.¹ I am likely to assail My elect in two distinct ways: namely, with temptation and with consolation. I daily read two lessons to them, one reproving their vices, and another exhorting them to increase all virtues. One who has My words and despises them, also has One who will judge him at the last day.

A Prayer to implore the grace of Devotion.

5. O Lord my God! You are to me whatever is good. And who am I that I dare speak to You?² I am your poorest meanest servant, and a most vile worm, much more poor and contemptible than I can or dare express. Yet you remember me, O Lord, because I am nothing, and I have nothing, and I can do nothing. You alone are Good, Just, and Holy. You can do all things, accomplish all things, and fill all things. It is only the sinner that you leave empty. Remember your mercies, and fill my heart with your grace, you who do not will that your works be void and in vain.

6. How can I bear myself up in this miserable life unless you strengthen me with your mercy and grace? Do not turn your face away from me;³ do not delay your visitation; do not withdraw your consolation, lest my soul becomes like a thirsty land to you. Teach me, O Lord, to do your will;⁴ teach me to live worthily and humbly in your sight, for you are my Wisdom. You truly know me, and knew me before the world was made, and before I was born in the world.⁵

CHAPTER 4 - We ought to live in Truth and Humility before God

MY son, walk before Me in truth, and ever seek Me in the simplicity of your heart.⁶ One who walks before Me in truth will be defended from evil incursions, and the Truth shall set him free⁷ from seducers, and from the slanders of unjust men. If the Truth has made you free, you will be free indeed,⁸ and you will not care for the vain words of men. O Lord, it is true. According to your words, I beseech you, let it be so with me; let your Truth teach me, guard me, and preserve me safe to the end. Let it set me free from all evil affection and inordinate love; and I will walk with you in great liberty of heart.

2. I WILL teach you (says the Truth) those things which are right and pleasing in My sight. Reflect on your sins with great displeasure and grief; and never consider yourself to be anything because of any good works. In truth, you are a sinner; you are subject to and encumbered by many passions. Of yourself, you always tend to nothing; you are quickly thrown down, quickly overcome, quickly disordered, and quickly dissolved. You have nothing in which you can glory,⁹ but many things for which you ought to consider yourself vile; for you are much weaker than you are able to comprehend.

¹ [Isa 10:3](#); [Hos 9:7](#); [1Pet 2:12](#)

² Gen. 18:27; 1Sam. 18:18, 23.

³ Ps. 119:17.

⁴ Ps. 143:10.

⁵ [Ps 139:13](#)

⁶ Gen. 17:1; Wisd. 1:1.

⁷ John 8:32.

⁸ [Jn 8:36](#)

⁹ 1Cor. 4:7.

3. And therefore, whatever you do, let nothing seem very much to you. Let nothing seem great, nothing precious and wonderful, nothing worthy of estimation, nothing high, nothing truly commendable and to be desired, but only that which is eternal. Let the eternal Truth be pleasing to you above all things. Let your own extreme unworthiness always be displeasing to you. Fear nothing, blame nothing, flee nothing, more than you do your vices and sins; these ought to be more displeasing to you than any losses of earthly things. Some do not walk sincerely in My sight,¹ but led by a certain curiosity and pride, they wish to know My secrets, and to understand the high things of God, neglecting both themselves and their own salvation. These often fall into great temptations and sins when I resist them for their pride and curiosity.

4. Fear the judgments of God, and dread the wrath of the Almighty. Do not, however, discuss the works of the Most High; but diligently search out your own iniquities, in how you have offended in great things, and how many good things you have neglected. Some carry their devotion only in books, some in pictures, some in outward signs and figures. Some have Me in their mouths, but little in their hearts.² There are others who, being illuminated in their understanding, and purged in their affection, always pant after eternal things.³ They are unwilling to hear of the things of this world; they serve the necessities of nature with restraint. These people perceive what the Spirit of Truth speaks in them.⁴ For He teaches them to despise earthly things, and to love heavenly things – to neglect the world, and to desire Heaven day and night.⁵

CHAPTER 5 - The Wonderful Effect of Divine Love

I BLESS you, O Heavenly Father, Father of my Lord JESUS Christ, for you have deigned to remember me, a poor creature. O Father of mercies and God of all comfort,⁶ thank you, who sometimes refresh me with your comfort, unworthy as I am of any comfort. I will always bless and glorify you, along with your only-begotten Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, forever and ever. Ah, Lord God, you Holy Lover of my soul, when you come into my heart, all that is within me rejoices. You are my Glory and the exultation of my heart: you are my Hope and Refuge in the day of my trouble.⁷

2. But because I am still weak in love, and imperfect in virtue, I need to be strengthened and comforted by you; therefore visit me often, and instruct me with all holy discipline. Set me free from evil passions, and heal my heart of all inordinate affections, so that being inwardly cured and thoroughly cleansed, I may be made fit to love, courageous to suffer, and steady to persevere.

3. Love is a great thing, indeed, a great and thorough good. By itself it makes everything that is heavy, light; and it bears evenly all that is uneven. For it carries a burden which is no burden,⁸ and it makes everything that is bitter, sweet and tasteful. The noble love of JESUS impels a man to do great things, and it stirs him up to always long for what is more perfect. Love desires to be aloft; it will not be kept back by anything low and base. Love desires to be free, and estranged from all worldly affections, so that its inward sight may not be hindered; so that it may not be entangled by any temporal prosperity, or subdued

¹ Ecclus. 3:21-23;

² Isa. 29:13.

³ Ps 42:1

⁴ Ps. 25:5.

⁵ Ps. 1:2.

⁶ 2Cor. 1:3.

⁷ Ps. 32:7; 59:16.

⁸ Matt. 11:30.

by any adversity. Nothing is sweeter than Love; nothing more courageous, nothing higher, nothing wider, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in Heaven and earth. That is because Love is born of God, and it cannot rest except in God, above all created things. . . .

4. One who loves, flies, runs, and rejoices; he is free and cannot be held in. He gives all for all, and has all in all; because he rests in One Highest above all things, from whom all that is good flows and proceeds. He does not respect the gifts themselves, but above all goods he turns himself to the Giver. Love often knows no measure, but is fervent beyond all measure. Love feels no burden. It thinks nothing of trouble, attempts what is above its strength, and makes no plea of impossibility as an excuse; for it thinks all things are lawful for itself, and all things are possible. It is therefore able to undertake all things, and completes many things, and makes them effective; where one who does not love would faint and lie down.

5. Love is watchful, and while we are sleeping, it slumbers not.¹ Though weary, it is not tired; though pressed, it is not distressed; though alarmed, it is not confounded; but as a lively flame and burning torch, it forces its way upwards, and securely passes through all. If any man loves, he knows what the cry of this voice is. For it is a loud cry in the ears of God, the ardent affection of the soul when it says, "My God, my Love, you are all mine, and I am all Yours."

6. Enlarge me in love, so that with the inward palate of my heart I may taste how sweet it is to love, and to be dissolved, and as it were to bathe myself in your Love. Let me be possessed by Love, mounting above myself, through exceeding fervor and admiration. Let me sing the song of love; let me follow you, my Beloved, on high; let my soul spend itself in your praise, rejoicing through love. Let me love you more than myself, and love myself only for you: and in you all who truly love you as the law of Love commands, shine out from Yourself.

7. Love is active, sincere, affectionate, pleasant, and amiable; it is courageous, patient, faithful, prudent, and long-suffering; it is manly, and never seeks itself.² For in whatever instance a person seeks himself, there he falls from Love.³ Love is circumspect, humble, and upright: not yielding to softness, or to levity, nor attending to vain things; it is sober, chaste, steady, quiet, and guarded in all the senses. Love is subject to and obedient to its superiors; to itself it is low and despised, but to God it is devout and thankful, trusting and hoping always in Him, even when God imparts no relish of sweetness to it: for without sorrow, no one lives in love.

8. One who is not prepared to suffer all things and stand by the will of his Beloved, is not worthy to be called a lover [of God].⁴ A lover ought to embrace willingly all that is hard and distasteful for the sake of his Beloved, and not turn away from Him because of any sudden adversity.

CHAPTER 6 - The Proof of a True Lover of Christ

MY son, you are not yet a courageous and considerate lover.

WHY do you say this, O Lord?

¹ Ps 121:3-5

² 1Cor. 13:5.

³ 1Cor. 10:33; Phil. 2:21.

⁴ Rom. 8:35.

BECAUSE a slight opposition makes you give up your undertakings, and you seek consolation too eagerly. A courageous lover stands firm in temptations, and gives no credit to the crafty persuasions of the Enemy. As I please him in prosperity, so in adversity I am not unpleasant to him.¹

2. A considerate lover does not regard so much the gift of the One who loves him, as he regards the love of the Giver. He esteems the good will rather than the value [of the gift], and he sets all gifts below the One whom he loves. A noble-minded lover does not rest in the gift, but in Me above every gift. All therefore is not lost if sometimes you have less feeling for Me or My Saints than you should. That good and sweet affection which you sometimes feel, is the effect of present grace, and a sort of foretaste of your Heavenly home: but you must not lean too much on this, for it comes and goes. But striving against all evil inclinations of the mind which may befall you, and rejecting² with scorn the suggestions of the devil, are noteworthy signs of virtue, and will have great reward.

3. Therefore let no strange fancies trouble you on any subject that may crowd into your mind. Keep to your purpose with courage, and with an upright intention towards God. Nor is it an illusion that sometimes you are suddenly rapt on high, and shortly return to the accustomed vanities of your heart. For these you unwillingly suffer, rather than willfully commit: so long as they displease you, and you strive against them, it is a matter of reward, and not loss.

4. Know that the ancient Enemy strives by all means to hinder your desire to good, and to keep you from of all religious exercises; particularly from the reverend estimation of God's Saints, from the devout commemoration of My Passion, from the profitable remembrance of sins, from the guard of your own heart, and from the firm purpose of advancing in virtue. He suggests many evil thoughts to you, that he might cause weariness and horror in you, and draw you back from prayer and holy reading. Humble confession displeases him; and if he could, he would cause you to cease from Holy Communion. Do not trust him, nor pay attention to him, although he often sets snares of deceit to entrap you. Charge him with it when he suggests evil and unclean thoughts to you. Say to him, "Away you unclean Spirit!³ Blush, you miserable wretch! You are most unclean to bring such things to my ears. Begone from me, you wicked Seducer! You will have no part in me: but JESUS will be with me as a strong Warrior, and you will stand confounded. I would rather die and undergo any torment, than consent to you. Hold your peace and be silent; I will hear you no more, even though you would bring many troubles to me. 'The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, whom shall I fear?'⁴ If whole armies were to stand together against me, my heart will not fear. The Lord is my Helper and my Redeemer."

5. Fight like a good soldier:⁵ and if you sometimes fall through frailty, draw greater strength than before, trusting in My more abundant Grace: and take great heed of vainly pleasing yourself, and beware of pride. This brings many into error, and it sometimes makes them fall into a blindness that is almost incurable. Let the fall of the proud, who foolishly presume of themselves in this way, serve as a warning to you, and may it keep you ever humble.

¹ Phil. 4:11-13.

² Matt. 4:10.

³ Matt. 4:10; 16:23.

⁴ Ps. 27:1.

⁵ Ps. 27:14; 1Tim. 6:12.

CHAPTER 7 - Concealing Grace under the guard of Humility

MY son, it is more profitable for you, and safer, to conceal the grace of devotion; do not lift yourself on high, nor speak of it much, or dwell on it much; rather, despise yourself, and fear it, as if it was given to someone who is unworthy of it. This affection must not be too earnestly clung to, for it may be quickly changed to the contrary. When you are in Grace, think how miserable and needy you are likely to be without Grace. Nor is it only when you have the grace of comfort that your progress in spiritual life is found; rather, it is when with humility, self-denial, and patience, you can endure the grace of comfort being withdrawn – provided you do not become listless in the exercise of prayer, nor allow the rest of your accustomed duties to be neglected. Instead, you cheerfully perform what you are able to, according to the best of your power and understanding; and you do not wholly neglect yourself simply because of the dryness or anxiety which you feel.

2. For there are many who, when things do not go well with them, then become impatient or slothful. For the way of man is not always in his power,¹ but it belongs to God to give, and to comfort when He will, and how much He will, and to whom He will, just as it pleases Him, and no more. Some unadvised persons, in their over-earnest desire for the grace of a devoted life, have defeated themselves. That is because they attempted more than they were able to perform, not weighing the measure of their own weakness, but following the desire of their heart rather than the judgment of their reason. And because they presumed on greater matters than was pleasing to God, they therefore quickly lost His grace. Those who had built themselves nests² in Heaven were made helpless and vile outcasts; to the end that, being humbled and impoverished, they might learn not to fly with their own wings, but to trust under My feathers.³ Those who are still novices and inexperienced in the way of the Lord may easily be deceived and broken to pieces, unless they govern themselves by the counsel of prudent persons.

3. And if they would rather follow their own notions than trust to others who are more experienced, their end will be dangerous, at least if they are unwilling to be drawn away from their own fond conceit. It is seldom the case that those who are self-wise will humbly endure being governed by others. It is better to have a small portion of good sense with humility,⁴ and a slender understanding, than great treasures of intellect with vain self-complacency. It is better for you to have little than much of what may make you proud. One does not act very discreetly if he entirely gives himself over to joy, forgetting his former helplessness, and that chastened fear of the Lord which is afraid of losing the grace that has been offered. Nor again is someone valiantly wise who, in time of adversity or depression, at once yields too much to his despairing thoughts, and reflects upon and thinks of Me less confidently than he should.

4. Someone who is willing to be over-secure in time of peace,⁵ will often be found too dejected and full of fears in time of war. If you had the wit to always continue being humble and moderate within yourself, and to thoroughly moderate and govern your spirit, you would not fall into danger and offense so quickly. It is good counsel that when a fervent spirit is kindled within you, you should consider how it will be when that light leaves you. And when this does happen, remember that the light may return again; for I have withdrawn it for a time as a warning to you, and for My own glory.

5. Such trials are often more profitable than if you were to always have things prosper according to your will. For a man's worthiness is not to be estimated by the number of visions and comforts he may have, or

¹ Jer. 10:23; Rom. 9:16.

² Isa. 14:13; Obad 1:4

³ Ps 91:4

⁴ Ps. 16:2; 17:10.

⁵ 1Thess. 5:6.

by his skill in the Scriptures, or by being placed in a higher station than others. Rather, it is measured by whether he is grounded in true humility, and full of divine charity; if he is always purely and sincerely seeking God's honor; if he thinks nothing of and unfeignedly despises himself;¹ and even rejoices more if he is despised and put down by others, than if he is honored by them.

CHAPTER 8 - A Plain Conceit of Ourselves in the Sight of God

SHALL I speak to my Lord, since I am but dust and ashes?² If I esteem myself to be anything more, behold, you stand against me, and my iniquities bear true witness – I cannot contradict it. But if I abase myself, and reduce myself to nothing, and shrink from self-esteem, and grind myself to (what I am) dust, your grace will be favorable to me, and your light will be near to my heart; and all self-esteem, however little, will be swallowed up in the valley of my nothingness and perish forever. There you show Yourself to me: what I am, what I have been, and where I have come from; for I am nothing, and I did not know it. If I am left to myself, behold! I become nothing but mere weakness; but if you look upon me for an instant, I am quickly made strong, and filled with new joy. And a great marvel it is that I am so suddenly lifted up, and so graciously embraced by you, when of my own weight I am always sinking downward.

2. Your love is the cause of it, freely forestalling and relieving me of so many necessities, guarding me from pressing dangers, and snatching me (as I may truly say) from countless evils. For indeed, by loving myself wrongly, I lost myself;³ and by seeking you alone, and purely loving you, I have found both myself and you; and by that love I have more deeply reduced myself to nothing. Because You, O sweetest Lord, deal with me above all deservedness, and above all that I dare hope for or ask.

3. Blessed are You, my God: for although I am unworthy of any benefits, yet your noble bounty and infinite goodness never ceases to do good even to the ungrateful,⁴ and to those who are turned away and far from you. Turn us to you, so that we may be thankful, humble, and devout; for you are our salvation, our courage, and our strength.

CHAPTER 9 - All things are to be referred to God as their Last End

MY son, if you desire to be truly blessed, then I ought to be your supreme and ultimate end. With this intention your affections will be purified; they are too often inordinately inclined to selfishness and to created things. For if you seek yourself in anything, you immediately faint and dry up. It is my will, therefore, that you refer all things principally to Me, for I am the One who have given you all things. Consider everything as flowing from the Highest Good;⁵ and therefore everything must be reduced to Me as their Originator.

2. From Me the small and great, the poor and rich, draw the water of life, as from a living fountain;⁶ and

¹ Ps. 84:10.

² Gen. 18:27.

³ John 12:25.

⁴ Matt. 5:45.

⁵ Ecclus. 1:5.

⁶ John 4:14.

those who willingly and freely serve Me, will receive grace for grace.¹ But the one who desires to glory in things outside of Me,² or to take pleasure in some private good, will not be grounded in true joy, nor be enlarged in his heart, but in many ways he will be encumbered and restrained. Therefore, you ought to ascribe nothing of good to yourself, nor attribute goodness to any man; but give all glory to God, without whom man has nothing. I have bestowed all things,³ and My will is to have all things return to me; and so, with great strictness, I require a return of thanks.

3. This is the truth by which vain-glory is put to flight. And if Heavenly grace enters in and true charity, there will be no envy or narrowness of heart, nor will self-love busy itself. For Divine charity overcomes all things, and enlarges all the powers of the soul. If you rightly judge, you will rejoice in Me alone, and in Me alone you will hope; for no one is good except God alone,⁴ who is to be praised above all things, and in all to be blessed.

CHAPTER 10 - To despise the World and serve God is a Sweet Life

NOW I will speak again, O Lord, and I will not be silent; I will say in the ears of my God, my Lord, and my King, who is on high: "O how great is the abundance of your goodness, O Lord, which you have laid up for those who fear you."⁵ But what are you to those who love You? What are you to those who serve you with their whole heart? Truly, the sweetness of contemplating you is unspeakable, the sweetness which you bestow on those who love you. In this especially you have shown me the sweetness of your charity: that when I was not, you made me, and that when I went far astray from you, you brought me back again so that I might serve you, and that you have commanded me to love you.⁶

2. O Fountain of love unceasing, what shall I say concerning You? How can I forget you, who have deigned to remember me, even after I had wasted away and perished? You have shown mercy to your servant beyond all expectation; and have exhibited favor and lovingkindness beyond all deserving. What return will I make to you for this grace?⁷ For it is not granted to all to forsake all, to renounce the world, and to undertake a life of religious retiredness. Is it any great thing that I serve you,⁸ whom the whole creation is bound to serve? Serving you should not seem much to me; rather this appears much to me, and wonderful: that you deign to receive into your service, one who is so poor and unworthy, and to make him one with your beloved servants.

3. Behold! All things which I have are yours, and by which I serve you.⁹ And yet, contrary to all expectations, you serve me rather than I serve you. Behold! Heaven and earth, which you have created for the service of man, are ready at hand, and daily perform whatever you have commanded. And this is little; for you have moreover appointed Angels to minister to man.¹⁰ But what excels all this is that you

¹ [Jn 1:16](#)

² [1Cor. 1:29](#).

³ [1Cor. 4:7](#).

⁴ [Matt. 19:17](#); [Luke 18:19](#).

⁵ [Ps. 31:19](#).

⁶ [Gen. 1:27](#); [Ps. 119:73](#); [Matt. 15](#) [perhaps [10:37](#)].

⁷ [Ps. 116:12](#).

⁸ [Judges 16:15](#).

⁹ [1Cor. 4:7](#).

¹⁰ [Ps. 91:11](#); [Heb. 1:14](#).

have deigned to serve man, and have promised that you would give Yourself to him.

4. What shall I give you for all these thousands of benefits? I would wish that I could serve you all the days of my life. I would wish that I were able, at least for one day, to do you some worthy service. Truly you are worthy of all service, of all honor, and of everlasting praise. Truly you are my Lord, and I am your poor servant who is bound to serve you with all my might; nor should I ever be weary of praising you. And this I wish to do; this I desire; and whatever is lacking in me, I beseech you, deign to supply it.

5. It is a great honor, and a great glory, to serve you, and to despise all things for you. For great grace will be given to those who have willingly subjected themselves to your most holy service. Those who for your love shall have renounced all carnal delights, will find the sweetest consolations of the Holy Ghost.¹ Those who for your Name's sake enter into the narrow way,² and leave behind all worldly care, will attain great freedom of mind.

6. O sweet and delightful service of God,³ by which a man is made truly free and holy! O sacred state of religious servitude, which makes a man equal to the Angels, which makes him pleasing to God, terrible to devils, and worthy to be commended of all the faithful. O welcome service and ever to be desired, in which we are rewarded with the Greatest Good and attain to joy which will endlessly remain with us!

CHAPTER 11 – The Longings and Desires of our Hearts are to be examined and moderated

MY son, it is still necessary for you to learn many more things which you have not even yet learned well.

WHAT are these, O Lord?

THAT you frame your desires⁴ wholly according to My good pleasure; and that you would not be a lover of yourself, but an earnest follower of My will. Various longings and desires often inflame you, and drive you forwards with vehemence; but do you consider whether you are moved more for your own advantage than for My honor? If I Myself am the cause, you will be well-content with whatever I ordain; but if any self-seeking lurks in you,⁵ behold, this is what hinders you and weighs you down.

2. Beware, therefore, that you do not lean too much on any preconceived desire without asking My counsel first. Otherwise, afterwards it may cause you regret, or you will be displeased with what at first pleased you, and which you earnestly desired as the best thing. For not every inclination which seems good is to be pursued immediately; nor again is every contrary inclination to be summarily avoided. It is sometimes expedient to use restraint even in good desires and endeavors. Otherwise, through importunity, your mind will be distracted; your lack of self-government will produce a scandal for others; or again, being thwarted and resisted by others, you will suddenly become confounded, and so fall.

3. Sometimes however you must be aggressive,⁶ and manfully resist your sensual appetite, not regarding

¹ Matt. 19:29.

² Matt. 7:14.

³ Matt. 11:30; 1John 5:3.

⁴ Ps. 108:1; Matt. 6:10.

⁵ Phil. 2:21.

⁶ 1Cor 9:27

what the flesh wants or does not want;¹ rather you must take pains that even if by force it may be made subject to the Spirit.² And it ought to be chastised and forced to remain under servitude until it has been prepared for everything, and has learned to be content with a little, and is pleased with plain and simple things, and does not murmur against every inconvenience.

CHAPTER 12 - Growth of Patience in the Soul, and striving against Concupiscence

O LORD my God, patience is very necessary for me,³ as I see that many things in this life happen as we would not have them. For whatever plans I devise for my own peace, my life cannot be without war and affliction.⁴ IT is so, My son. But My will is that you do not seek that peace which is void of temptation, or which feels nothing contrary; instead, think that you have found peace when you are exercised with a variety of tribulations,⁵ and you have been tried in many adversities.

2. If you say, that you are not able to suffer much, how then will you endure the fire to come? Of two evils, the lesser should always be chosen. So that you may therefore avoid the future everlasting punishment, endeavor to endure present evils patiently for God's sake. Do you think that the men of this world suffer nothing or only suffer a little? Ask even those who enjoy the greatest delicacies, and you will find that it is otherwise. But you may say they have many delights, and follow their own wills, and therefore they do not consider their own afflictions much. Even if they do have whatever they want now, how long do you think it will last?

3. Behold, the wealthy of this world will be consumed like smoke,⁶ and there will be no memory of their past joys! Indeed, even while they are still alive, they do not rest in their days without bitterness, weariness, and fear. For from the self-same thing which they imagine is their delight, they often receive the penalty of sorrow. Nor is it anything but just that having inordinately sought and followed after pleasures, they should not enjoy them without shame and bitterness.

4. O how brief, how false, how inordinate and filthy, are all those pleasures. Yet so drunken and blind are men that they do not understand it; instead, like dumb beasts they incur the death of the soul in return for the poor enjoyment of this corruptible life. Therefore, My son, "do not go after your lusts, but refrain yourself from your appetites."⁷ "Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart."⁸

5. For if you desire true delight, and to be more plentifully comforted by Me, then behold: your blessing and abundant consolation will be rendered to you in the contempt of all worldly things, and in cutting off all base delights. The more you withdraw yourself from all solace of created things, the sweeter and more powerful consolations you will find in Me. But you will not attain these consolations at first without some sadness, and without a laborious conflict. Old inbred habits will create resistance, but by better habits they will be entirely overcome. The flesh will murmur against you, but with fervency of spirit you will bridle

¹ Rom. 8:1-13.

² 2Cor. 4:10; 10:3.

³ Heb. 10:36.

⁴ Job 7:1-3

⁵ James 1:2.

⁶ Ps. 68:2.

⁷ Ecclus. 18:30.

⁸ Ps. 37:4.

it. The Old Serpent will instigate and trouble you, but by prayer he will be put to flight; moreover, by useful employment you will greatly block the way against him.

CHAPTER 13 - The Obedience of one in Humble Subjection, after the Example of Jesus Christ

MY son, one who endeavors to withdraw himself from obedience, withdraws himself from Grace: and one who seeks private benefits for himself ¹ loses those which are common. One who does not cheerfully and freely submit himself to his superior, signifies that his flesh is not yet perfectly obedient to him, but often kicks and murmurs against him.² Learn therefore to quickly submit yourself to your superior if you desire to keep your own flesh under the yoke. For the outward enemy [the flesh] is more speedily overcome if the inward man [the Spirit] is not laid waste. There is no worse enemy, nor one more troublesome to the soul, than you are to yourself, if you are not in harmony with the Spirit. It is absolutely necessary to gain a true contempt for yourself if you desire to prevail against flesh and blood.

2. Because you still love yourself inordinately, you are afraid to relinquish yourself wholly to the will of others. And yet, what great matter is it if you, who are but dust and nothing, subject yourself to a man for God's sake? Consider that I, the Almighty and the Most Highest, who created all things out of nothing, humbly subjected Myself to man for *your* sake? I became the most humble and the most abject of all men,³ that you might overcome your pride with My humility. O dust, learn to be obedient! Learn to humble yourself, you who are made of earth and clay, and to bow yourself down under the feet of all men. Learn to break your own wishes, and to yield yourself to all subjection.

3. Do not be fiercely hot to defend yourself, and allow no pride to dwell in you. Instead, show yourself so humble and so very small, that all may be able to walk over you, and tread you down like the mire of the streets. Vain man, what have you to complain of? What can you answer, foul sinner, to those who upbraid you – you who have so often offended God, and so many times deserved hell? But My eye spared you because your soul was precious in My sight. And this was so that you might know My love, and be ever thankful for My benefits. And it was so that you might continually give yourself to true subjection and humility, and patiently endure the contempt which rightfully belongs to you.

CHAPTER 14 - The Duty to consider the Secret Judgments of God, so that we are not lifted up for anything good in us

YOU, O Lord, thunder forth your judgments over me. You shake all my bones with fear and trembling, and my soul is sore afraid. I stand astonished and I consider, "That the Heavens are not pure in your sight."⁴ If you found wickedness in Angels,⁵ and did not spare even them, what shall become of me? Even stars fell from Heaven.⁶ What then can I presume as one who is but dust? Those whose works seemed commendable have fallen into the lowest misery; and I have those who ate the bread of Angels,⁷

¹ Matt. 16:24; 1Tim 6:5

² [Act 26:14](#)

³ Luke 2:7; John 13:14; Phil 2:6-7

⁴ Job 15:15.

⁵ Job 4:18.

⁶ Rev. 8:10.

⁷ Ps. 78:25.

delighting themselves with the husks of swine.¹

2. There is therefore no sanctity, if You, O Lord, withdraw your hand. No wisdom avails if you cease to guide. No courage helps if you abandon our defense. No chastity is secure if you do not protect it. No custody of our own avails if your sacred watchfulness is not present with us. For if we are left to ourselves, we sink and perish; but you visit us, we are raised up and live. Truly we are unstable, but through you we are strengthened: we grow lukewarm on our own, but we are inflamed by you.

3. O how humbly and plainly I ought to think of myself! I ought to consider it nothing if I seem to have any good quality! I ought to submit myself to your unfathomable judgments with profound humility, O Lord; where I find myself to be something other than Nothing, still, it is Nothing! O unmeasurable weight! O sea that can never be passed over: where I discover nothing of myself, except that I am only and wholly Nothing! Where then is the hiding-place of glory in myself? Where is the confidence that is conceived of virtue? All vain-glorying is swallowed up in the deep of your judgments over me.

4. What is all flesh in your sight? Shall the clay glory against the One who forms it? How can the one whose heart is truly subject to God be lifted up with vain words?² Not all the world can lift up him, whom the Truth has subjected to itself: nor shall the one who has firmly settled his whole hope in God be moved by the tongues of any who praise him. For even those who speak are all nothing, for they will pass away with the sound of their own words; but the Truth of the Lord remains forever.³

CHAPTER 15 - In everything we desire, how we ought to stand affected, and what we ought to say

MY son, speak this way in everything: "Lord, if this is pleasing to you, let it be so."⁴ "Lord, if it is to your honor, let this be done in your Name." "Lord if you see it is expedient, and if you allow it to be profitable for me, then grant to me that I may use this to your honor. But if you know it will be hurtful to me, and not profitable to the health of my soul, then take away any such desire from me." For every desire does not proceed from the Holy Spirit, even though it seems right and good to a man. It is difficult to judge truly whether a good spirit or a contrary one drives you to desire this or that; or whether by your own spirit you are moved towards it. Many have been deceived in the end who at first seemed to be led on by a good spirit.

2. Therefore whatever occurs to the mind as desirable, must always be desired and prayed for *in the fear of God*, and with humility of heart; and above all you must commit the whole matter to Me, with special resignation. You must say, "O Lord, you know what is best for us, let this or that be done, as you please. Give what you will, and how much you will, and when you will. Deal with me as you think good, and as best pleases you, and is most for your honor. Set me where you will, and deal with me in all things just as you will. I am in your hand: turn me around and turn me back again, as you please. Behold, I am your servant, prepared for all things; for I do not desire to live to myself, but to you;⁵ and O that I could do it worthily and perfectly."

¹ [Lk 15:16](#)

² Isa. 29:16; Eccclus. 23:4, 5.

³ Ps. 117:2.

⁴ James 3 [perhaps 4:13].

⁵ [Gal 2:19](#)

A Prayer that the will of God may be fulfilled

3. O MOST merciful JESUS, grant to me your Grace, that it may be with me, and labor with me,¹ and persevere with me even to the end. Grant that I may always desire and will what is most acceptable to you, and most dear. Let your will be mine, and let my will ever follow Yours, and agree perfectly with it. Let my will and nill² be one with Yours, and do not let me be able to will or nill anything except what you will or nill.

4. Grant that I may die to all things that are in the world,³ and love for your sake to be scorned,⁴ and not known in this generation. Grant to me above all things that can be desired, to rest in you, and to have my heart at peace in you. You are the true peace of the heart; you are its only rest. Outside of you all things are hard and restless. In this very peace, that is, in you, the one Highest Eternal Good, I will sleep and rest.⁵ *Amen.*

CHAPTER 16 - True Comfort is to be sought in God alone

WHATEVER I can desire or imagine for my comfort, I do not look for it here but hereafter. For if I might alone have all the comforts of the world, and if I were able to enjoy all its delights,⁶ it is certain that they could not endure long. Which is why, O my soul, you cannot be fully comforted,⁷ nor have perfect refreshment, except in God who is the Comforter of the poor and Patron of the humble. Wait a little while, O my soul; wait for the Divine promise, and you will have an abundance of all good things in Heaven. If you inordinately desire the present things, you will lose those which are heavenly and eternal. Use temporal things, and desire eternal things. You cannot be satisfied with any temporal goods because you were not created to enjoy them.

2. If you were to possess all created good, you still could not be happy or blessed by that. But your entire blessedness and felicity consists in God who created all things;⁸ they do not consist in things that are seen and commended by the foolish lovers of the world, but in those things which the good and faithful servants of Christ wait for. The spiritual and pure in heart, those whose citizenship is in Heaven,⁹ sometimes have a foretaste of such things. All human consolation is vain and brief. Blessed and true is the consolation which is received inwardly from the Truth. A devout man carries with him everywhere his own Comforter JESUS, and he says to Him, "Be present with me, O Lord JESU, in every time and place. Let this be my consolation: to cheerfully be willing to do without all human comfort. And if your consolation is lacking, then let your will and just testing of me be the greatest comfort to me; for you will not always be angry, nor will you threaten forever."¹⁰

¹ Wisd. 9:10; Col 1:29

² *Archaic*: to not will, or to will against (n'ill)

³ Col 2:20

⁴ Mat 5:11

⁵ Ps. 4:8.

⁶ Matt. 16:26.

⁷ Ps. 77:1, 2.

⁸ Wisd. 2:23.

⁹ Phil. 3:20.

¹⁰ Ps. 103:9.

CHAPTER 17 - All our Anxieties are to be placed on God

MY son, allow me to do with you what I please. I know what is expedient for you. You think as man; you judge many things as your human feelings persuade you.

1. O LORD, what you say is true. Your anxiety for me is greater¹ than all the care that I can take for myself. For the one who does not cast not all his anxiety on you² stands precariously on the edge. O Lord, if only my will may remain right and firm towards you, then do with me however it pleases you. For it cannot be anything but good, whatever you do with me.

2. If it is your will that I should be in darkness, be blessed; and if it is your will that I be in light, then again be blessed. If you deign to comfort me, be blessed; and if you will have me afflicted, then equally, be ever blessed.

My son, this ought to be your state if you desire to walk with Me: you ought to be as ready to suffer as to rejoice. You ought to be as cheerful to be destitute and poor, as to be full and rich.

3. O LORD, for your sake, I will cheerfully suffer³ whatever comes upon me by your permission. From your hand I am willing to receive indifferently both good and evil, sweet and bitter, joy and sorrow; and for all that befalls me, I will be thankful. Keep me safe from all sin and I shall fear neither death⁴ nor hell. Because you will not cast me away from you forever, nor blot me out of the book of life, whatever tribulation may befall me will not hurt me.

CHAPTER 18 - Temporal Miseries must be borne patiently, after the Example of Christ

MY son, I descended from Heaven⁵ for your salvation. I took your miseries upon Me,⁶ being drawn to that not by necessity but by charity, so that you yourself might learn patience, and bear temporal miseries without grudging. For from the hour of My birth⁷ until My death on the cross, I was not without suffering or grief. I suffered great lack of temporal things; I often heard many complaints against Me; I endured disgraces and revilings benignly; in return for benefits, I received ingratitude; for miracles, I received blasphemies; for heavenly doctrine, I received reproofs.

2. O LORD, you were patient in your lifetime by doing these things, especially in fulfilling the commandment of your Father;⁸ it is the reason that I, a most miserable sinner, should bear myself patiently according to your will; and it is for my soul's welfare that I should endure the burden of this corruptible life as long as you choose. For although this present life is burdensome to our feelings, yet notwithstanding this, by your grace it is now made very profitable; and by your example and the footsteps of your Saints, it is now made more splendid and endurable for the weak. Also, it is much more full of consolation than under the old Law, when the gate of Heaven remained shut; and the way to Heaven also

¹ Matt. 6:30; John 6:20.

² 1Pet 5:7

³ Job 2:10.

⁴ Ps. 23:4.

⁵ John 3:13.

⁶ Isa. 53:4.

⁷ Luke 2:7.

⁸ John 5:30.

seemed more obscure, when so few took care to seek after the kingdom of Heaven.¹ Moreover, those who then were just, and the kind who should be saved, could not enter into the Heavenly kingdom, for it was prior to your Passion and the due satisfaction of your holy death.

3. O how great are the thanks I am bound to render to you, for you have deigned to show to me, and to all faithful people, the good and right way to your eternal kingdom. For your life is our way, and by holy patience we walk toward you who are our Crown. If you had not gone before us and taught us, who would have cared to follow? Alas, how many would remain behind and far off if they had not considered your most noble example!² Behold, we are still lukewarm, even though we have heard of so many of your miracles and doctrines; what would become of us, if we did not have so great a Light³ by which to follow you!

CHAPTER 19 – The Endurance of Injuries, and the Proof of True Patience

WHAT is it you are saying, My son? Stop complaining when you consider My Passion, and the sufferings of other holy persons. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood.⁴ You suffer only a little compared to those who suffered so much, those who were so strongly tempted, so grievously afflicted, who were tried and abused in so many ways.⁵ Therefore, you ought to call to mind the heavier sufferings of others, so that you may more easily bear your own very small troubles. And if they do not seem very small to you, then beware, lest your impatience be the cause of it. However, whether they are small or great, endeavor to patiently undergo them all.

2. The better you dispose yourself toward suffering, the wiser you will be, and the greater the reward you will receive, and the more easily you will endure it – if you are diligently prepared for it both in mind and by habit. Do not say, “I cannot endure to suffer these things at the hands of a this particular person, nor should I endure things of this sort – for he has done me great wrong, and he reproaches me with things which I never thought of; but I will willingly suffer at the hands of another, that is, if they are things I see I ought to suffer.” Such a thought is foolish; it does not consider the virtue of patience, nor by whom its crown is received. Rather, it weighs too closely the persons and the injuries from which it suffers.

3. One who is willing to suffer only so much as he thinks good, and from whom he pleases, is not truly patient. Rather, the truly patient man does not mind by whom he is abused, whether by his superiors, by an equal, or by an inferior; whether it is by a good and holy man, or by one who is perverse and unworthy. But however much, or however often anything adverse befalls him, he takes it all thankfully, and indifferently from every creature, as if it were from the hands of God; he considers it a great gain. For with God, it is impossible that anything suffered for God’s sake, however small, will come to pass without its just reward.

4. Therefore, be prepared for the fight if you want the victory. Without combat you can not attain to the

¹ Matt. 7:14.

² This suggests a Pelagian view that Christ came only to provide an example to follow so that we might pursue our own righteousness and attain salvation by it; this is salvation by works. Thus “due satisfaction” (at the top of the page) would refer only to our sins prior to conversion – we are responsible for our sins afterward. This was and remains a common Catholic view of justification – so that confession and absolution by the Church become essential to salvation. This is not the Protestant view at all. Rather, Protestants believe that Christ paid for all our sins, past, present, and future; he completely saved us on the cross.

³ John 1:9.

⁴ Heb. 12:4.

⁵ Heb. 11:37.

crown of patience.¹ If you are unwilling to suffer, then you are refusing to be crowned. So if you desire to be crowned, then fight manfully, and endure patiently. Without labor there is no arriving at rest,² nor without fighting can the victory be reached. O LORD, let what by nature seems impossible to me, become possible to me by your grace. You know that I am able to suffer only a little, and that I am quickly thrown down when even a slight adversity arises. For your Name's sake, let every exercise of tribulation be made amiable and desirable to me; for to suffer and be disquieted for your sake is wholesome for my soul.

CHAPTER 20 - Acknowledging our own Infirmities; and the Miseries of this Life

I WILL confess my own unrighteousness against myself;³ I will confess my weakness to you, O Lord. Often it is a small matter that makes me sad and dejected. I resolve to act with courage, but when even a small temptation comes, I am immediately in a great bind. It is sometimes only a trifle from which a great temptation arises. While thinking myself tolerably safe and least expecting it, I sometimes find myself almost entirely overcome by a slight breath.

2. Behold therefore, O Lord, my low state⁴ and my frailty, known to you in every way. Have mercy on me and deliver me out of the mire, so that I may not stick fast in it,⁵ and I may not remain utterly thrown down forever. This is what often strikes me from behind, and confounds me in your sight: that I am so subject to falling, and so weak in resisting my passions. And although I do not entirely consent, yet their continued assaults are troublesome and grievous to me; and it is exceedingly irksome to live this way in daily conflict. This is where my weakness becomes known to me: hateful desires invade me much more easily than they forsake me.

3. Most mighty God of Israel, you zealous Lover of faithful souls! O that you would consider the labor and sorrow of your servant, and assist him in all things, whatever he undertakes. Strengthen me with heavenly courage lest the old man, the miserable flesh, which is not yet fully subject to the Spirit, prevails and gets the upper hand; it will be necessary for me to fight against this flesh as long as I breathe in this miserable life. Alas, what kind of life is this, where tribulation and miseries are never lacking, and where everything is full of snares and enemies! For when one tribulation or temptation retreats, another comes on; indeed, while the first conflict is still going on, many others come unexpectedly, one after another.

4. And how can a life be loved that has so many embitterments, and that is subject to so many calamities and miseries? How can it be called a life when it begets so many deaths and plagues? And yet it is the object of men's love and many seek to delight themselves in it. The world is often blamed for being deceitful and vain, and yet men do not part with it easily because the desires of the flesh hold so great a sway. But some things draw us to love the world, while others draw us to despise it. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,⁶ draw us to love the world; but the pains and miseries that justly follow them cause us to hate and loathe the world.

¹ 2Tim. 2:3-5.

² [Heb 4:5-11](#)

³ Ps. 32:5.

⁴ Ps. 25:18.

⁵ Ps. 69:14.

⁶ 1John 2:16.

5. Unfortunately, the fondness for vicious pleasures overcomes the mind of someone who is addicted to the world, and he considers it a delight to huddle under thorns,¹ because he has neither seen nor tasted the sweetness of God and the inward pleasantness of virtue. But those who perfectly despise the world, and are studious to live to God under holy discipline, are not ignorant of the Divine sweetness promised to those who truly forsake the world. They also dearly see how grievously the world errs, and how it is deceived in many ways.

CHAPTER 21 – We are to rest in God above all Things which are Good, and above all His own Gifts

ABOVE all things, and in all things, O my soul, you shall rest in the Lord always, for He Himself is the everlasting Rest of the Saints. Grant me, O most sweet and loving JESUS, to rest in you above all creatures,² above all health and beauty, above all glory and honor, above all power and dignity, above all knowledge and subtlety, above all riches and arts, above all joy and gladness, above all fame and praise, above all sweetness and comfort, above all hope and promise, above all deserving and desire: Above all gifts and favors that you can give and impart to us, above all mirth and jubilee that the mind of man can receive and feel; finally, above Angels and Archangels, and above all the Heavenly host, above all things visible and invisible, and above all that you are not, O my God.

2. Because You, O Lord my God, are supremely good above all; you alone are Most High, most powerful, most full and sufficient, most sweet and full of consolation: You alone are most lovely and loving; you alone are most noble and glorious above all things. In you all good things together are perfect, and ever have been, and ever shall be. And therefore it is too small and unsatisfying, whatever you bestow on me besides Yourself, or reveal to me of Yourself, or promise to me while you are still not seen and not fully obtained. For surely my heart cannot truly rest, or be entirely contented, unless it rests in you, and surmounts all gifts and all creatures whatever.

3. O you most beloved spouse of my soul, JESUS Christ, you most pure Lover, you Lord of all creation: O that I had the wings of true liberty, that I might fly away and rest in you!³ O when will it be fully granted to me to consider in quietness of mind and to see how sweet you are, my Lord God? When will I fully gather myself into you, so that by reason of my love toward you I may not sense myself but you alone, above all sense and measure, in a manner not known to everyone!⁴ But now I often sigh, and bear my infelicity with grief. Because many evils occur in this vale of miseries, which often trouble, grieve, and overcloud me; they often hinder and distract me, allure and entangle me, so that I can have no free access to you, nor enjoy the sweet welcomings which are ever ready with the blessed spirits. O let my sighs move you, and my manifold desolation here on earth.

4. O JESU, you brightness of eternal glory, you comfort of the pilgrim's soul, with you my tongue is without voice, and my very silence speaks to you. How long does my Lord delay to come? Let Him come to me, His poor despised servant, and let Him make me glad. Let him put out His hand and deliver a poor wretch from all anguish. Come, O come; for without you I will have no joyful day or hour; for you are my joy, and without you my table is empty. I am a wretched creature, and in a way, I am imprisoned and loaded with fetters until you refresh me with the light of your presence, and grant me liberty, and show a friendly countenance toward me.

¹ Job 30:7; Prov 22:5

² Eph 1:19-22

³ Ps. 55:6.

⁴ Dan. 10:11.

5. Let others seek what they please instead of you; but for me, nothing else does or will delight me except you alone, my God, my hope, my everlasting salvation. I will not hold my peace nor cease to pray until your grace returns again and you speak inwardly to me.

BEHOLD, here I am. Behold, I come to you, because you have called upon Me. Your tears and the desire of your soul, your humiliation and your contrition of heart, have inclined and brought Me near to you.

And I said, LORD, I have called upon you and desired to enjoy you, ready to refuse all things for your sake. For you first stirred me up so that I might seek you. Be blessed therefore, O Lord, You who have shown this goodness to your servant according to the multitude of your mercies.

6. What has your servant more to say before You? He can only greatly humble himself in your sight, ever mindful of his own iniquity and vileness. For there is none like you¹ in all the wonderful things of Heaven and earth. Your works are very good, your judgments true, and by your providence the universe is governed. Therefore, praise and glory be to you, O Wisdom of the Father: let my mouth, my soul, and all creatures together, praise and bless you.

CHAPTER 22 - The Remembrance of God's Manifold Benefits

O Lord, open my heart to your law and teach me to walk in your commandments.² Grant me to understand your will, and with great reverence and diligent consideration to remember your benefits. Let me do so as well in general as in particular, so that from here on I may be able to give you thanks worthily. But I know and confess that I am not able, even in the least point, to give you due thanks for the favors which you bestow on me.³ I am less than worthy to receive the least of all your benefits: and when I consider your excellence, the greatness of it makes my spirit faint.

2. All that we have in soul and in body, and whatever we possess outwardly or inwardly, naturally or supernaturally, are your benefits. They proclaim that you are bountiful, merciful, and good, the One from whom we have received all good things. Although one has received more and another less, all are Yours, and without you even the least blessing cannot be had. One who has received the greatest cannot glory that he deserved it, nor extol himself above others, nor insult the lesser; for the one who is the greatest and the best, is the one who ascribes least to himself; he is the one who is most humble and most devout in rendering thanks. And one who esteems himself viler than all men, and judges himself most unworthy, is the fittest to receive the greater blessings.⁴

3. But one who has received less ought not to lose heart, nor take it grievously, nor envy those who are enriched with greater store; rather, he should turn his mind to you, and exceedingly praise your goodness, for you bestow your gifts so bountifully, so freely, and so willingly, without respect to persons.⁵ All things proceed from you, and therefore you are to be praised in all things. You know what is fit to be given to everyone: why this man should have less and that more. It is not for us to judge, but for you who exactly mark what everyone deserves.

¹ Ps. 86:8.

² Ps. 119.

³ [Lk 7:47](#)

⁴ [Mat 3:11, 11:11](#)

⁵ [Act 10:34; Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9; 1Pet 1:17](#)

4. Which is why, O Lord God, I even consider it a great mercy not to have much of what outwardly and in the opinion of men seems worthy of glory and applause. For so it is that one who considers the poverty and unworthiness of his own person, should be so far from being grieved, saddened, or dejected by it, that he should rather take great comfort and be glad; because You, O God, have chosen the poor and humble and the despised of this world for Yourself,¹ for your familiar and domestic attendants. Your Apostles themselves are witnesses of this, those whom you have made princes over all the earth.² And yet they lived in the world without complaint,³ humble and simple, without malice and deceit, so that they even rejoiced to suffer reproach for your Name.⁴ What the world abhors, they embraced with great affection.

5. When therefore a man loves you and acknowledges your benefits, nothing ought to rejoice him so much as your will toward him, and the good pleasure of your eternal appointment. And he ought to be so contented and comforted with this, that he would as willingly be the least, as another would wish to be the greatest. He would also be as peaceable and contented to be in last place as in first; as contented to be a despised cast-away with no name or character, as to be preferred in honor before others, or to be greater in the world than they. For your will and the love of your glory ought to be preferred before all things; they ought to comfort a man more and please him better than all the benefits which he either has received or may receive.

CHAPTER 23 - Four Things that bring much Inward Peace

MY son, now will I teach you the way of peace and true liberty.

O Lord, I beseech you, do as you say, for this is delightful to me to hear.

- BE DESIROUS, MY SON, TO DO THE WILL OF ANOTHER RATHER THAN YOUR OWN.⁵
- ALWAYS CHOOSE TO HAVE LESS RATHER THAN MORE.⁶
- ALWAYS SEEK THE LOWEST PLACE AND TO BE LESS ESTEEMED THAN EVERYONE ELSE.⁷
- ALWAYS WISH AND PRAY THAT THE WILL OF GOD MAY BE WHOLLY FULFILLED IN YOU.⁸

Behold, such a man enters within the borders of peace and rest.

2. O Lord, this short discourse of yours contains great perfection within itself.⁹ Little is spoken, but it is full of meaning and abundant in fruit. For if I could faithfully keep it, I would not be so easily disturbed. Whenever I feel myself disquieted and weighed down, I find that I have gone back from this doctrine. But you who can do all things, and ever love to profit my soul, increase your grace in me so that I may be able to fulfil your words and work out my own salvation.¹⁰

¹ 1Cor. 1:27, 28.

² Ps. 45:16.

³ Thess. 2:10.

⁴ Acts 5:41.

⁵ Matt. 26:39; John 5:30; 6:38.

⁶ 1Cor. 10:24.

⁷ Luke 14:10.

⁸ Matt. 6:10.

⁹ Matt. 5:48.

¹⁰ [Phil 2:12](#)

A Prayer against evil thoughts

3. O LORD my God, do not be far from me. My God, hasten to help me¹ for a gammot of thoughts and great fears have risen up against me, afflicting my soul. How shall I pass through unhurt? How shall I break them to pieces? “I will go before you (He says), and I will humble the great ones of the earth; I will open the doors of the prison and reveal hidden secrets to you.”² Do as you say, O Lord, and let all my evil thoughts fly from before your face. This is my hope, my one only consolation, to fly to you in every tribulation, to trust in you, to call upon you from my inmost heart, and to wait patiently for your consolation.

A Prayer for mental illumination

4. O merciful JESUS, enlighten me with a clear shining inward light, and remove all darkness from the habitation of my heart. Repress my many wandering thoughts, and break in pieces those temptations which violently assault me. Fight strongly for me, and vanquish the evil beasts – I mean the alluring desires of the flesh – so that peace may be obtained by your power, and so that your abundant praise may resound in your holy court: in a pure conscience. Command the winds and tempests. Say to the sea, “Be still”.³ Say to the north wind, “Do not blow.” And there shall be a great calm.

5. Send out your light and your truth⁴ so that they may shine upon the earth; for until you enlighten me, I am like earth without form and void. Pour forth your grace from above; imbue my heart with heavenly dew; supply fresh streams of devotion to water the face of the earth, so that it may bring forth good and excellent fruit. Lift up my mind which is pressed down by a load of sins, and draw my whole desire toward heavenly things, so that having tasted the sweetness of supernal⁵ happiness, it may be irksome⁶ to to even to think about earthly things.

6. Pluck me away and deliver me from all transitory consolation of creatures, for no created thing can give full comfort and rest to my desires. Join me to Yourself with an inseparable band of love, for you alone satisfy the one who loves you; without you all things are vain and frivolous.

CHAPTER 24 - Avoiding Curious Enquiry into other Men's Lives

MY son, be not curious or trouble yourself with idle anxieties.⁷ What is this or that to you? You follow Me.⁸ For what is it to you whether that man is such or such, or whether this man does or says this or that? You will not need to answer for others; but you will need to give an account for yourself;⁹ Why then do you entangle yourself? Behold, I know everyone, and see all things that are done under the sun; I also understand how it is with everyone: what he thinks, what he wishes, and what his intentions aim at.

¹ Ps. 71:12.

² Isa. 45:2, 3.

³ Ps. 43:3.

⁴ Matt. 8:26.

⁵ [The things of heaven](#)

⁶ [Mind-deadening; i.e. boring by comparison.](#)

⁷ Ecclus. 3:23; 1Tim. 5:13.

⁸ John 21:22.

⁹ Gal. 6:4, 5.

Therefore all things are to be committed to Me; keep yourself gently at peace. Let those who are unquiet be as unquiet as they wish. Whatever they have done or said will come upon them, for they cannot deceive Me.

2. Do not care for the shadow of a great name, or for the familiar friendship of many, or for the private affection of men. For these things both distract the heart, and greatly darken it. I would willingly speak my word and reveal My secrets to you, if you would diligently watch for My coming and open the door of your heart to Me. Be circumspect, and watchful in prayer, and humble yourself in all things.

CHAPTER 25 – What firm Peace of Heart and true Spiritual Progress consist of

MY son, I have spoken; “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you: not as the world gives, I give to you.”¹ Peace is what all desire, but all do not care for the things that pertain to true peace. My peace is with the humble and gentle of heart; your peace shall consist in great patience. If you will hear Me and follow My voice, you will be able to enjoy much peace.

WHAT then shall I do, Lord?

IN every matter, look at yourself: at what you do and what you say; and direct your whole attention to this so that you may please Me alone; do not desire or seek anything besides Me. Do not rashly judge anything concerning the words or deeds of others; nor should you entangle yourself with things that are not committed to you; in doing this, you may be little or seldom disturbed.

2. But never feeling any disturbance at all, or never suffering any trouble of mind or body, is not something which belongs to this life; it belongs to the state of eternal Rest. Do not think, therefore that you have found true peace if you feel no depression; nor think that all is well if you are not aggravated by an adversary; nor think that “to be perfect,” is to have all things done according to your desire. Nor should you highly esteem yourself, or consider yourself specially beloved, if you happen to be in a state of great devotion and sweetness; for it is not by these things that a true lover of virtue is known; nor does the progress and perfection of a man consist in these things.

3. *In what then, O Lord, does the progress and perfection of a man consist?*

IN giving yourself over with all your heart to the Divine Will; in not seeking your own interest, either in great matters or small, whether in time or in eternity. In this way, you will keep one and the same countenance: being always with thanksgiving, whether in prosperity or adversity, weighing all things with an equal balance.² Be of such courage, and so patient in hope, that when inward comfort is withdrawn, your heart may be prepared to suffer even greater things. And do not justify yourself as though you ought not to suffer these afflictions, or any so great as these. Instead, justify Me in whatever I appoint for you, and still praise My Holy Name. Then you will walk in the true and right way of peace, and you will have sure hope to see My face again with great delight. For if you attain a full contempt of yourself, know that you will then enjoy an abundance of peace, as great as your state of sojourning is capable of.

¹ John 14:27.

² [Phil 4:12](#)

CHAPTER 26 - The Excellence of a Free Mind, sooner gained by Humble Prayer than Reading

O LORD, it is the business of a perfect man to never relax his mind from attentive thought of heavenly things, and thus to pass through many cares (as it were) without care; not as one who is destitute of all feeling, but by the privilege of a free mind, cleaving to no creature with inordinate affection.

2. I beseech you, my most gracious God, preserve me from the cares of this life, lest I be too much entangled in it; also preserve me from the many necessities of the body, lest I be ensnared by pleasure; and from whatever is an obstacle to the soul, lest being broken with troubles I be overthrown. I do not speak of those things which worldly vanity so earnestly desires, but of miseries, such as punishments and the common curse of mortality,¹ which weigh down and hinder your servant's soul so that it cannot enter into the freedom of the Spirit as often as it would.

3. O my God, you ineffable sweetness, make all carnal comfort bitter for me; it draws me away from the love of eternal things, and in an evil way it allures me to itself by the view of some present delightful good. Do not let me be overcome, O Lord; do not let me be overcome by flesh and blood;² do not let the world and its brief glory deceive me; do not let the devil and his subtle fraud unseat me. Give me strength to resist, patience to endure, and constancy to persevere. Give me the most sweet unction of your Spirit instead of all the comforts of the world; and in place of carnal love, pour in the love of your name.

4. Behold! Meat, drink, clothes, and other necessities to maintain the body are burdensome to a fervent spirit. Grant me to use such refreshments moderately, and not to be entangled with an overly great desire for them. It is not lawful to discard all of these, for nature is to be sustained; but the holy law forbids us to demand such things in excess, and to demand those things which are merely for pleasure; for then the flesh would rebel against the Spirit. In this, I beg you, let your hand govern me and teach me, so that I may not exceed the law in anything.

CHAPTER 27 - Private Love most hinders from the Chiefest Good

MY son, you ought to give all for all, and nothing for yourself. Know that the love of yourself does you more hurt than anything in the world. The more love and affection you bear towards anything, the less love clings to you. If your love is pure,³ simple, and well-ordered, you will be free from bondage to things. Do not covet what it is not lawful for you to have. Do not possess what may entangle you and deprive you of inward liberty. It is strange that you do not commit yourself wholly to Me from the bottom of your heart, along with all those things you can have or desire.

2. Why do you consume yourself with vain grief?⁴ Why weary yourself with superfluous cares? Pursue My good will, and you will suffer no detriment at all. If you seek this or that, and want to be in this place that to better enjoy your own profit and pleasure, you will never be quiet, or free from a troubled mind; for in every instance something will be lacking, and in every place someone will cross you.

3. Man's welfare, then, does not lie in obtaining and multiplying external things, but in despising them, and utterly rooting them out of the heart. And you must understand that this is not only about income and wealth, but about seeking honor also, and desiring vain praise, all of which must pass away with this

¹ Gen. 3:17; Rom. 7:23, 24.

² Rom. 12:21.

³ 1Tim 1:5

⁴ Ps 6; Ps 31:9-16

world. The place you seek avails little if a spirit of fervor is lacking. Nor will any peace last long if it is sought from outside.¹ If the state of your heart lacks a true foundation – that is, unless you stand steadfast in Me – you may change, but you will not better yourself. For when the chance arises to lay hold of what you seek, you will find what you fled from, and worse.

A Prayer for a clean heart, and Heavenly Wisdom

4. STRENGTHEN me, O God, by the grace of your Holy Spirit.² Grant me to be strengthened with might in the inner man,³ and to empty my heart of all useless care and anguish;⁴ let me not be drawn away by various desires for anything, whether poor or precious, but to look on all things as passing away; and to look at myself the same way, as if I was about to pass away with them. For nothing is permanent under the sun where all things are vanity, and troubling to the spirit.⁵ O how wise is someone who considers them this way!

5. O Lord, grant me Heavenly wisdom,⁶ that I may learn above all things to seek and find you, above all things to relish and love you, and to think of all other things as being what indeed they are: at the disposal of your wisdom. Allow me to prudently avoid someone who flatters me, and to endure patiently someone who contradicts me. For it is a great part of wisdom not to be moved by every wind of teaching,⁷ nor to give ear to an ill flattering siren⁸; in this way we shall continue securely in the way we have begun.

CHAPTER 28 - Against the Tongues of Slanderers

MY son, do not take it badly if some think ill of you,⁹ and say what you would not willingly hear. You ought to judge the worst of yourself, and think no one is weaker than yourself. If you walk inwardly, you will not give much weight to fleeting words outwardly. It is prudent to maintain silence in an evil time, and to inwardly turn yourself to Me, and not be troubled by men's judgment.

2. Do not let your peace be on the tongues of men; for whether they interpret well or ill of you, you are not therefore another man. Where are true peace and true glory? Are they not in Me?¹⁰ One who neither wants to please men, nor fears displeasing them, will enjoy much peace. It is from inordinate love and vain fear that all disquietness of heart and distractions of the mind arise.

CHAPTER 29 – How we ought to call upon God, and to bless Him, when Tribulation is upon us

¹ [Ezek 7:24-25](#)

² [Isa 42:1](#)

³ Eph. 3:16.

⁴ Matt. 6:34.

⁵ Eccles. 1:14; 2:17, 26.

⁶ Wisd. 9:4.

⁷ Eph. 4:14.

⁸ In Greek Mythology, sirens were sea nymphs who lured mariners to destruction on the rocks surrounding their island by their irresistible song (see Homer's *Odyssey*).

⁹ 1Cor. 4:13.

¹⁰ John 16:33.

BLESSED be your Name, O Lord, forever,¹ for it is your will that this temptation and tribulation comes upon me. I cannot escape it, but must flee to you so that you may help me, and turn it to my good. Lord, I am now in affliction, and my heart is ill at ease, for I am greatly troubled by the present suffering. And now, O Beloved Father, what shall I say?² I am caught in the middle of a bad situation; save me from this hour. Yet I came to this hour so that you may be glorified when I have been greatly humbled and delivered by you. May it please you, Lord, to deliver me,³ for, poor wretch that I am, what can I do and where will I go without You? Grant me patience, O Lord, even now in this emergency. Help me, my God, and then I will not fear, however grievously I am afflicted.

2. And now amidst my troubles what shall I say? Lord, your will be done;⁴ I have well deserved to be afflicted and weighed down. Therefore I ought to bear it; and O that I may bear it with patience until the tempest has passed over and all is well again, or even better! Be that as it may, your Omnipotent hand is able to take even this temptation from me, and to assuage the violence of it, so that I do not completely sink under it – just as you have often dealt with me before, O my God, my Mercy! And the more difficult it is for me, the easier this change is for the right hand of the Most High.

CHAPTER 30 - Craving Divine Aid, and the Confidence of recovering Grace

MY son, I am the Lord who gives strength in the day of tribulation.⁵ Come to Me when it is not well with you.⁶ This is what hinders Heavenly consolation most of all: that you are too slow in turning to prayer. For in the meantime, before you earnestly supplicate Me, you seek many other comforts, and refresh yourself with outward things. And so it comes to pass that all of this does little to profit you, until you consider well that I am the One who rescues those who trust in Me; and that out of Me, there is neither powerful help, nor profitable counsel, nor lasting remedy. But do you, having now recovered breath after the tempest, gather strength again in the light of My mercies; for I am at hand (says the Lord) to repair all, not only entirely, but also abundantly and in most plentiful measure.

2. Is there anything hard for Me? Or will I be like one who says and does not do?⁷ Where is your faith? Stand firmly and with perseverance; take courage and be patient; comfort will come to you in due time. Wait – wait for Me I say: I will come and take care of you. It is a temptation that bothers you, and a vain fear that frightens you. What else does being anxious about future contingencies bring you, but sorrow upon sorrow? “Each day has sufficient trouble for itself.”⁸ It is vain and unprofitable to either be disturbed or pleased about future things which may never come to pass.

3. But it is common to man to be deluded with such imaginations; and it is a sign of a mind that is still weak to be so easily drawn away by the suggestions of the Enemy. For he does not care whether it is by true or by false propositions, as long as he may delude and deceive you; nor does he care whether he defeats you with the love of present, or the fear of the future. Therefore do not let not your heart be

¹ Job 1:21; Ps. 113:2.

² Matt. 26 [or John 12:27].

³ Ps. 11:13.

⁴ Matt. 6:10.

⁵ Nahum 1:7.

⁶ Matt. 11:28.

⁷ Matt. 23:3.

⁸ Matt. 6:34.

troubled, nor let it fear.¹ Trust in Me, and put your confidence in My mercy.² When you think you are farthest from Me, often I am nearest to you. When you that almost all is lost, then often the greatest gain of reward is close at hand. All is not lost, when anything happens that is contrary. You ought not to judge according to your present feelings; nor should you surrender yourself to grief from wherever it comes, as though all hope of escape were gone.

4. Do not think you have been entirely abandoned, although for a time I sent you some tribulation, or even withdrew your desired comfort; for this is the way to the Kingdom of Heaven. And without doubt it is more expedient for you and for the rest of My servants to be exercised with adversities, than to have all things according to your desires. I know the secret thoughts of your heart, and that it is very expedient for your welfare to leave you sometimes without a taste of your desires, lest you be puffed up with your prosperous estate, and willing to please yourself in what you are not entitled. What I have given, I can take away; and I can restore it again when I please.

5. When I give it, it is Mine; when I withdraw it, I am not taking anything that is yours; for Mine is every good gift and every perfect gift.³ If I send you affliction, or any kind of cross, do not repine or let your heart fail you; I can quickly succor you and turn all your heaviness into joy. However it is, I am righteous, and greatly to be praised when I deal with you in this way.

6. If you are wise and consider what the truth is, you should never mourn dejectedly for any adversity that befalls you; rather rejoice and give thanks.⁴ Indeed, you will consider this time a special joy, that I afflicted you with sorrows and did not spare you. I said to My beloved disciples, “As the Father has loved Me, so also I love you.”⁵ Certainly I did not send them out to temporal joys, but to great conflicts; not to honors, but to contempts; not to idleness, but to labors; not to rest, but to bring forth much fruit with patience.⁶ Remember you these words, O my son!

CHAPTER 31 - The Contempt of All Creatures to find out the Creator

O LORD, I stand much in need of still greater grace if I am to reach that point where neither man nor creature will be a hindrance to me. For as long as anything holds me back, I cannot freely take my flight to you. He was longing to fly freely who said, “O that I had wings like a dove, and I would fly away and be at rest!”⁷ What is more at rest than the single eye?⁸ And who is more free than someone who desires nothing on earth? Therefore a man ought to survey all creatures, and completely leave himself and stand in a sort of ecstasy of mind, and see that You, the Creator of all things, have none among the creatures like Yourself. Also, unless a man is freed from all created things, he cannot attend to divine things with a free mind. That is the reason why there are few contemplative men to be found: because few know how to completely withdraw themselves from created things that are perishing.

¹ [Jn 14:1,27](#)

² Ps. 91:2.

³ James 1:17.

⁴ [Jam 1:2](#)

⁵ John 15:9.

⁶ [Lk 8:15](#); [Jn 15:5,8](#)

⁷ Ps. 55:6.

⁸ Matt. 6:22 (*the eye is the lamp of the body...*) There is a single light, lamp, or eye – not lights, lamps, or eyes. Therefore there are no competing shadows or objects. The “single eye” conveys the idea of single-mindedness. ([Jam 1:6-8](#); [4:8](#); [Jer 32:39](#))

2. To obtain this state of mind, much grace is needed so that it may elevate the soul, and carry it far above itself. Unless a man is elevated in spirit, and freed from all created things, and wholly united to God, whatever he knows and whatever he has is of little weight. Whoever considers anything great, except the One, Only, Infinite, Eternal Good, will be small and lie groveling below for a long while. Whatever is not God is nothing, and it ought to be accounted as nothing. There is a big difference between the wisdom of an illuminated and devout man, and the knowledge of a learned and studious clerk. Learning which flows from above is far more noble from the Divine influence than what is painfully acquired by the wit of man.

3. There are many who desire contemplation, but they have no mind to practice the things that are required for it. It is also a great hinderance that men rest in signs and sensual things, and take little care to perfectly mortify themselves. I do not know what it is, or by what spirit we are led, or what we pretend, those of us who like to be called spiritual, that we take so many pains, and are so anxious about transitory and worthless things, while we scarcely or seldom think of our own inward concerns with full recollection of our minds.

4. Alas, shortly after a slight recollection we break out again, and do not weigh our works with diligent and strict examination. We do not pay attention to where our affections lie, nor do we deplore the impurity that is in all our actions. For “all flesh had corrupted his way,” and therefore the great deluge ensued.¹ Since our inward affection is so corrupted, our actions which proceed from them must be corrupted as well, giving proof of the lack of internal vigor. From a pure heart proceeds the fruit of a good life.²

5. We ask how much a man has done, but we do not as carefully weigh from which virtuous principle he acts. We enquire whether he has been courageous, rich, handsome, skillful, a good writer, a good singer, or a good laborer. But we seldom ask how poor he is in spirit, how patient and meek, or how devout and spiritual. Nature regards the outward things of a man. Grace addresses the inward things. The one is often disappointed; the other has her trust in God, and so she is not deceived.

CHAPTER 32 - Self-denial, and Renouncing every Evil Appetite

MY son, you cannot possess perfect liberty unless you wholly renounce yourself.³ These who merely seek their own interest, and are lovers of themselves, are all in fetters.⁴ They are covetous, inquisitive, gossiping, always seeking what is soft and delicate, and not the things of JESUS Christ. Instead, they are often devising and framing things that will not last. For all that is not of God shall perish. Keep this short and complete saying: “Forsake all and you will find all.” Leave concupiscence⁵ and you will find rest. Weigh this thoroughly in your mind; and when you have fulfilled it, you will understand all things.

2. O LORD, this is not the work of one day, nor is it children’s sport; rather, the short phrase “self-denial” includes all the perfection of religious persons.

3. MY son, you should not turn away or be quickly defeated when you hear about the way of perfection; rather, you should be stirred to higher things, or at least stirred in your desire to long for them. I wish it were so with you, and that you had arrived at this state: to no longer be a lover of yourself, but to stand at

¹ Gen. 6:12; 7:21.

² [Col 1:10](#)

³ Matt. 16:24; 19:21.

⁴ [2Tim 3:2](#)

⁵ [Sexual desire; eroticism.](#)

My beckoning, and at the beckoning of the one whom I have appointed as a father over you; then you would greatly please Me, and your whole life would pass by in joy and peace. You still have many things to part with; you will not attain what you desire unless you are wholly resigned to Me. “I counsel you to buy from Me gold tried in the fire so that you may become rich;”¹ this is Heavenly Wisdom² which treads under foot all that is petty and low. Set little by earthly wisdom, and do not fondly care to please others, or yourself.³

4. I said to exchange things which are precious and of great esteem among men for things which are considered petty. For true Heavenly Wisdom seems very petty, of little account, and almost forgotten among men; there are no high thoughts of it, nor is it increasingly sought on earth. Many indeed praise it with their mouth, but they are far from it in their life; yet this is the precious pearl⁴ which is hidden from many.

CHAPTER 33 - Inconstancy of Heart, and having our Final Intentions directed to God

MY son, do not trust your feelings, for whatever they are now, they will quickly change. As long as you live, you are subject to change,⁵ even against your will. So you are merry one moment, and sad another; quiet one moment, troubled another; now devout, then insincere; now diligent, then listless; now grave, and then light-hearted. But the one who is wise and well-instructed in the Spirit stands fast in these mutable things; he does not heed what he feels, or which way the wind of instability blows; instead, the whole intention of his mind tends toward the right and best end. For in this way, he is able to continue throughout these things unchanged, undiverted, and unshaken; in the midst of so many various events, the single eye of his intention is being directed unceasingly towards Me.

2. The purer the eye of intention,⁶ the more steadfast a man will pass through the various storms which assail him. But in many the eye of a pure intention grows dim, for their regard is quickly drawn aside to some pleasurable object which meets them. It is rare to find one who is wholly free from any blemish of self-seeking. So the Jews of old came to Bethany, to Martha and Mary. It was not only for JESUS’ sake, but so that they might see Lazarus.⁷ The eye of our intention therefore is to be purified, so that it may be single and right;⁸ and it is to be directed towards Me alone, above all the various objects which may come between.

CHAPTER 34 - God is Sweet above All Things, and in All Things, to him that loves Him

“BEHOLD! My God, and all things.”⁹ What more can I wish, and what happier thing can I long for? O sweet and Savory word! To him, that is, to the one who loves the Word, not the world or the things that

¹ Rev. 3:18.

² [Jam 3:17](#)

³ [1Cor 7:32-34](#)

⁴ Matt. 13:46.

⁵ Job 14:2.

⁶ Matt. 6:22.

⁷ John 12:9.

⁸ Matt. 6:22.

⁹ [1Chr 29:17](#)

are in the world.¹ “My God, and all things.” To the one who understands, it is enough to say it; and to the one who loves, it is delightful to repeat it often. For when You are present, all things are delightful, but when You are absent, everything becomes loathsome. You give quietness of heart, and great peace, and festive joy. You make us think well of all circumstances, and to praise You in everything;² nor can anything please us for very long without You; but if it is to be pleasant and tasteful, your Grace must be present, and it must be seasoned with the seasoning of Your Wisdom.

2. What will not be tasteful to the one who has a true relish for You? And for the one who has no relish for You, what will have power to please him? But the wise men of the world, and those too who relish the things of the flesh, are destitute of your wisdom;³ for in the wise of the world is found the greatest vanity, and in those who relish the flesh is found death. But those who follow You, by their contempt for worldly things and by mortifying the flesh, are known to be truly wise; for they are ported from vanity to truth, from the flesh to the spirit. These relish God; and whatever good they find in created things, they wholly attribute to their Maker and to His praise. Great, however, indeed very great, is the difference between the sweetness of the Creator and of the creature, of Eternity and of time, of Light uncreated and of light reflected.

3. O Everlasting Light, surpassing all created luminaries, dart the beams of your brightness from above, that they may penetrate all the most inward parts of my heart. Purify, rejoice, enlighten, and enliven my spirit with all its powers, that I may cling to you with exceeding joy and triumph. O when will that blessed and desired hour come that you satisfy me with your Presence, and become All in all to me? So long as this is not granted me, I will not have full joy. Still, to my dismay, the old Man lives in me;⁴ he is not wholly crucified, and he is not completely dead. Still, he lusts mightily in opposition to the Spirit, and he stirs up inward wars; nor does he allow the kingdom of the soul to be at peace.

4. But You who rule the power of the sea, and still the violent motion of its waves,⁵ arise and help me! Scatter the nations that desire war;⁶ crush them in Your might. Display your wonderful works, I beg you, and let your right hand be glorified; for there is no other hope or refuge for me except in you, O Lord my God.⁷

CHAPTER 35 - There is no Security from Temptation in this Life

MY son, you are never secure in this life; as long as you live⁸ you will need spiritual armor. You dwell among enemies; you are assaulted on the right hand and on the left.⁹ Therefore if you do not defend yourself on every side with the shield of patience, you will not be without a wound for long. Moreover, if you do not fix your heart on Me with a sincere wish to suffer all things for Me, you will not be able to bear the heat of this combat, nor will you obtain the palm branch of the blessed. Therefore you should to go through it all like a man, and use a strong hand against whatever withstands you. For manna is given to

¹ [1Jn 2:15](#)

² [1Th 5:18](#)

³ [1Cor. 1:26](#); [Rom. 8:5](#); [1John 2:16](#).

⁴ [Rom. 7](#).

⁵ [Ps. 89:9](#); [Mk. 4:39](#)

⁶ [Ps. 68:30](#).

⁷ [Ps. 31:4](#); [119:114](#); [Jer 17:17](#).

⁸ [Job 7:1](#).

⁹ [2Cor. 6:7](#).

the one who overcomes, but there remains great misery for the indolent.

2. If you seek rest in this life, how will you then reach the everlasting Rest? Do not prepare yourself for much rest, but for great patience. Seek true peace, not on earth, but in Heaven; not in men, nor in any other creature, but in God alone. You ought to cheerfully undergo all things for the love of God, that is to say, cheerfully undergo all labor and pain, temptation, aggravation, anxiety, necessity, infirmity, injury, slander, reproof, humiliation, confusion, correction, and scorn. These aid virtue; they are the trial of a novice in Christ; these frame the Heavenly Crown. I will give an everlasting reward for a short labor, and infinite glory for transitory confusion.

3. Do you think that you will always have spiritual consolations when you want them? My Saints did not always have them; instead they had many afflictions, and assorted temptations, and feelings of great desolation. Nevertheless, in all these they bore themselves patiently, and trusted in God rather than in themselves, knowing that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the future glory.¹ Would you have at once what many have barely obtained after many tears and great labors? Wait for the Lord; behave yourself manfully, and be of good courage;² do not distrust and do not abandon your place; but steadily expose both body and soul for the glory of God. I will reward you in a most plentiful manner; I will be with you in every tribulation.

CHAPTER 36 - Against the Vain Judgments of Men

MY son, throw your heart firmly on the Lord; and when conscience testifies of your dutifulness and innocence, do not fear the judgment of men. It is a good and happy thing to suffer in such a way; nor will this grieve a heart which is humble, and which trusts in God rather than in itself. For the most part, men are given to much talking, and therefore little confidence is to be placed in them. Moreover, it is not possible to satisfy everyone. Although Paul endeavored to please everyone in the Lord, and he was made to be all things to all men,³ yet to him it was a very small thing to be judged by man's judgment.⁴

2. He did much for the edification and salvation of others – as much as lay in his power to do⁵ – and yet he could not keep others from sometimes judging him, and sometimes despising him. Therefore he committed it all to God who knew all. And when men spoke unjust things, or thought vanities and lies, and boasted about themselves as they were inclined to do, he defended himself, even to their face,⁶ with humility and patience. Sometimes, however, he answered them to prevent the weak from being offended by his silence.⁷

3. Who are you to fear a mortal man? Today he exists, and tomorrow he is not seen.⁸ Fear God, and you will not shrink from the terrors of men. What harm can the words or injuries of any man do to you? Such a man hurts himself rather than you; nor will he be able to avoid the judgment of God,⁹ whoever he is.

¹ Rom. 8:18.

² Ps. 27:14.

³ 1Cor. 9:22.

⁴ 1Cor. 4:3.

⁵ Col. 1:29.

⁶ [Gal 2:11](#)

⁷ Acts 26; Phil. 1:14; [Mat 11:6](#).

⁸ 1Mac. 2:62, 63.

⁹ Rom. 2:3; 1Cor. 11:32.

Have God before your eyes, and do not contend with peevish words. Though for the present you seem to be worse off, and to suffer shame undeservedly, do not therefore complain, nor should you lessen your crown by impatience.¹ Rather, lift up your eyes to Me in Heaven. I am the one who is able to deliver you from all shame and wrong, and to render to every man according to his works.

CHAPTER 37 - Pure and Entire Resignation of Ourselves, to obtain Freedom of Heart

MY son, forsake yourself, and you will find Me.² Resolve to make no choice or reserve anything for yourself, and you will always be a gainer. For even greater grace will be added to you the moment you do resign yourself, provided you do not return to satisfying yourself. LORD, how often shall I resign myself, and in what shall I forsake myself? ALWAYS – yes, every hour – in small things as well as in great. I make no exceptions, but desire that you be stripped of all selfish things. Otherwise, how can you be Mine and I be yours, unless you are stripped of all self-will, both within and without? The sooner you do this, the better it will be for you. And the more fully and sincerely you do it, the more you will please Me, and the greater your gain will be.

2. There are some who resign themselves, but with certain exceptions: for they do not put their full trust in God, and therefore they contrive how to provide for themselves. Some also offer everything at first, but then afterwards, assailed by temptation, they return to their own ways; therefore they make no progress in the path of virtue. These will not attain the true liberty of a pure heart, nor the favor of My sweetest friendship, unless they first entirely resign and make a daily oblation³ of themselves. Without this there is not, nor can there be, any lasting fruitful union.

3. I have often said to you, and now again I say the same, “Forsake yourself,”⁴ resign yourself, and you will enjoy much inward peace. Give all for all; ask for nothing, require nothing in return; abide purely and unhesitatingly in Me and you will possess Me. You will be free in heart, and darkness will not trample you. Let this be your whole endeavor, your prayer, and your desire: that you may be stripped of all selfishness, and with entire simplicity follow JESUS only. May you die to yourself, and live eternally to Me. Then you will be rid of all your vain fancies, baseless worries, and superfluous cares. Then also immoderate fear will leave you, and inordinate love will die.⁵

CHAPTER 38 - Good Government in Things External, and having Recourse to God in Dangers

MY son, with all diligence you should endeavor in every place and in every external action or occupation, to be inwardly free, and thoroughly master of yourself. All things [of the flesh] ought to be under you, and not you under them. You must be lord and master of your own actions, and not be a slave or a hireling. Rather you should live as a freed man and a true Hebrew, passing over into the portion and freedom of the sons of God.⁶ For standing upon present things, they contemplate eternal things. With the left eye they look on transitory things, and with the right on the things of heaven. They are not drawn to cling to temporal things; rather they draw temporal things to serve them well, and in ways ordained by God and

¹ Heb. 12:1, 2.

² Matt. 16:24.

³ i.e. a sacrificial offering.

⁴ Matt. 16:24.

⁵ Love which has no limits either in its expression, or in its objects – it is exercised without wisdom or prudence.

⁶ Col 1:13

appointed by the Great Work-master who has left nothing in His creation without due order.

2. Also stand steadfast in all circumstances, and do not judge the things you see and hear by their outward appearance, or with a carnal eye.¹ But in every affair quickly enter with Moses into the Tabernacle² to ask counsel of the Lord. Then you will sometimes hear the Divine Oracle, and you will return instructed concerning many things, both present and those to come. For Moses always had recourse to the Tabernacle to decide doubts and questions; he fled to the help of prayer for support under dangers and the iniquity of men. So in the same way, you should take refuge within the closet of your heart,³ earnestly craving the Divine favor. For we read that Joshua and the children of Israel were deceived by the Gibeonites for this reason: because they did not ask counsel beforehand at the mouth of the Lord;⁴ trusting too easily to fair-sounding words, they were deluded by counterfeit pity.

CHAPTER 39 – A Man should not Fret in Matters of Business

MY son, always commit your cause to Me, and I will dispose of it well in due time. Wait for My ordering of it, and you will find it will be for your good. O LORD, I do most cheerfully commit everything to you, for my care can avail me little. I wish that I did not dwell on future events so much, but surrendered myself without reluctance to your good pleasure.

2. MY son, often a man vehemently struggles for something he desires, but when he gets it, he begins to change his mind; for the affections do not remain on one object long. Rather they urge us from one thing to another. It is therefore no small benefit for a man to forsake himself, even in the smallest things.

3. The true profit of a man consists in denying himself; one who is thus self-denied, lives in great freedom and security. But the old Enemy,⁵ who always sets himself against all who are good, never ceases from tempting. Day and night he grievously lies in wait to throw the unwary headlong into the snare of deceit if he can. “Watch and pray,” says the Lord, “so that you will enter not into temptation.”⁶

CHAPTER 40 - Man has no Good of Himself, nor Anything in which he can glory

“LORD, what is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you attend to him?”⁷ What has man deserved that you should grant him your favor? O Lord, what cause can I have to complain if you forsake me? If you do not do what I desire, what can I justly say against it? Surely this I may truly think and say: “Lord, I am nothing. I can do nothing. I have nothing that is good of myself. But in all things, I am full of decay and I am ever inclined to nothing. Unless you help me and inwardly inform me, I become entirely lukewarm, and I am ready to fall to pieces.”

2. But You, Lord, are always the same, and You endure forever.⁸ You are always Good, Just, and Holy,

¹ 1Sam 16:7; Jn 8:15

² Ex. 33:9.

³ Matt. 6:6.

⁴ Josh. 9:14.

⁵ 1Pet. 5:8; Rev 12:9

⁶ Matt. 26:41.

⁷ Ps. 8:4.

⁸ Ps. 102:12.

doing all things well, justly, in holiness, and ordering them in wisdom. But I am more ready to go backward than forward; I never continue in one estate, but “seven times are passed over me.”¹ Nevertheless it soon becomes better when it pleases you, and when you deign to reach out your helping hand. For you can help me alone, without human aid, and so strengthen me that my countenance will be changed no more; instead my heart will be turned to you alone and be at rest.

3. For this reason, if I could just once completely throw off all human consolation, either to attain devotion to You, or because of my own needs which compel me to seek after You (for no mortal man can comfort me), then I might well hope in your grace, and rejoice in the gift of new consolation.

4. My thanks are to you from whom everything proceeds whenever it goes well with me. But in your sight I am mere vanity and nothing, an unconstant and weak person. Of what then can I glory; or for what do I desire to be respected? Is it for being nothing? This too is vain. Vain glory is in truth an evil pest. It is the greatest of vanities because it draws a man away from true glory, and it robs him of Heavenly Grace. For while he pleases himself, he displeases you; and while he openly seeks the praise of men, he is deprived of true virtues.

5. But true glory and holy exultation is for a man to glory in you² and not in himself; to rejoice in your name, not in his own virtue, and not to take delight in any created thing. Praised be your Name, not mine; magnified be your work, for your sake only, not mine: let your Holy Name be blessed, but let no part of men’s praises be given to me.³ You are my glory; you are the joy of my heart. In you will I glory and rejoice all day long, but as for myself, I will not glory except in my infirmities.

6. Let the Jews seek honor of one another;⁴ I will ask for what comes from God alone. Truly, compared to your eternal glory, all human glory, all temporal honor, all worldly exaltation, is vanity and folly. O my God, my Truth and my Mercy, O Blessed Trinity, to you alone be praise, honor, power, and glory, forever and ever.⁵

CHAPTER 41 - The Contempt of all Temporal Honor

MY son, make it no concern of yours if you see others honored and advanced, while you are despised and debased. Lift up your heart toward Heaven, to Me, and the contempt of men on earth will not grieve you. LORD, we are blind and quickly misled by vanity. If I look rightly into myself, I cannot say that any creature has ever done me wrong; and therefore I cannot justly complain before you.

2. But because I have often and grievously sinned against you, all creatures may justly take arms against me. Therefore shame and contempt are justly due me. But to you are due praise, honor, and glory. Unless I prepare myself with cheerful willingness to be despised and forsaken by all creatures, and to be considered entirely nothing, I cannot obtain inward peace and stability; nor can I be spiritually enlightened; nor can I be fully united to you.

¹ Dan. 4:16, 23, 32 – that is, “I change with every year that goes by.”

² Hab. 3:18.

³ Ps. 113; 115:1.

⁴ John 5:44.

⁵ Mat 6:13; Rev 5:12-13; 7:12; 19:1

CHAPTER 42 - Our Peace is not to be set on Men

MY son, if you rest your peace on any person, because you have formed a high opinion of him, and because you are familiar with each other, you will become entangled and unstable. But if you have recourse to the ever-living and abiding Truth, then the desertion or death of a friend will not grieve you. Your regard for your friend ought to be grounded in Me; and so whoever you think well of, and whoever is very dear to you in this life, is to be beloved for My sake. Without Me, friendship has no strength, and it will not continue; nor is love which is not knit by Me true and pure. You ought to be so dead to such affections for beloved friends that, as far as you are concerned, you would choose to be without all human sympathy. The farther a man retires from all earthly comfort, the nearer he approaches to God. So too, as he descends toward himself, and becomes less in his own sight, the higher he ascends to God.¹

2. But one who attributes any good to himself, hinders God's grace from coming to him. That is because the Grace of the HOLY SPIRIT always seeks a humble heart.² If you could just perfectly annihilate yourself, and empty yourself of all created love, then I might see fit to overflow into you with great Grace. When you look to created things, the countenance of the Creator is withdrawn from you. Learn in all things to overcome yourself for the sake of your Creator; then you will be able to attain divine knowledge. However beggarly anything is, if it is inordinately loved and regarded, it keeps back the Highest Good, and corrupts the soul.

CHAPTER 43 - Against Vain and Secular Knowledge

MY son, do not let the sayings of men move you, however attractive and ingenious they may be. "For the Kingdom of God does not consist in word, but in power."³ Pay attention to My words, for they inflame the heart, and enlighten the mind; they produce contriteness, and they supply an abundant variety of consolation. Never read the word of God in order to appear more learned or more wise. Be studious to mortify your sins; for this will profit you more than obtaining answers to many difficult questions.

2. When you have read and known many things, you must always return to one Beginning and Principle. I am He who teaches man knowledge.⁴ I bestow on little children a more valuable understanding than can be taught by man.⁵ The one to whom I speak will quickly be wise, and he will profit greatly in the Spirit. Woe to those who enquire about the many curious things of men, but take little care about the way of serving Me! The time will come when the Master of masters, Christ the Lord of Angels, will appear to hear the lessons of all, that is, to examine the consciences of everyone. Then He will search Jerusalem with candles, and the hidden things of darkness will be laid open,⁶ and the arguing of men's tongues shall be silenced.

3. I am He who lifts up the humble mind to comprehend more reasonings of eternal Truth in one instant than if he had studied ten years in the schools. I teach without the noise of words, without the confusion of opinions, without any ambition for honor, without the scuffling of arguments. I am He who instructs men to despise earthly things, to loathe things which are present and to seek things eternal, to relish

¹ Jn 3:30

² Isa 57:15; 66:2; 1Pet. 5:5.

³ 1Cor. 4:20.

⁴ Isa 54:13; Jn 6:45; 1Th 4:9

⁵ Mat 18:3; 21:16; Ps 8:2

⁶ Zeph. 1:12; 1Cor. 4:5.

eternal things; to flee honors, to endure offenses, to place all hope in Me, and to desire nothing outside of Me, and above all things to ardently love Me.

4. For a certain person, by loving Me from the bottom of his heart, became instructed in divine things, and was likely to speak admirable truths. He made greater progress by forsaking all things than by studying subtle niceties. Nevertheless, to some men I speak common things, to others special things; to some I gently show Myself in signs and figures, while to others I reveal mysteries in great light. The voice of books is indeed one revelation, but it does not inform all alike; for inwardly I am the teacher of the Truth, the searcher of the heart, the discernor of the thoughts, the promoter of the actions, distributing to every man as I judge fit.

CHAPTER 44 - Not fetching Trouble for Ourselves from Outward Things

MY son, in many things it is your duty to be ignorant, and to consider yourself as one who is dead upon the earth, and to whom the whole world is crucified.¹ There are many things too which it is your duty to pass by with a deaf ear, so that you may be more mindful of those things which belong to your peace. It is more profitable to turn away one's eyes from unpleasing subjects, and to leave each person to his own opinion, than to pay attention to contentious discourses. If all stands well between God and you, and you have His judgment in your mind, you will very easily endure being like one who is defeated.

2. O LORD, what have we come to? Behold: we lament a temporal loss – we toil and run for a pitiful gain; while the spiritual harm we incur is forgotten, and in the end we barely get back a sense of it. We mind what profits us little or nothing, and we pass over what is especially necessary – because man slides off after external things. And unless he speedily recovers himself, he is mired in them, and willingly.

CHAPTER 45 - Credit is not to be given to All, and Man is prone to offend in Words

GRANT me help, O Lord, in tribulation, for the help of man is useless!² How often have I *not* met with men's faithfulness where I thought myself sure of it! How often too have I found faithfulness where I least expected it beforehand! Therefore it is useless to hope in men; but the salvation of the righteous is in you, O God!³ Blessed be You, O Lord my God, in all things that happen to us. We are weak and unstable; we are quickly deceived and quite changed.

2. Who is able in all things to warily and circumspectly keep himself so as never to encounter any deception or perplexity? But one who trusts in you, O Lord, who seeks you with a single heart, does not slip so easily.⁴ And if he falls into any tribulation, no matter how entangled he may be, he will quickly be delivered or comforted through You; for you will not forsake the one who hopes in you even to the end.⁵ A friend can rarely be found who continues faithful in all his friend's distresses. You, O Lord, in fact you alone, are most faithful at all times, and there is no other like you.⁶

¹ Gal. 2:20; 6:14.

² Ps. 60:11.

³ Ps 37:39

⁴ Ps 37:31

⁵ Deut 31:6,8; Josh 1:5; 1Chr 28:20; Jn 14:18

⁶ Ps 86:7-8; Isa 46:9

3. O how wise was that holy soul who said, “My mind is firmly settled, and is grounded in Christ.”¹ If it were so with me, then the fear of man would not so easily trouble me, nor would the darts of words upset me. Who has the power to foresee and guard against all future evils? If they still hurt us, even when we do foresee things, how can *unforeseen* evils do otherwise than grievously wound us? But wretch that I am, why have I not foreseen better for myself? Why too have I so easily placed my faith in others? We are men, nothing but frail men, even though we were reputed and called Angels by many.² Whom will I trust, O Lord? Whom will I trust but You? You are the Truth which neither deceives nor can be deceived. And on the other side, “every man is a liar,”³ weak, inconstant, and subject to fall, especially in words; and therefore we should rarely give immediate credit to what seems to sound right on the face of it.

4. O you have wisely warned us to beware of men; and, that a man’s foes are of his own household;⁴ and not to pay attention if someone should say, “Look here, or Look there.”⁵ My hurt has been my instructor, and I wish it may make me more cautious, and not more unwise. “Be wary,” says one, “be wary, keep to yourself what I say to you;” and while I hold my peace, and think it is secret, he cannot himself keep what he desired me to keep, but presently betrays both me and himself, and is gone. Protect me from such mischief-making, reckless persons, O Lord, so that I neither fall into their hands, nor ever commit such things myself. Grant me to keep truth and consistency in my words, and to remove a crafty tongue far from me. What I am not willing to suffer, I should by all means beware of doing myself.

5. O how good is it, and tending to peace, to be silent about other men, and not to thoughtlessly believe all that is said, nor too easily pass on reports,⁶ to lay one’s self open to few men and ever seek after you as the one who beholds the heart.⁷ And not to be carried about by every wind of words,⁸ but to desire that all things, both within and without, be accomplished according to the pleasure of your will.⁹ How helpful it is, for keeping heavenly Grace, to avoid appearances and not to seek those things which seem to cause widespread admiration; but to pursue with all diligence the things which bring amendment of life and godly zeal.

6. How many have been the worse for having their virtue known and over-hastily commended! How truly profitable has grace been when preserved in silence in this frail life, which we are told is all temptation and warfare!

CHAPTER 46 - Putting Our Trust in God when Evil Words arise

MY son, stand firm and put your trust in Me;¹⁰ for what are words, but words? They fly through the air like mere pebbles that cannot hurt. If you are guilty of the accusations, consider how you would gladly amend yourself. If your conscience does not reproach you, consider that you would gladly suffer this for God’s sake. It is little enough to sometimes suffer from words, since you do not yet have the courage to

¹ St. Agatha

² [Ps 8:5-6](#);

³ Rom. 3:4.

⁴ Mic. 7:6.

⁵ [Mat 24:23](#)

⁶ Prov. 25:9.

⁷ Isa. 26:3.

⁸ [Eph 4:14](#)

⁹ [Phil 2:13](#)

¹⁰ Ps. 37:3.

endure hard lashes. And why do such small matters go to your heart, unless it is because you are still carnal,¹ and you regard men more than you should? For it is because you are afraid of being despised that you are unwilling to be reproved for your faults, and so you seek the shelter of excuses.

2. But look better into yourself, and you will acknowledge that the world is still alive in you, and what troubles you is a vain desire to please men. For when you avoid being abased and confounded for your faults, it is evident that you are neither truly humble, nor truly dead to the world, nor is the world crucified to you.² But give diligent ear to My word, and you will not care about ten thousand words spoken by men. Behold, if all that could be most maliciously invented were spoken against you, how could it hurt you if you allowed it to completely pass by, and took no more account of it than you would of a splinter? Could it pluck so much as one hair from your head?

3. But someone who has no heart [for God] within him, and does not have God before his eyes, is easily moved with a word of dispraise. But one who trusts in Me, and has no wish to trust in his own judgment, will be free from the fear of men. For I am the Judge³ and the discernor of all secrets⁴: I well understand how the matter occurred; I know the one who offers the injury, and the one who suffers it. That word proceeds *from Me*; this has happened *by My permission*, so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.⁵ I will judge the guilty and the innocent; but by a secret judgment I have thought it fit beforehand to test them both.

4. The testimony of men often deceives. My judgment is true; it shall stand and not be overthrown: it usually lies hidden, and it is obvious to only a few, and even then only in special cases. Yet my judgment never errs, nor can it err, although to the eyes of the foolish it may not seem right. Therefore men ought to turn to Me in every judgment, and not lean on their own opinion.⁶ For the just man will not be disturbed,⁷ whatever befalls him from God. Even if an unjust charge is brought against him, he will not care much. Nor will he vainly exult if he is justly vindicated of other charges. For he considers that I am the One who searches the heart and mind, and that I do not judge according to the outward face and human appearance. For often what is found blameworthy in My sight is thought to be commendable in the judgment of men.

5. O LORD GOD, the Just Judge,⁸ strong and patient, you who know the frailty and wickedness of men, be my strength and all my confidence, for my own conscience is insufficient for me. You know what I do not know, and therefore I ought to humble myself under every accusation, and bear it meekly. Out of your mercy, then, forgive me whenever I have acted otherwise; and when the next trial comes, grant me the grace of more thorough endurance. Your overflowing pity toward me, in obtaining pardon, is better than any fancied righteousness of my own to ward off the misgivings of my own conscience. Although I know of nothing against myself,⁹ I cannot justify myself by that; for without your mercy, no man living will be justified in your sight.¹⁰

¹ 1Cor 3:3

² Col 2:20; Gal 6:14

³ Ps. 7:8.

⁴ Ps 44:21; 1Cor 14:25

⁵ Luke 2:35.

⁶ Prov 3:5

⁷ Prov. 12:13.

⁸ Ps 7:11

⁹ 1Cor. 4:4.

¹⁰ Ps. 143:2.

CHAPTER 47 - All Grievous Things are to be endured for the sake of Eternal Life

MY son, do not be worn out by the labors which you have undertaken for My sake, nor let tribulations ever discourage you at all; instead, let My promise strengthen and comfort you in every circumstance. I am well able to reward you above all measure and degree. You will not toil here long, nor will you always be oppressed with griefs. Wait a little while and you will see a speedy end of your sorrows. There will come an hour when all labor and trouble shall cease. All that passes away with time is poor and brief.

2. Do what you do in earnest; labor faithfully in My vineyard;¹ I will be your recompense. Write, read, sing, mourn, keep silence, pray, bear your crosses like a man; life everlasting is worth all these conflicts and more. Peace will come on a day known to the Lord, and there will be neither day nor night² (as there are presently) but unceasing light, infinite brightness, steadfast peace, and secure rest. Then you will not say, “Who will deliver me from the body of this death?”³ Nor will you cry, “Woe is me, because my sojourning is prolonged!”⁴ For death will be thrown down headlong, and there will be salvation which can never fail: no more anxiety, but instead, blessed joy, and fellowship sweet and noble.⁵

3. O if you had seen the everlasting crowns of the Saints in heaven,⁶ and how great the glory they now rejoice with – those who once were considered contemptible by the world, and in a way, unworthy of life itself. Truly, you would quickly prostrate yourself, even to the earth; you would prefer to be under all, than to have command over so much as one. Nor would you long for this life’s pleasant days; you would instead rejoice to suffer affliction for God, and consider it your greatest gain to be reputed as nothing among men.⁷

4. O if you relished these things, and allowed them to sink into the depth of your heart; how could you dare to complain even once? Are not all plainful labors to be endured for the sake of life eternal? It is no small matter to lose or to gain the Kingdom of God. Lift up your face to Heaven, therefore. Behold, I and all My Saints with Me, who had great conflicts in this world, now rejoice; now we are comforted, secure, and at rest; and they will remain with Me everlastingly in the Kingdom of My Father.

CHAPTER 48 - The Day of Eternity, and this Life’s Constraints

O MOST blessed mansion of the City above!⁸ O most clear Day of Eternity, which night does not obscure, but the highest Truth ever enlightens! O day ever-joyful, ever-secure, and never changing into a contrary state! O that this day might at once appear, and all these temporal things be at an end! To the Saints indeed it shines, glowing with uninterrupted brightness; but to those who are pilgrims on the earth, it only appears afar, as through a glass.⁹

2. The Citizens of Heaven know how joyful that day is, but the banished children of Eve bewail the

¹ Matt. 20:7.

² Zech. 14:7.

³ Rom. 7:24.

⁴ Ps. 120:5.

⁵ [Ps 55:14](#)

⁶ Wisd. 3:1-9; 5:16.

⁷ [Phil 3:8](#)

⁸ Rev. 21:2.

⁹ [Heb 11:13](#); [1Cor 13:12](#).

bitterness and tediousness of this. The days of this life are few and evil,¹ full of sorrows and pains.² Here a man is defiled with many sins, ensnared with many passions, held fast by many fears, racked with many cares, distracted with many curiosities, entangled with many vanities, encompassed by many errors, worn away by many labors, burdened with temptations, enervated by pleasures, tormented with want.

3. O when will these evils come to an end? When will I be delivered from the miserable bondage of my sins?³ When will I be mindful, O Lord, of you alone?⁴ When will I fully rejoice in You?⁵ When will I enjoy true liberty without any impediments whatever, without any trouble in mind or body? When will I have solid peace, peace that is secure and undisturbed, peace that is both within and without, peace that is in every way assured? O merciful JESU, when will I stand to behold You? When will I contemplate the glory of your Kingdom? When will you be all in all to me? O when will I be with you in your Kingdom which you have prepared for your beloved ones from all eternity? I am left a poor and banished man in the land of my enemies, where there are daily wars and very great calamities.

4. Comfort my banishment and assuage my sorrow, for my whole desire sighs after you. For everything is a burden to me, whatever this world offers me for consolation. I long most to enjoy you inwardly, but I cannot attain it. My desire is that I may be wholly given up to heavenly things, but temporal things and unmortified passions weigh me down. With the mind, I wish to be above all things; but with the flesh I am enforced against my will to come under them. Thus, unhappy man that I am,⁶ I fight against myself; I grieve myself: while my spirit seeks to be above, my flesh seeks to be below.

5. O how I inwardly suffer. While in my mind I dwell on Heavenly things, and even while I pray, a multitude of carnal temptations and thoughts suddenly occur to me! O my God, do not be far from me, nor turn away in wrath from your servant.⁷ Cast down your lightning and disperse these thoughts; shoot your arrows and let all the imaginations of the Enemy be confounded. Gather in and call home my senses to you; make me forget all worldly things; enable me to quickly throw off with scorn all these vicious imaginations. Succor me, O Everlasting Truth, so that no vanity may persuade me. Come to me, Heavenly Sweetness, and let all impurity flee before your face. Pardon me also, and in mercy deal with me gently, as often as in prayer I think on nothing besides you. For truly I must confess, that I am likely to yield to many distractions. Thus it often happens that I am not where I am bodily standing or sitting; rather I am where my thoughts carry me. Where my thoughts are, there I am; and usually where my affections are, there are my thoughts. What brings delight by nature, or is pleasing by habit, readily occurs to my mind.

6. And for this reason, You who are Truth itself have plainly said, “For where your treasure is, there your heart is also.”⁸ If I love Heaven, I willingly muse on Heavenly things. If I love the world, I rejoice with the pleasure of the world, and grieve for its adversity. If I love the flesh, I will constantly imagine things pleasing to the flesh. If I love the Spirit, I will delight to think about spiritual things. For whatever I love, I willingly speak and hear of it, and carry home with me its attributes. But blessed is the man who is willing to separate himself from created things, for your sake, O Lord; who fights his nature, and through fervor of the Spirit, crucifies the lust of the flesh – so that with a serene conscience he may offer pure prayers to you; and having excluded all earthly things, both outwardly and inwardly, he may be fit to be

¹ Gen 47:9

² Ecc 2:23

³ Rom. 7:24.

⁴ Ps. 71:16; 1Pet 2:19

⁵ 2Cor 7:16

⁶ Rom. 7:24; 8:23.

⁷ Ps. 71:12.

⁸ Matt. 6:21.

admitted into the Angelical choirs.

CHAPTER 49 - The Desire of Everlasting Life, and how great Rewards are promised to those who strive resolutely

MY son, when you perceive the desire of eternal bliss poured out on you from above, and you long to depart the tabernacle of the body, so that you may be able to contemplate My brightness without shadow of turning,¹ then open your heart wide, and receive this holy inspiration with your whole desire. Give greatest thanks to the Heavenly Goodness which treats you with such condescension, visiting you mercifully, provoking you fervently, sustaining you powerfully, lest through your own weight you sink back to earthly things. For you do not obtain this desire by your own thought or endeavor, but by the mere condescension of Heavenly grace and Divine regard – and it is given so that you may further progress in all virtue, and in greater humility, and prepare yourself for future conflicts, earnestly striving to cling to Me with the whole affection of your heart, and to serve Me with fervent willingness.

2. My son, the fire often burns, but the flame does not ascend without smoke. Likewise, the desires of some burn towards Heavenly things, and yet they are not free from the temptation of carnal affections. And therefore it is not purely for the honor of God that they make such earnest requests to Him. This is also true of the desires which you pretend to be so serious and earnest about; for desires which are tainted with the love of your own special interest and advantage, are not pure and perfect.

3. Do not ask for what is delightful and profitable to *you*, but for what is acceptable to *Me*, and which tends toward My honor. For if you judge rightly, you ought to prefer and follow My appointment for things, rather than your own intent for them, or your desire for anything else. I know your desires, and I have often heard your groanings. Already you long to be in the glorious liberty of the sons of God; already you delight in the everlasting habitation: your Heavenly home, full of joy. But that hour has not yet come; there still remains another time, and that is a time of war,² a time of labor and of trial.³ You desire to be filled with the Highest Good, but you can not attain it just yet. I AM He;⁴ wait for Me (says the Lord)⁵ until the Kingdom of God has come.⁶

4. You are still to be tested on earth, and to be exercised in many things. Comfort will sometimes be given to you, but its abundant fulness will not be granted. Take courage therefore, and be valiant⁷ in doing as well as in suffering things which are contrary to your human nature. It is your duty to put on the new Man,⁸ and to be changed into another man. Often it is your duty to do what you would not do; often your duty is also to leave undone what you would otherwise do. What pleases others will succeed; what pleases you will not. What *others* say will be heard; what *you* say will not be considered: Others will ask and receive; you will ask but not obtain it. Others will be greatly praised by men, but nothing will be said about you. Things will be committed to others, but you will be considered useless.

¹ Jam 1:17

² Ecc 3:8.

³ 1Cor 3:8; 15:58; Lk 8:13; Col 1:29

⁴ Isa 48:12;

⁵ Zeph 3:8; Rev 2:23

⁶ That is, until the Kingdom of God – which arrived with Christ (Mat 12:28) – completely pervades a restored creation at his Return (Mat 6:10; Rev 12:10).

⁷ Josh. 1:7.

⁸ Eph. 4:24; Col 3:10.

5. At this, our nature will sometimes be troubled, but it is a great thing if you can bear it with silence. In these and many things like them, the faithful servant of the Lord is likely to be tested as to how far he can deny and break himself in all things. There is scarcely anything in which you have such a need to die to yourself, as there is in seeing and suffering those things which are contrary to your own will; especially when what has been commanded is what seems inconvenient or useless to you; and because you are under someone else's authority, you dare not resist their higher power. Therefore it seems hard to walk at the other's beck and call, and to relinquish your own opinion.

6. But consider, My son, the fruit of these labors, the end that is nearly at hand, and the reward which is very great. Then you will not resent bearing them; instead, your patience will yield the strongest comfort. For instead of that small part of what you will, and which you now so readily relinquish, you shall have what you will in Heaven forever. Surely *there* you will find all that you may wish for, and all that you will be able to desire. *There* you will have within your reach all that is good, without fear of losing it. *There* your will shall always be one with Mine; it will not covet any outward or private thing. *There* no one will stand against you, no man will complain about you, no man will hinder you, and nothing will get in your way. Instead, everything you can desire will be present there, and refresh your whole affection, and fill it up to the brim. *There* I will give you glory for the reproach you suffered here; I will give you the garment of praise for your heaviness, and an eternal kingly throne for the lowest place here. *There* the fruit of obedience will appear, the labor of repentance will rejoice, and humble subjection will be gloriously crowned.

7. At present, then, bend yourself humbly under all of this, and do not care who said this or commanded that. But take special care that if your superior, or your inferior, or your equal, require anything of you, or even *suggest* their desire to you, that you take it all in good spirit, and with a sincere will you endeavor to fulfil it. Let one seek this and another that; let this man glory in this and another in that; and let them be praised a million times for these things; but *you* rejoice neither in this nor in that – instead, rejoice in the contempt of yourself, and in the good pleasure and honor of Me alone. *This* is what you are to wish: that whether by life, or by death, God may always be glorified in you.¹

CHAPTER 50 - How a Desolate Person ought to offer Himself into the Hands of God

O LORD God, Holy Father, be blessed both now and forevermore, because as you will, so it is done, and what you do is good. Let your servant rejoice in you, not in himself or in anything else; for you alone are the true gladness; you are my hope and my crown; you are my joy and my honor, O Lord. What does your servant have, but what he received from you,² even without any merit of his own? Yours are all things, both what you have given, and what you have made.³ I have been poor and troubled from my youth,⁴ and my soul is sorrowful sometimes even to the point of tears; sometimes too my spirit is disquieted because of impending sufferings.

2. I long after the joy of Peace; I earnestly crave the peace of your children, those who are fed by you in the light of your comfort. If you give peace, if you pour holy joy into me, the soul of your servant will be filled with melody, and it will become devout in your praise. But if you withdraw Yourself (as you do too many times), your servant will not be able to run by the way of your commandments; rather, he will bow his knees and strike his chest, because it is not now as it was in the past, when your candle shined upon

¹ [Dan 3:16-18](#); [Job 13:15](#); [Rom 14:8](#)

² [1Cor. 4:7](#).

³ [Ps 50:10-12](#)

⁴ [Ps. 88:15](#).

his head, and when, under the shadow of your wings, he was protected from the temptations which assaulted him.

3. O Righteous Father, and ever to be praised, the hour has come that your servant is to be proved. O beloved Father, it is fitting and right that in this hour your servant should suffer something for your sake. O Father, evermore to be honored, the hour has come which from all eternity you foreknew would come: that for a short time your servant would be outwardly oppressed, but inwardly he would ever live with you; that he would be despised for a little while, and humbled, and that he would fail in the sight of men, and be wasted with suffering and lethargy; but only so that he may rise again with you in the morning dawn of the new Light, and be glorified in Heaven. Holy Father, you have so appointed it, and so You will have it; and so it is fulfilled which You yourself have commanded.

4. For this is a favor to your friend: to suffer and be afflicted in the world for your love; however often, and by whomever it happens, and in whatever way you permit it. Without your counsel and providence, and without cause, nothing comes to pass in the earth. ¹ It is good for me, Lord, that you have humbled me so that I may learn your righteous judgments, and may cast away all haughtiness of heart and all presumptuousness. ² It is better for me that shame covers my face so that I may look to you for consolation rather than to men. I have also learned by this to dread your unsearchable judgments, you who punish the just with the wicked,³ though not without equity and justice.⁴

5. I give you thanks, for you have not spared my sins but have worn me down with bitter stripes, inflicting sorrows and sending anxieties upon me, both within and without. There is no one else under Heaven who can comfort me, but only you, O Lord my God, the Heavenly Physician of souls, the one who strikes and heals, who brings us down to hell and back again.⁵ Your discipline over me and your very rod itself will instruct me.⁶

6. Behold, O beloved Father, I am in your hands. I bow myself under the rod of your correction.⁷ Strike my back and my neck so that I may bend my crookedness to your will. Make me a dutiful and humble disciple (since you are likely to be kind), so that I may always be ready to go if you beckon me. I commend myself to you and all that is mine, in order to be corrected: it is better to be punished here than hereafter. You know all things generally, and also each separately, and there is nothing in man's conscience which can be hidden from you.⁸ Before things are done, you know that they will come to pass; and you have no need for anyone to teach or admonish you about what is going on here on earth.⁹ You know what is expedient for my spiritual progress, and how greatly tribulation serves to scour off the rust of my sins.¹⁰ Do with me according to your desired good pleasure;¹¹ and do not disdain me for my sinful life which is known to no one as thoroughly and clearly as it is known to you.

¹ [Lam 3:37](#)

² [Ps.119:71](#).

³ [Mat 5:45](#)

⁴ [Ps 98:9](#)

⁵ [Tob. 13:2](#); [Ps. 18:16](#).

⁶ [Ps 23:4](#)

⁷ [Heb 12:5-7](#)

⁸ [Jer 23:24](#); [Lk 12:2](#)

⁹ [Job 21:22](#)

¹⁰ [Prov 20:30](#)

¹¹ [2Kg 15:25-26](#)

7. Grant me, O Lord, to know what is worth knowing, to love what is worth loving, to praise what pleases you most, to esteem highly what is precious to you, to abhor what is filthy and unclean in your sight. Do not allow me to judge according to the sight of the outward eyes, nor to sentence according to the hearing of ignorant men; but with a true judgment, allow me to discern between things visible and spiritual; and above all, allow me to always seek the good pleasure of your will.¹

8. The minds of men are often deceived in their judgments; also, those who love the world are deceived in loving only visible things. How is a man better for being esteemed greater by men? Or the deceitful for flattering the deceitful; the vain for extolling the vain; the blind for commending the blind; the weak for glorifying the weak? These things deceive a man. In truth, when one vainly praises another, he shames him all the more. “For what everyone is in your sight, that he is, and no more,” says humble St. Francis.

CHAPTER 51 - A Man ought to employ himself in Works of Humility, when strength is Lacking for Higher Employments

MY son, you are not always able to continue in a more fervent desire of all that is virtuous, nor to persist in a higher pitch of contemplation. Because of original corruption, you must sometimes descend to inferior things and bear the burden of this corruptible life, even though it is against your will, and done with wearisomeness. As long as you carry a mortal body, you will feel weariness and a heavy heart. You should therefore, in the flesh, often bewail the burden of the flesh, because you cannot employ yourself unceasingly in spiritual studies and divine contemplation.

2. At such times, it is expedient to flee to humble and exterior works; to refresh yourself with good actions; to expect My coming and Heavenly visitation with a firm confidence; to patiently bear your banishment and the dryness of your mind; at least until I visit you again and set you free from all these anxieties. For I will cause you to forget your painful toils, and to enjoy thorough inward quietness. I will spread open before you the pleasant fields of the Scriptures, so that with an enlarged heart you may begin to run in the way of My commandments. And you will say, “The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the future glory which will be revealed in us.”²

CHAPTER 52 – A Man should not consider himself worthy of Comfort, but rather as deserving of Chastisement

O LORD, I am not worthy of your consolation, nor of any spiritual visitations; and therefore you deal justly with me when you leave me poor and desolate. For though I could shed a sea of tears, still I would not be worthy of your consolation. Therefore I am not worthy of anything but to be scourged and punished, because I have offended you grievously and often, and in many things I have greatly sinned. Therefore, in the judgment of truth and reason, I am not worthy even of the least comfort. But You, O gracious and merciful God, do not will that your works should perish.³ To show the riches of your goodness upon the vessels of mercy,⁴ You deign to comfort your servant beyond all that he deserves and above the ways of men. For your consolations are not like the treatments of men.

¹ [Phil 2:13](#)

² [Rom. 8:18.](#)

³ [2Pet 3:9](#)

⁴ [Rom 9:23; Eph 2:7](#)

2. What have I done, O Lord, that you should bestow any heavenly comfort upon me?¹ I do not remember that I have done any good, but that I have been always prone to sin, and slow to amend my ways. This is true and I cannot deny it. If I said otherwise, you would stand against me² and there would be no one to defend me. What have I deserved for my sins but hell and everlasting fire? I confess in truth that I am worthy of all scorn and contempt; nor am I fit to be remembered among your devout servants. And although I am unwilling to hear this, I will for Truth's sake lay open my sins, even against myself, so that I may more readily be considered worthy to obtain your mercy.

3. What can I say since I am guilty and full of confusion? My mouth can utter nothing but this: "I have sinned, O Lord! I have sinned; have mercy on me, pardon me!"³ Put up with me a little, so that I may bewail my griefs before I go into the land of darkness, a land covered with the shadow of death.⁴ What do you require of a guilty and miserable sinner other than being contrite, and humbling himself for his offenses? From true contrition and humbling the heart arises hope of forgiveness;⁵ the troubled conscience is reconciled; the grace which was lost is recovered; a man is preserved from the wrath to come; and God and the penitent soul meet together with a holy kiss.

4. Humble contrition for sins is an acceptable sacrifice to you, O Lord, giving forth a savor far sweeter in your sight than the perfume of frankincense. This is also the pleasant ointment⁶ which you would have poured on your sacred feet; for you have never despised a contrite and humble heart.⁷ Here is the place of refuge from the angry face of the Enemy; here, whatever defilement and pollution has been contracted elsewhere, is amended and washed away.

CHAPTER 53 - The Grace of God does not join itself with those who relish Earthly Things

MY son, My grace is precious, it does not allow itself to be mingled with external things, nor with earthly consolations. You should therefore throw away any hindrances to Grace if you desire to receive its infusion. Look for a secret place for yourself; love to dwell alone with yourself; desire no one else's conversation. Rather, pour out your devout prayers to God so that you may keep your mind contrite, and your conscience pure. Consider the whole world nothing; prefer to attend to God before you attend to any outward things. For you will not be able to attend Me, and at the same time take delight in transitory things. It is fitting that you remove yourself far away from acquaintances and dear friends,⁸ and void your mind of all temporal comfort. This is what the blessed Apostle Peter exhorts, so that the faithful of Christ will remain strangers and pilgrims in this world.⁹

2. O how great our confidence will be at the hour of our death, if no affection to anything detains us in the world. But the sickly mind does not yet comprehend what it means to have a heart alienated from all things in this way; nor does the carnal man know the liberty of the spiritual man. Even so, if he wants to be truly spiritual, he ought to renounce those who are far off, as readily as he would renounce those who

¹ Ps 8:4

² Job 9:2, 3.

³ Ps. 51:4; Lk 18:13.

⁴ Job 10:21.

⁵ Isa. 57:15.

⁶ Luke 7:38.

⁷ Ps. 51:17.

⁸ Matt. 19:29.

⁹ 1Pet. 2:11.

are near to him; and beware of no man more than himself. If you perfectly overcome yourself, you will very easily bring everything else under the yoke. The perfect victory is to triumph over ourselves. For one who keeps himself subjected in such a way that his sensual affections are obedient to his reason, and his reason is obedient to Me in all things – that person is truly conqueror of himself, and master of the world.

3. If you desire to climb to this height, then you must set out courageously, and lay the axe to the root,¹ so that you may pluck up and destroy the hidden inordinate inclination toward self, and toward all love of private and earthly good. By this vicious propensity (namely, man's inordinate love of himself) nearly everything is sustained that ought to be thoroughly overcome. If this evil is vanquished and subdued, great peace and tranquility will quickly ensue. But because few labor to be perfectly dead to themselves, or fully deny themselves, they remain *entangled* in themselves; they cannot be lifted above themselves in spirit. But one who desires to walk freely with Me must mortify all his corrupt and inordinate affections, and he should not cling earnestly to any created thing with selfish love.

CHAPTER 54 - The Different Motions of fleshly Nature and spiritual Grace

MY son, mark carefully the movements of Nature and Grace; for they move in a very contrary and subtle manner; they can hardly be distinguished except by someone who is spiritually and inwardly enlightened. All men certainly desire what is good, and they make some pretense towards good in their words and deeds; and therefore many are deceived by this show of good. Nature is crafty in this way, and it seduces many. It ensnares and deceives them; for it always has self for her end and her object. But Grace walks in simplicity; she abstains from all displays of evil; she does not shelter herself under deceptions; she does all things purely for God's sake, for the One in whom she also finally rests.

2. Nature is reluctant and loath to die, or to be kept down, or to be overcome, or to be in subjection, or to be readily subdued. But Grace studies self-mortification; she resists sensuality, seeks to be in subjection, longs to be defeated, and has no wish to use her own liberty. She loves to be kept under discipline, and does not desire to rule over anyone, but rather to always live, abide, and be under God; and for God's sake, grace is ready to humbly bow down to every ordinance of man. By contrast, Nature strives for her own advantage, and considers what profit she may reap by another: Grace does not consider what is profitable and convenient for herself, but what may be for the good of many. Nature willingly receives honor and reverence; but Grace faithfully attributes all honor and glory to God.

3. Nature fears shame and contempt; but Grace rejoices to suffer reproach for the Name of JESUS.² Nature loves leisure and bodily rest; Grace cannot be unemployed, but cheerfully embraces labor. Nature seeks to have things that are curious and beautiful, and she abhors those things which are cheap and coarse. But Grace delights in what is plain and humble, does not despise rough things, nor does it refuse to wear what is old and patched. Nature respects temporal things, rejoices at earthly gains, sorrows for loss, is irritated by every little injurious word. But Grace looks to eternal things; it does not cling to temporal things, nor is it disturbed by losses, nor is it soured by hard words; this is because she has placed her treasure and her joy in Heaven where nothing perishes.³

4. Nature is covetous; it more willingly receives than gives, and loves to have things private and her own. But Grace is kind-hearted and communicative; she shuns private interest; she is content with a little, and

¹ [Mat 3:10](#)

² [Jer 15:25](#); [Mat 10:22](#); [1Pet 4:14](#)

³ [Mat 6:19-20](#)

judges that it is more blessed to give than to receive.¹ Nature inclines a man to created things, to his own flesh, to vanities, and to vagaries here and there. But Grace draws near to God and to every virtue; she renounces created things, avoids the world, hates the desires of the flesh, restrains wandering about, and blushes to be seen in public. Nature is willing to have some outward solace in which she may be sensually delighted. But Grace seeks consolation in God alone, and to delight in the highest Good above all visible things.

5. Nature manages everything for her own gain and profit; she cannot bear to do anything *gratis*; instead, for every kindness she hopes to obtain what is equal or better; or at least to obtain praise or favor; and she is very earnest to have her works, gifts, and words valued greatly. But Grace seeks no temporal thing, nor does she desire any reward other than God alone; nor does she ask to have more of temporal necessities than what may serve her to obtain eternal things.

6. Nature rejoices to have many friends and relationships; she glories in noble place and noble birth; she smiles on the powerful, fawns on the rich, and applauds those who are like herself. But Grace loves even her enemies, and she is not puffed up with her number of friends; nor does she think anything of high birth unless it is coupled with more exalted virtue. She favors the poor rather than the rich, sympathizes more with the innocent than with the powerful, rejoices with the honest man, not with the deceitful. She always exhorts good men to strive for the best gifts, and by all virtue to become like the Son of God. Nature quickly complains of lack and of trouble. Grace endures her needs with firmness and constancy.

7. Nature refers all things to herself, strives and argues for herself. But Grace brings everything back to God from whom they originally proceed; she ascribes no good to herself, nor does she arrogantly presume; she is not contentious, nor does she prefer her own opinion before others; but in every matter of sense and understanding, she submits herself to the Eternal wisdom and the Divine judgment. Nature is eager to know secrets and to hear news; she likes to be seen everywhere, and to prove many things by her own senses; she desires to be acknowledged, and to do things for which she may be praised and admired. But Grace does not care to hear news, nor to understand curious matters (because all of this arises from the corruption of the old man), seeing that there is nothing new on earth,² and nothing is durable.³ Grace therefore teaches to restrain the senses, to shun vain complacency and ostentation, to humbly hide those things that are worthy of admiration and praise, and to seek profitable fruit from every matter and in every knowledge, and to seek the praise and honor of God. She will not have herself or her things praised publicly, but instead desires that God be blessed in His gifts, who bestows all things out of mere love.

8. This Grace is a supernatural light, and a certain special gift from God, and the proper mark of the Elect, and a pledge of everlasting salvation; it raises up a man from earthly things to love the things of Heaven, and from being carnal, it makes him a spiritual man. The more, therefore, that Nature is depressed and subdued, the greater that Grace is infused; and every day, by new visitations of Grace, the inward man becomes reformed according to the image of God.

CHAPTER 55 - The Corruption of Nature, and the Efficacy of Divine Grace

O LORD my God, who have created me after your own image and likeness,⁴ grant me this Grace which you have shown to be so great and so necessary to salvation, so that I may overcome my most evil nature

¹ [Ac 20:35](#)

² [Ecc 1:9](#)

³ [Mk 13:31](#)

⁴ [Gen. 1:26](#).

which draws me to sin and to perdition. For I feel in my flesh the law of sin contradicting the law of my mind,¹ and leading me captive to obey sensuality in many things; nor can I resist its passions unless your most holy Grace, fervently infused into my heart, assists me.

2. There is need of your Grace, O Lord, and great degrees of it, so that Nature may be overcome, which is ever prone to evil from her youth.² For through Adam, the first man, our Nature is fallen and corrupted by sin. The penalty of this stain has descended on all mankind in such a way that Nature itself, which was created good and upright by you, has now been overtaken by the sin and infirmity of man's corrupted nature, because left to itself, its inclination draws it to evil and to inferior things.³ The small power which remains is like a spark lying hidden in the ashes. This is Natural Reason itself, surrounded by great darkness. Yet it still retains the power to discern the difference between good and evil, true and false. However, it is unable to accomplish all it approves of; it no longer enjoys the full light of the Truth; and its own affections are unsound.

3. This is why, O my God, I delight in your law according to the inward man,⁴ knowing your commandment is good, just, and holy, and that it reproves all evil and sin as things to be avoided. But with the flesh, as long as I obey sensuality rather than reason, I serve the law of sin. That it why, though I will to do what is good, I cannot find how to perform it. For this reason, though I often purpose many good things, even a light resistance causes me to pull back and weaken, because I lack the Grace to help my infirmity. And so it happens that I know the way of perfection, and I see clearly enough how I ought to act, but being weighed down with my own corruption, I do not rise up to what is more perfect.

4. O Lord, your Grace is entirely needful for me to begin anything good, to proceed with it, and to accomplish it. For without Grace I can do nothing,⁵ but in you I can do all things, when your Grace strengthens me.⁶ O Grace truly celestial, without which our most worthy actions are nothing, nor are any gifts of nature to be esteemed. Neither arts or riches, beauty or strength, wit or eloquence, are of any value before you without your Grace, O Lord. For gifts of nature are common to both good and bad, but the peculiar gift of the elect is Grace and Love; and those who bear this honorable mark, are counted worthy of everlasting life. So eminent is this Grace that neither the gift of prophecy, nor the working of miracles, nor any speculation (however high) is of any esteem without it. No, not even faith, or hope, or any other virtues, are acceptable to you without Charity and Grace.⁷

5. O most blessed Grace that makes the poor in spirit rich in virtues, and renders him who is rich in many goods humble in heart! Come down to me, come and replenish me early with your comfort, lest my soul faint for weariness and dryness of mind. I beseech you, O Lord, that I may find Grace in your sight; for your Grace is sufficient for me, even if other things that Nature longs for are not obtained. Although I am tempted and troubled with many tribulations, yet I will fear no evils, as long as your Grace is with me.⁸ This alone and by itself is my strength; this alone gives advice and help. This is stronger than all my enemies, and wiser than all the wise.

¹ Rom. 7:23.

² Gen. 8:21.

³ [Gen 6:5](#)

⁴ Rom. 7:22.

⁵ John 15:5.

⁶ [Phil 4:13](#)

⁷ 1Cor. 13:3.

⁸ Ps. 23:4.

6. Your Grace is the mistress of truth, the teacher of discipline, the light of the heart, the solace in affliction, the dispeller of sorrow, the expeller of fear, the nurse of devotion, the source and fountain of tears. Without this, what am I, but a withered piece of wood and an unprofitable branch, fit only to be thrown away.¹ Let your grace therefore, O Lord, always precede and follow me, and make me continually given to good works, through your Son JESUS Christ. *Amen.*

CHAPTER 56 - We ought to Deny Ourselves and Imitate Christ by the Cross

MY son, the more you can go out of yourself, the more you will be able to enter into Me. Just as voiding all desire for external things produces inward peace, so forsaking yourself inwardly joins you to God. I wish you to “learn to perfectly resign yourself to My will, without contradiction or complaint.”² Follow me: I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”³ **Without the Way, there is no going; without the Truth, there is no knowing; without the Life, there is no living.** I AM the Way, which you ought to follow; the Truth, which you ought to trust; the Life, which you ought to hope for. I AM the inviolable Way, the infallible Truth, the endless Life. I AM the straightest Way, the supreme Truth; I am the true, the blessed, the uncreated Life. If you remain in My way, you will know the Truth, and the Truth will make you free, and you will lay hold of eternal Life.

2. If you would enter into life, keep the commandments.⁴ If you would know the truth, believe Me.⁵ If you would be perfect, sell all you have.⁶ If you would be My disciple, deny yourself completely.⁷ If you would possess a blessed life, despise this present life.⁸ If you would be exalted in Heaven, humble yourself in this world.⁹ If you would reign with Me, bear the Cross with Me.¹⁰ For only the servants of the Cross find the way of blessedness and true light.

3. O LORD JESUS, because your life was strict and despised by the world, grant me grace to imitate you, even though it is with the world’s contempt. For the servant is not greater than his Lord, nor is the disciple above his Master.¹¹ Let your servant be practiced in your life, for my salvation and true holiness consist in this. Whatever else I read or hear, it does not give me full refreshment or delight.

4. My son, since you know and have read all these things, you will be happy if you do them.¹² “One who has My commandments and keeps them, he is the one who loves Me; and I will love him, and I will reveal Myself to him,”¹³ and I will make him sit together with Me in My Father’s kingdom.¹⁴ O LORD JESU, as you have said and promised, so truly let it come to pass, and grant that I may not be wholly

¹ [Jn 15:6](#)

² [Ex 16:8](#); [Phil 2:14](#)

³ John 14:6.

⁴ Matt. 19:17.

⁵ [Jn 8:45](#)

⁶ Matt. 19:21.

⁷ Luke 9:23.

⁸ John 12:25.

⁹ [Mat 23:12](#)

¹⁰ Luke 14:27.

¹¹ Matt. 10:24.

¹² [Jn 13:17](#)

¹³ John 14:21.

¹⁴ [Mat 26:29](#)

undeserving of this favor. I have received the Cross; I have received it from your hand; I will bear it, and bear it even to death, because you have laid it upon me. Truly the life of a good Christian is a Cross; yet it is also a guide to Paradise. We have now begun, and it is not lawful to go back, nor is it fit to leave what we have undertaken.¹

5. Let us then take courage, brethren; let us go forward together. JESUS will be with us. **For the sake of JESUS we have undertaken this Cross; for the sake of JESUS let us persevere in the Cross.** He will be our Helper, who is also our Guide and Forerunner.² Behold, our King enters in before us, and He will fight for us.³ Let us follow manfully; let no man fear any terrors;⁴ let us be prepared to die valiantly in battle; nor let us bring such a disgrace on our glory as to flee from the Cross.

CHAPTER 57 - A Man should not be too Dejected, even when he falls into some Defects

MY son, being patient and humble in adversities is more pleasing to Me than having great comfort and devotion when things go well. Why are you so grieved by every little thing that is spoken against you? Even if it had been much more, you should not have been moved. But now, let it pass: it is not the first, nor is it anything new, nor will it be the last – if you live long. You seem courageous enough, as long as nothing adverse befalls you. You can also give good counsel, and you can strengthen others with your words – but when any tribulation suddenly comes to **your** door, you fail in your own counsel and strength. Observe, then, the great frailty which you have too often experienced in small things. It is nonetheless intended for your good when these and similar trials happen to you.

2. Put it out of your heart the best you can. And if tribulation has touched you, do not let it defeat you, nor trouble you for very long. **Bear it patiently if you cannot bear it joyfully.** Although you are unwilling to hear it, and are indignant at it, restrain yourself, and allow no inordinate word to pass out of your mouth that may hurt Christ's little ones. The storm which is now raised will quickly be pacified, and inward grief will be sweetened by the return of Grace. "I yet live", says the Lord, "and I am ready to help you,"⁵ and to give you more than ordinary consolation, if you put your trust in Me,⁶ and devoutly call upon Me."⁷

3. Be more patient, and gird yourself for greater endurance. All is not lost, even though you often feel afflicted or grievously tempted. **You are a man, and not God; you are flesh, and not an Angel.** How can you expect to always continue in the same state of virtue when an Angel in Heaven has fallen, and also the first man in Paradise? ⁸ I am He who lifts up the mourners to safety and soundness;⁹ those who know their own weakness, I bring to My own Divinity.¹⁰

¹ Lk 9:62; Heb 10:38-39

² Ps 46:1; Heb 13:6; Jn 14:26; Rom 8:29

³ Heb 6:20; Neh 4:20

⁴ Ps 91:5

⁵ Isa. 49; Isa. 65:1; 2Cor 13:4

⁶ Isa 57:13

⁷ Ps 50:15; 91:15; Jer 29:12

⁸ Gen. 3.

⁹ Job 5:11

¹⁰ 2Pet 1:4; Rom 8:26

4. O LORD, blessed be your Word, more sweet to my mouth than honey and the honeycomb.¹ What would I do in these great tribulations and difficulties, if you did not comfort me with your holy words? What does it matter how much or what I suffer, as long as I may in the end attain the port of salvation? Grant me a good end; grant me a happy passage out of this world. Be mindful of me, O my God, and direct me in the right way of your kingdom.² *Amen.*

CHAPTER 58 - High Matters and God's Secret Judgments are not to be narrowly enquired into

MY son, beware that you do not argue about high matters, or about the secret judgments of God: about why this man is left,³ and that man taken into such great favor. Why is one so grievously afflicted, and another so eminently exalted? These things are beyond all reach of man's faculties; nor is it in the power of our reasoning or arguing to discover the judgments of God. Therefore, when the Enemy suggests these things to you, or some curious people raise the question, let your answer be that of the Prophet: "You are just, O Lord, and your judgment is right."⁴ And again, "The judgments of the Lord are true and altogether righteous."⁵ **My judgments are to be feared, not to be discussed;** for they are such as cannot be comprehended by the understanding of man.⁶

2. In the same way, I advise you not to enquire or dispute about the merits of holy men, as to which of them is holier than the other, or which will be greater in the kingdom of Heaven.⁷ Such matters often breed unprofitable strifes and contentions,⁸ they also nourish pride and boastfulness from which arise envy and dissension; one proudly endeavors to promote one Saint, and the other another. Wishing to know and discover such things serves no good purpose; rather, it is displeasing to righteous Souls; for I am not the God of disorder, but of peace;⁹ peace consists in true humility, rather than self-exaltation.

3. Some are carried away with zealous affection towards these Saints or those; nevertheless, this is human love rather than divine. I am He who made *all* the Saints. I gave them Grace. I obtained Glory for them. I know what everyone deserves. I preceded them with the blessings of My goodness. I foreknew My beloved ones before the beginning of the world.¹⁰ I chose them out of the world, and they did not choose Me first.¹¹ I called them by grace; I drew them by mercy; I led them safely through various temptations. I poured into them glorious consolations. I gave them perseverance. I crowned their patience.

4. I acknowledge both the first and the last; I embrace *all* with inestimable love. I am to be praised in *all* My Saints; I am to be blessed above *all* things, and to be honored in everyone whom I have thus gloriously exalted and predestined, without any precedent merits of their own. Therefore, the one who despises one of the least of Mine, does not honor the greatest;¹² for I made both the small and the great.¹

¹ Ps. 119:103.

² Ps 119:35, 133

³ Jn 21:22

⁴ Ps. 119:137.

⁵ Ps. 19:9.

⁶ Ps 139:6

⁷ Mat 18:1

⁸ 2Cor 10:12; Heb 13:7; Gal 6:4

⁹ 1Cor 14:33

¹⁰ Rom 8:29; Eph 1:4

¹¹ John 15:16.

¹² James 2:1-5; Mat 25:40.

Someone who disparages any of the Saints, disparages Me, and everyone else in the Kingdom of Heaven. These all are one through the bond of charity; their thought is the same; their will is the same; and in love they are all united one to another.²

5. But still (which is a far higher consideration), they love Me more than they love themselves,³ or any merits of their own. For being transported above self and self-love, they are wholly committed to love Me in whom they also realize complete rest.⁴ Nothing can turn them back; nothing can hold them down. For being full of eternal Truth, they burn with the fire of unquenchable charity. Therefore, let carnal and natural men who can love nothing but their own selfish joys, keep from disputing about the state of God's Saints. Such men give and take according to their own fancies, not according to the eternal Truth.⁵

6. Many are ignorant, especially those who are only slightly enlightened; they can seldom love anyone with a perfect spiritual love. They are still led greatly by natural affection and human friendship toward this man or that. They conceive of heavenly things according to their experience in their earthly affections. But there is an incomparable distance between the things which the immature conceive, and those which the illuminated are enabled to behold through revelation from above.

7. Beware, therefore, My son, that you do not handle with empty curiosity, those things which exceed your knowledge.⁶ Rather, let this be your great business and endeavor: to attain even the least place in the kingdom of God. Even if someone knew who exceeded someone else in sanctity, or who is accounted the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven – what would this wisdom benefit him unless he then humbled himself more in My sight, and gave greater praise to My Name, in proportion to this knowledge? Someone who thinks of the greatness of his own sins, and the smallness of his virtues, and how far he is from the perfection of the Saints, is far more acceptable to God than someone who argues about their own greatness or littleness.

8. They would be well-contented indeed, if men would just content themselves, and refrain from their pointless conversations. They do not glory about their own merits if they ascribe no goodness to themselves, but attribute all goodness to Me, the One who has given them all things out of My infinite love. They are filled with such a great love for the Divinity, and with such an overflowing joy, that there is no glory or happiness that is, or can be, lacking in them. All the Saints, the higher they are in glory, the more humble they are in themselves, and the nearer and dearer they are to Me. And therefore you have it written, that “they cast their crowns before God, and fell down on their faces before the Lamb, and adored Him who lives forever and ever.”⁷

9. Many of those who enquire who is the greatest in the kingdom of God, do not know whether they will ever be numbered among the least. It is a great thing to be even the least in Heaven, where all are great;⁸ for they shall all be called (and shall be) the Sons of God.⁹ “The least shall become a thousand,”¹⁰ and

¹ Wisd. 6:7.

² [Ac 4:32](#); [1Cor 1:10](#); [1Pet 3:8](#); [Eph 4:4-6](#)

³ [Mat 10:37](#); [Jn 21:15](#)

⁴ [Mat 11:29](#)

⁵ [Prov 1:29-33](#)

⁶ [Ecclus. 3:21](#).

⁷ [Rev. 4:10](#).

⁸ [Mat 11:11](#)

⁹ [Mat 5:20](#)

¹⁰ [Isa. 60:22](#).

“the sinner of an hundred years shall die.”¹ For when the disciples asked who would be greatest in the kingdom of Heaven, they received an answer like this: “Unless you are converted, and become like little children, you will not enter into the kingdom of Heaven; whoever therefore humbles himself like this little child, is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven.”²

10. Woe to those who refuse to humble themselves willingly with little children, because the low gate of the kingdom of Heaven will not give them entrance.³ Woe also to the rich, who have their consolation here; for while the poor enter into the kingdom of God, they will stand outside lamenting. Rejoice you who are humble and poor – be filled with joy, for yours is the kingdom of God,⁴ if you at least walk according to the Truth.⁵

CHAPTER 59 - All our Hope and Trust is to be fixed in God alone

LORD, what is my confidence which I have in this life? Or what is the greatest comfort I can derive from anything under Heaven? Is it not You, O Lord my God, whose mercies are without number? Where has it ever been well with me without You? Or when could it be ill with me when you were present? I would rather be poor for you than rich without you. I would rather choose to be a pilgrim on earth *with* you, than to possess Heaven *without* you. **Where you are, there is Heaven: and where you are not, there is death and hell.** You are all my desire, and therefore I must sigh and call and earnestly pray to you. In short, there is none whom I can fully trust myself to, none that can seasonably help me in my needs, except You alone, my God. You are my hope; you my confidence; you are my Comforter; and in all things, You are most faithful to me.

2. All men seek their own gain;⁶ you set my salvation and my profit first, and turn all things to my good.⁷ Although you expose me to various temptations and adversities, you order all this to my advantage; you are likely to try your beloved ones a thousand ways. In these trials of me, you are no less to be loved and praised than if you filled me full of heavenly consolations.

3. Therefore, in you, O Lord God, I place my whole hope and refuge; on you I rest all my tribulation and anguish; for I find that everything else is weak and inconstant, whatever I behold outside of you. For many friends cannot profit me, nor will strong helpers assist me, nor will prudent counsellors give a profitable answer to me, nor will the books of the learned afford me comfort, nor will any precious substance deliver me, nor will any place, however retired and lovely, shelter me – unless you Yourself assist, help, strengthen, console, instruct, and guard me.

4. For all things that seem linked to attaining peace and well-being are nothing without you; and in truth they bring no well-being at all. You, therefore, are the Fountain of all that is good, the Height of life, the Depth of all that can be spoken. And so, hope in you, above all things, is the strongest comfort your servants have. Therefore I lift up my eyes to you. In you my God, the Father of mercies, I put my trust.⁸

¹ Isa. 65:20.

² Matt. 18:3-4.

³ Matt. 7:14.

⁴ Matt. 5:3.

⁵ 1Jn 1:6

⁶ Phil. 2:21.

⁷ Rom 8:28

⁸ 2Cor 1:3

Bless and sanctify my soul with your heavenly blessings, that it may become your holy habitation, and the seat of your eternal glory; and let nothing be found in this temple of your Divinity, which offends the eyes of your Majesty. According to the greatness of your goodness, and the multitude of your mercies, look upon me, and hear the prayer of your poor servant who is far exiled from you in the land of the shadow of death. Protect and keep my soul, for I am the lowest of your servants, in the midst of so many dangers in this corruptible life. By your grace accompanying me, direct my soul along the way of peace to its home of everlasting brightness. *Amen.*

THE FOURTH BOOK

CONCERNING THE SACRAMENT

A Devout Exhortation to the Holy Communion

The Voice of Christ.

“COME to Me, all of you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you,”¹ says the Lord. “The bread which I will give is My Flesh, for the life of the world.”² “Take and eat; this is My Body which is given for you.”³ Do this in remembrance of Me.”⁴ “Whoever who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood, dwells in Me, and I in him... The Words which I have spoken to you are Spirit and Life.”⁵

CHAPTER 1 - Christ ought to be received with Great Reverence

The Voice of the Disciple.

THESE are your words, O Christ the everlasting Truth, though not uttered all at one time, nor written in one and the same place. Because they are yours, and true, they are all to be thankfully and faithfully received by me. They are Yours, and you pronounced them; but they are mine also, because you have spoken them for my salvation. I cheerfully receive them from your mouth, so that they may be more deeply implanted in my heart. Those most gracious words, so full of sweetness and of love, arouse me; but my own offenses dishearten me, and an impure conscience drives me back from receiving such great Mysteries. The sweetness of your words encourages me, but the multitude of my sins weighs me down.

2. You command me to come to you confidently if I would partake with you, and receive the food of immortality – if I desire to obtain everlasting life and glory. “Come to Me (You say), all of you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you.”⁶ O sweet and loving words in the ear of a sinner, that You, my Lord God, would invite the poor and needy to participate in your most holy Body and Blood! But who am I, Lord, that I should presume to approach You? Behold the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain you, and yet you say, “Come to Me, all of you.”

3. What does so gracious a condescension mean, and so loving an invitation? How may I dare to come, I who do not know anything good in myself upon which I may presume to come? How can I bring you into my house, I who have so often offended your most benign countenance? Angels and Archangels stand in awe of you; holy and righteous men fear you; and yet You say, “Come to Me, all of you?” Unless You, O Lord, said this, who would believe it to be true? And unless you commanded it, who could attempt to

¹ Matt. 11:28.

² John 6:51.

³ Matt. 26:26.

⁴ 1Cor. 11:24.

⁵ John 6:56, 63.

⁶ Matt. 11:28.

draw near? Consider Noah, that just man who labored a hundred years in the making of the Ark so that he might be saved with a few: ¹ how can I, in one hour's space, prepare myself to receive with reverence the Maker of the world?

4. Moses, your great servant and your special friend, made an ark of incorruptible wood, which he also covered over with the finest gold in which to lay up the tables of the law;² and I, a corrupted creature, how will I dare to receive the Maker of the Law and the Giver of life without such concern? Solomon, the wisest of the kings of Israel, took seven years to build a magnificent Temple to the praise of your Name.³ He also celebrated its Feast of Dedication for eight straight days; he offered a thousand peace-offerings; and he solemnly set the Ark of the Covenant in the place prepared for it, with the sound of trumpets and great joy.⁴ And I, the most miserable and poorest of men, how will I bring you into my house, I who can scarcely spend half an hour in true devotion? And I wish I could just once spend something like half an hour in a worthy and due manner!

5. Oh my God, how earnestly they studied and endeavored to please you! Alas, how little I do! How short a time I spend preparing myself to receive the Communion! Seldom am I wholly collected; very seldom indeed am I cleansed from all distractions. And yet surely, in the life-giving Presence of your Godhead, no unbecoming thought ought to intrude itself, nor should any created thing occupy my heart: for it is not an Angel, but the Lord of the Angels, whom I am about to receive as my Guest.

6. However, the difference between the Ark of the Covenant with its relics, and your most pure Body with its unspeakable virtues, is very great; so is the difference between those legal sacrifices, figures of things to come, and the True Sacrifice of Your Body which was the fulfilment of all those ancient sacrifices.⁵ Why then am I not more ardent and zealous in seeking your adorable Presence? Why do I not prepare myself with greater solicitude to receive your holy things? By contrast, those ancient holy patriarchs and prophets, indeed kings and princes, along with the whole people, showed such an affectionate devotion to your divine service.

7. The most devout King David⁶ danced before the ark of God with all his might, calling to mind the benefits bestowed in times past upon his forefathers. He made instruments of various kinds; he published psalms and appointed them to be chanted with joy; he also often played on the harp, being inspired with the grace of the Holy Ghost. He taught the people of Israel to praise God with their whole hearts, and with voices full of melody to bless and praise Him every day. If such great devotion was used then, and such a celebration of divine praise was kept up before the Ark of the Testament, then what reverence and devotion should now be preserved by me and by all Christian people during the ministration of the Sacrament, in receiving the most precious Body and Blood of Christ?

8. Many run to various places to visit the memorials of departed Saints; they are full of admiration at hearing of their deeds; they behold with awe the spacious buildings of their temples; and they find their affections moved by whatever is connected with their memory. But behold, you are here Yourself, present with me on your altar, my God, Saint of Saints, Creator of men, and Lord of the Angels. Often in seeking such memorials, people are moved by curiosity, and the novelty of fresh sights, while little or no fruit of amendment is carried home; particularly when they go from place to place with such levity, and without

¹ Gen. 6.

² Exod. 25:10-16.

³ 1Kings 6:38.

⁴ 1Kings 8.

⁵ [Heb 8:5; 10:1](#)

⁶ [2Sam. 6:14](#); [Ecclus. 47:8-9](#).

true contrition of heart. But here, in the Sacrament of the Altar, you are wholly present, my God – the Man Christ JESUS; here an abundant fruit of eternal salvation is granted to all worthy and devout receivers.¹ Here there is nothing to attract men that savors of levity, curiosity, or sensuality: nothing but firm faith, devout hope, and sincere charity.

9. O God, the invisible Creator of the world, how wonderfully you deal with us; how sweetly and graciously you dispose of all things with your elect, those to whom you offer Yourself to be received in this Sacrament! For this truly exceeds all understanding; this specially draws the hearts of the devout, and it inflames their affections. For even your true faithful ones, those who dispose their whole life to amendment, often gain much grace of devotion, and love of virtue, from this most precious Sacrament.

10. O the admirable and hidden grace of this Sacrament, which only the faithful ones of Christ know! But the unbelieving, and those who are slaves to sin, cannot experience it. In this Sacrament, spiritual grace is conferred, and virtue which was lost is restored in the soul, and the beauty which had been disfigured by sin, returns again. This grace is sometimes so great, that out of the fulness of devotion given here, not only the mind, but the weak body too, feels a great increase of strength bestowed on it.

11. Nevertheless, our lukewarmness and negligence is to be exceedingly lamented and pitied: that we are not drawn with greater affection to receive Christ in whom consists all the hope of those who are to be saved, and all their merit. For He Himself is our sanctification and redemption; He Himself is the consolation of pilgrims, and the everlasting fruition of Saints. It is therefore to be exceedingly lamented that many so little consider this salutary Mystery which causes joy in Heaven, and preserves the whole world. Alas for the blindness and hardness of the human heart, that it does not more tenderly cherish so unspeakable a Gift; but rather, through its daily use, the heart sinks into a listless disregard of it!

12. For if this most holy Sacrament were celebrated in only one place, and if it were consecrated by only one priest in the world, then how great do you think the desires men would be affected by that place, and towards such a priest of God, that they might be witness to the celebration of these divine Mysteries? But now many are made priests, and Christ is offered in many places, so that the grace and love of God toward man may appear greater, the more widely this sacred Communion is spread over the world. Thanks be to you, O merciful JESU, you eternal Shepherd, for you have deigned to refresh us, who are poor and in a state of banishment, with your precious Body and Blood; and you invite us to receive these Mysteries by a message from your own mouth, saying, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you.”

¹ While this undoubtedly refers to the Roman Catholic doctrine of trans-substantiation, Calvin likewise believed that the Eucharist is not merely a memorial, as Zwingli conceived of it. The wording here suggests the Eucharist includes our own symbolic sacrificial death (“*you are here Yourself, present with me on your altar*”). In Calvin’s understanding, the elements are somehow imbued with the very presence of the Holy Spirit through the faith of those who partake of them. They remain a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace, a mere physical reminder of the spiritual truths they represent; but in considering by faith the Covenant and the Cross, we transcend the mere physicality of the bread and wine to embrace the Truth of God revealed in Christ on the cross. The Roman Catholic view is that the elements are an actual *means* of grace – they are salvific in a way; Christ is sacrificed again on the present altar by the priest. By contrast, the Reformed view is that believers are acknowledging and receiving the benefit of the sacrifice Christ made once for all two thousand years ago; the grace obtained on the cross *then*, is applied to our sin *now*, by faith. Hence, confession and true repentance, which prepare the heart to receive Christ’s atonement, are essential elements at the Eucharist table in *both* views. It is a mystery not to be taken lightly by any believer. – WHG.

CHAPTER 2 - The great Goodness and Love of God is exhibited to Man in this Sacrament

The Voice of the Disciple.

IN confidence of your goodness and great mercy, O Lord, I draw near, as a sick person draws near to the Healer, as one hungry and thirsty draws near to the Fountain of Life, as a needy wretch to the King of Heaven, a servant to his Lord, a creature to the Creator, a desolate soul to my own tender Comforter. But why do you deign to come to me?¹ What am I that you should grant yourself to me? How dare a sinner appear before You? And how is it that you deign to come to a sinner? You know your servant, and You are well aware that he has no good thing in him for which you should grant him this favor. I confess therefore my own vileness; I acknowledge your goodness; I praise your tender mercy; and I give you thanks for this transcendent love of yours. For you do this for your own sake, not for any merits of mine; to the end that your goodness may be better known to me, your love more abundantly poured down, and your gracious humility more eminently presented. Since, therefore, it is your pleasure and you have commanded that it should be so, your condescension is also dearly pleasing to me; and O that my iniquity may not be a hindrance in this!

2. O most sweet and most benign JESU, how great are the reverence and thanksgiving, together with perpetual praise, that are owed to you for receiving your sacred Body and Blood, whose preciousness no mortal man is able to express! But what shall my thoughts dwell on at this Communion, in thus approaching my Lord whom I am not able to duly honor, and yet whom I cannot but desire devoutly to receive? What can I think about better and more profitable than to utterly humble myself before you, and to exalt your infinite goodness above me? I praise you, my God, and I will exalt you forever. I despise myself and throw myself down before you, into the deep of my own vileness.

3. Behold, you are the Holy of holies, and I am the scum of sinners! Behold, you incline Yourself to me, who am not worthy so much as to look at you! Behold, you come to me; it is your will to be with me; you invite me to your banquet. You are willing to give me heavenly food and the bread of Angels to eat, which is indeed none other than Yourself, the Living Bread, which came down from Heaven, and gives life to the world.²

4. Behold where this love proceeds from! What a gracious condescension of you Shines forth in it! How great the thanks and praises that are due to you for these benefits! O how salutary and profitable was your counsel when you ordained It! How sweet and pleasant is the banquet when you gave Yourself to be our food! O how admirable is your working, O Lord, how mighty is your power, how unspeakable your truth! For you spoke the word and all things were made;³ and this too was done which you Yourself command.⁴

5. This is a matter of great admiration, worthy of all faith, and surpassing man's understanding, that you my Lord God, True God and man, should offer Yourself wholly to us in a little Bread and Wine, and in this become our inexhaustible support. You who are the Lord of the universe and stand in need of none,⁵

¹ Luke 1:43.

² Ps. 78:25; John 6:33.

³ Gen. 1; Ps. 148:5.

⁴ Mat 26:26-28 Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." ²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

⁵ Ps. 16:2.

are pleased to dwell in us by means of this your Sacrament.¹ Preserve my heart and body undefiled, so that with a cheerful and pure conscience I may be able very frequently to celebrate, and to receive to my everlasting health, those Mysteries² which you specially ordained and instituted for your own honor, and for a never-ceasing memorial of Yourself.³

6. Rejoice, O my soul, and give thanks to God for so noble a gift, and so precious a consolation, left to you in this vale of tears. For as often as you call to mind this Mystery, and receive the Body of Christ, you go over the work of your redemption, and you are made a partaker of all the merits of Christ.⁴ For the love of Christ is never diminished, and the greatness of His propitiation is never exhausted. Therefore you ought to dispose yourself to this by a constant and fresh renewing of your mind, and weigh with attentive consideration the great Mystery of salvation. So great, so new, and so joyful it should seem to you, that when you celebrate or partake in these holy Mysteries, it is as if on this same day Christ first descending into the womb of the Virgin had become a man, or as if hanging on the Cross today, he suffers and dies for the salvation of mankind.

CHAPTER 3 - It is profitable to Communicate often

The Voice of the Disciple.

BEHOLD, O Lord, I come to you so that it may be well with me through your gift, and so that I may rejoice in your holy feast which You, O God, have in your goodness prepared for the poor.⁵ Behold, in you is whatever I can or ought to desire; you are my Salvation and my Redemption, my Hope and Strength, my Honor and Glory. Therefore rejoice the soul of your servant this day,⁶ for I have lifted up my soul to you, O Lord JESU. I long to receive you now with devotion and reverence; I desire to bring you into my house so that, with Zaccheus, I may be counted worthy to be blessed by you, and to be numbered among the sons of Abraham. My soul thirsts to receive your Body and Blood; my heart longs to be united with you.⁷

2. Give Yourself to me, and it suffices; for no comfort is available besides you. Without you I cannot exist, and without your visitation I have no power to live. And therefore I must often draw near to you, and receive you for the medicine of my salvation; otherwise I may faint in the way if I am deprived of the heavenly Food. For so you once said, most merciful JESUS, preaching to the people, and curing various diseases: "I will not send them home fasting, or they may faint in the way."⁸ Therefore, deal likewise

¹ Jam 4:4-6

² Heb 13:18; 1Tim 3:9

³ Lk 22:19; 1Cor 11:24-25

⁴ Heb 3:14

⁵ Ps. 68:10.

⁶ Ps. 86:4.

⁷ Again, this is a Roman Catholic concept that the communion elements are efficacious in maintaining our union with Christ; the Reformed view is that we were united to Christ before the foundation of the earth: given into his hand by the Father for redemption at the cross, and for sanctification by the Spirit (2Thess 2:13; the *Redemptive Covenant*). This union is both *objective* (ordained by God from eternity) and *subjective* (applied at our conversion; Gal 3:27). We do not "fall out of" Christ such that we require "re-uniting" with him. Nor are we cut off from Christ for failing to take communion. In the Roman Catholic tradition, excommunication cuts a believer off from the sacrament, and thus it places his soul in peril of destruction. And so it is understood by Roman Catholics as an effectual *means* of grace. Reformers also called it a means of grace (WCF), yet not in a salvific way; rather, it is an effectual aid to affirming our *faith* (a required element), and receiving the consolation of Christ's sacrifice. – WHG

⁸ Matt. 15:32; Mark 8:8.

now with me, you who have deigned to leave Yourself in the Sacrament for the comfort of the faithful. For you are the sweet refection of the soul: and one who eats you worthily, will be partaker and heir of everlasting glory.¹ It is indeed necessary for me, for I so often fall into error and sin, and so quickly become dull and faint; so that by frequent prayer and confession, and by receiving your Holy Body and Blood, I renew, cleanse, and inflame myself; otherwise, by abstaining from these too long, I fall away from my holy purposes.

3. For the imaginations of man are prone to evil from his youth;² unless some divine remedy helps him, by-and-by he falls away to worse things. This Holy Communion therefore draws us back from evil and strengthens us in good. For if I am now so often negligent and lukewarm when I communicate³ or celebrate, what would become of me if I did not receive this remedy, and did not seek after so great a help? Though I may not be fit or well-prepared to celebrate every day, I will nonetheless endeavor to receive the divine Mysteries at appointed times, and to be a partaker of so great a Grace. For this is the one chief consolation of faithful souls, for as long as they are absent from you in this mortal body: that being mindful of their God, they often receive their Beloved with a devout mind.

4. O the wonderful condescension of your tender mercy towards us, that you O Lord God, the Creator and Giver of life to all Spirits, deign to come to a poor soul, and abundantly satisfy its famishing hunger with your whole Deity and Humanity! O happy minds and blessed souls, who have the privilege of receiving you, their Lord God, with devout affection; and in so receiving you, they are permitted to be full of spiritual joy! O how great a Lord they entertain! How beloved a Guest they harbor! How delightful a Companion they receive! How faithful a Friend they welcome! How lovely and noble a Spouse they embrace! For You are to be loved before all things that are loved; and above all things that can be desired. O my most sweet, my most beloved! Let heaven and earth and all their ornaments be silent in your presence; for whatever praise or beauty they may have, it is received from your bounteous condescension, and will never equal the grace and beauty of your Name, whose wisdom is beyond measure.⁴

CHAPTER 4 - Many Benefits are bestowed upon those who Communicate Devoutly

The Voice of the Disciple.

O LORD my God, present your servant with the blessings of your sweetness,⁵ so that I may be enabled to to approach worthily and devoutly to your glorious Sacrament. Stir up my heart toward you, and set me free from heavy listlessness: visit me with your salvation,⁶ so that in spirit I may taste your sweetness which plentifully lies hidden in this Sacrament as in a fountain. Enlighten also my eyes to behold so great a Mystery, and strengthen me with undoubting faith to believe it. For it is *your* work, and not any human power; it is your sacred institution, not man's invention. For no man is able to comprehend and understand these things by himself; they transcend even the exquisite skill of Angels. What portion then of so high and sacred a Mystery will I, an unworthy sinner, who is dust and ashes,⁷ be able to search out and comprehend?

¹ [1Cor 10:16; 11:27-29](#)

² Gen. 8:21.

³ [That is, commune – to partake of the Eucharist and unite in fellowship with the saints, and with God \(1Jn 1:3\)](#)

⁴ Ps. 147:5.

⁵ Ps. 21:3.

⁶ Ps. 106:4.

⁷ [Gen 18:27](#)

2. O Lord, in the simplicity of my heart, with a good and firm faith, and at your command, I draw near to You with hope and reverence; and I do truly believe that you are present here in this Sacrament, both God and Man. Your will therefore is that I should receive you, and that I should unite myself to you in charity. Thus I implore your mercy, and crave your special Grace to this end: that I may be wholly dissolved and overflow with love towards you, and never after allow any consolation to enter in which does not come from you. For this most high and precious Sacrament is the health of both soul and body, the medicine for all spiritual languor; hereby my vices are cured, my passions are bridled, my temptations are overcome or at least weakened; greater grace is infused, virtue attempted is increased, faith is confirmed, hope strengthened, and love is inflamed and enlarged.

3. For you have bestowed, and still often bestow, many benefits in this Sacrament upon your beloved ones who communicate devoutly: O my God, the Protector of my soul, the Restorer of human weakness, and the Giver of all inward consolation. For you impart to them great comfort against every kind of tribulation; You lift them up from the depth of their own dejected state to hope in your protection; and You inwardly recreate and enlighten them with new Grace; so that those who felt themselves full of anxiety and heartlessness before Communion, after being refreshed with heavenly Meat and Drink, find a change for the better in themselves. And in this way of dispensing, you deal with your elect in order that they may truly acknowledge and clearly prove how great their own infirmity is, and what goodness and grace they obtain from you. For of themselves they are cold, hard, and undevout; but by You they are enabled to become fervent, cheerful, and devout. For who humbly approaches the fountain of sweetness, that does not carry away from there at least some little sweetness? Or who standing near a large fire, does not receive some small heat from it? And you are a fountain that is always full and overflowing; a fire that is ever-burning and never goes out.¹

4. Which is why, if I am not permitted to draw out of the full fountain itself, nor drink my fill, I will still put my lips to the mouth of this Heavenly conduit, so that I may receive from there at least some small drop to refresh my thirst, and so that I may not wither away. Although I cannot as yet be altogether Heavenly, nor as inflamed as the Cherubim and Seraphim, yet I will still endeavor to earnestly apply myself to devotion, and to prepare my heart to obtain just some small flame of divine fire by humbly receiving this life-giving Sacrament. But whatever is lacking in me, O Merciful JESU, most Holy Savior, in my behalf bountifully and graciously supply; for you have deigned to call us all to you saying, “Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you.”²

5. Indeed, I do labor in the sweat of my brow.³ I am racked with grief; I am burdened with sins; I am troubled with temptations; I am entangled and oppressed with many evil passions; and there is no one to help me, no one to deliver and save me except you O Lord God my Savior, to whom I commit myself and all that is mine, so that you may keep watch over me, and bring me safe to life-everlasting. Receive me for the honor and glory of your Name. You have prepared your Body and Blood to be my meat and drink. Grant, O Lord God, my Savior, that by frequenting your Mysteries, the zeal of my devotion may grow and increase.

¹ Isa. 12:3; [Ps 36:9](#); Lev. 6:13; [Mat 3:11](#)

² Matt. 11:28.

³ Gen. 3:19.

CHAPTER 5 - The Dignity of this Sacrament, and of the Ministerial Function

The Voice of the Beloved.

If you had the purity of Angels,¹ and the sanctity of Saint John the Baptist, you would not be worthy to receive this Sacrament yourself, nor to administer it to others. For it is not within the scope of what men deserve, that man should consecrate and administer the Sacrament of Christ, and receive the bread of Angels for food.² This Mystery is grand; great too is the dignity of the Priests who have been granted what is not permitted to Angels. For only duly ordained Priests in the Church have the power to celebrate this Sacrament, and to consecrate the Body of Christ. The Priest is indeed the minister of God, using the word of God, by God's command and appointment;³ nevertheless, God is the principal Author and invisible Worker in this; to whom all that He wills is subject, and all that He commands is obedient.⁴

2. You should then trust God Almighty in this most excellent Sacrament, more than your own sense, or any visible sign. And therefore you must approach this holy work with fear and reverence. Take diligent heed to yourself,⁵ and consider that the ministry is delivered to you by the laying on of the Bishop's hand.⁶ Behold: you have been made a priest,⁷ and consecrated to celebrate the Lord's Sacraments. See now that you offer Sacrifice to God faithfully and devoutly, and at appropriate times, and conduct yourself so that you may be without reproof.⁸ You have not lightened your burden, but are now bound with a stricter band of discipline, and are obliged to a more perfect degree of sanctity.⁹ A Priest ought to be adorned with all graces, and give an example of good living to others. His life and conversation¹⁰ should not be in the popular and common ways of mankind, but in the way of Angels in Heaven, or with matured men on earth.

3. A Priest clad in sacred garments is Christ's Deputy, so that with all supplication and humility he may entreat God for himself and for the whole people.¹¹ He has both before and behind him the sign of the Lord's Cross, so that he may be continually reminded of the Passion of Christ. He wears the Cross on the

¹ Matt. 18:10.

² Ps. 78:25.

³ This restriction is also found in the WCF chap. 27. Two verses are often given to support this restriction: 1Cor 4:1 "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God"; HEB 5:4 "And no man takes this honor to himself, but the one who is called of God, as was Aaron." That would be taking them out of context. But the restriction isn't found in these specific verses so much as in the overarching principle of Headship. Some are given to be pastors/elders, and they exercise headship in the Church on behalf of Christ, under his authority, governed by his word. There are those who are called to exercise such authority, and others who are called to submit to it. Administering these *communal* sacraments appears to come under the principle of headship, so that all things are done in an orderly, considered, and sanctified way. – WHG

⁴ Gen. 1; Ps. 49:7-9;

⁵ 1Tim. 4:16; Deut 4:9.

⁶ 1Tim 4:14

⁷ This clergy-laity distinction has always plagued the Church. We are all a royal priesthood (1Pet 2:9). Substitute "elder" or "overseer" for the word "priest" in these paragraphs. For we have only One Priest (Heb 7:23-24). Those who are called to eldership under Christ are those who are recognized as spiritually mature, gifted, and humble (Mk 9:35; 10:44; 1Tim 3:1).

⁸ 1Tim 3:2

⁹ Jam 3:1

¹⁰ Heb 13:7.

¹¹ Heb. 5:3; this is ripped out of context; the reference is to priests of old, and by inference to Christ who is now High Priest over all; He needs no sacrifice for his own sins, and thus he is a better sacrifice, under a better covenant.

Chasuble¹ before him, so that he may diligently look at Christ's footsteps, and earnestly study to follow them. Behind, he is also signed with the Cross, so that he may cheerfully endure, for God's sake, any evils inflicted on him by others. He bears the Cross before him so that he may mourn for his own sins; and he bears the cross behind him so that he may lament for the faults of others with sympathy and tears, and know that he has been placed in the middle between God and the sinner.² Nor should he cease from prayer and holy oblation, until he prevails to obtain grace and mercy. When a Priest celebrates the Holy Eucharist, he honors God, he rejoices the Angels, he edifies the Church, he helps the living, and he makes himself partaker of all good things.

CHAPTER 6 - An Enquiry concerning Spiritual Exercise before Communion

The Voice of the Disciple.

WHEN I weigh your worthiness, O Lord, and my own vileness, I tremble exceedingly, and I am confounded. For if I do not come to you, I fly from life; and if I unworthily intrude myself, I incur your displeasure. What therefore shall I do, O my God, my Helper and my Counsellor in all necessity?

2. Teach me the right way: appoint me some brief exercise suitable to this Holy Communion. For it is good for me to know how I should prepare my heart for you with devotion and reverence, for receiving your Sacrament to my soul's health, or also for celebrating so great and divine a Sacrifice.

CHAPTER 7 - Thoroughly searching our own Conscience, and the Holy Purposes of Amendment

The Voice of the Beloved.

ABOVE all things, God's Priest ought to come to celebrate and receive this Sacrament with exceeding humility of heart, and with suppliant reverence, with full faith, and a dutiful anxiety for God's honor. Diligently examine your conscience, and to the utmost of your power, purify and make it clear with true contrition and humble confession, so there may be nothing in you that weighs heavily on you, or that may breed remorse in you, and hinder your free access to the throne of Grace. Think with displeasure of all your sins in general, and more particularly bemoan and lament your daily transgressions. And if you have time, confess to God in the secret of your heart all the wretchedness of your disordered passions.

2. Lament with pain and sighing that you are still so carnal and worldly, so unmortified in your passions, so full of the impetus of sexual lust, so unwatchful over your outward senses, so often entangled with empty longings, so much inclined toward outward things, so negligent in inward and spiritual things, so prone to laughter and unbridled mirth, so hard and indisposed to tears and contriteness, so prompt to ease and to the pleasures of the flesh, so dull to zeal and strictness of life, so curious to hear what is new and see what is beautiful, so slack to embrace what is humble and plain, so covetous of abundance, so stingy in giving, so tight in clutching, so inconsiderate in speech, so reluctant to keep silence, so ugly in manners, so fretful in conduct, so eager about food, so deaf to the Word of God, so hurried to rest, so slow to labor, so eager for gossip, so drowsy at the sacred Services, so hasty to have them end, so inclined to

¹ A long sleeveless vestment worn by a priest when celebrating Mass – WHG.

² This is another Roman Catholic belief that prompted the Reformation: but there is only one Intermediary, one Intercessor, and that is Christ (Gal 3:19-20; Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25) – WHG.

wander and be inattentive, so negligent in the prayers, so lukewarm in celebrating, so dry and heartless in receiving the Holy Eucharist, so quickly distracted, so seldom thoroughly self-collected, so suddenly moved to anger, so apt to take displeasure against another, so ready to judge, so severe to reprove, so joyful at prosperity, so weak in adversity, so often making good resolutions, and yet so poorly bringing them about.¹

3. Having confessed and bewailed these and other defects of yours, and doing so with sorrow and great displeasure at your own infirmity, make a firm resolution to always be amending your life, and making progress in all that is good. Then with full resignation, and with your entire will, offer yourself up to the honor of My Name on the altar of your heart, a perpetual whole burnt offering,² both body and soul,³ faithfully committing them to Me. And thus you may be considered worthy to draw near to celebrate this Eucharistical Sacrifice to God, and to receive the Sacrament of My Body and Blood to your soul's health.

4. For man has no oblation more worthy, nor any greater for destroying sin, than offering himself to God purely and wholly, in and with the Holy Communion of Christ's Body and Blood. And when a man has done what lies in him to, and is truly penitent, then however often he comes to Me for pardon and grace, "as I live," says the Lord, "who does not desire the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live;"⁴ "I will not remember his sins anymore, but they will all be forgiven him."⁵

CHAPTER 8 - The Oblation of Christ on the Cross, and Resignation of Ourselves

The Voice of the Beloved.

Of My own will, I offered Myself up to God the Father for your sins:⁶ My hands were stretched out on the cross, and My body was stripped and laid bare, so that nothing remained in Me that was not wholly turned into a sacrifice to appease the divine Majesty. In a similar way, you too should offer yourself willingly to Me every day in the Holy Communion,⁷ as a pure and sacred oblation, with all your strength and affections, and to the utmost reach of your inward faculties. What more do I require of you, than that you are studious to resign yourself entirely to Me? Whatever you give me other than yourself, has no value in My sight, for I do not seek your *gifts*, but *you*.⁸

2. Just as it would not suffice to possess all things without having Me, neither can it please Me, whatever you might give, if you do not offer yourself. Offer yourself to Me, and give yourself wholly to God, and your offering will be acceptable. Behold, I offered Myself wholly to My Father for you; I also gave My whole Body and Blood for your food so that I might be wholly yours, and so that you might continue to be Mine to the end. But if you stand on your own, and do not freely offer yourself to My will, the oblation is not complete; nor will there be complete union between us. Therefore, if you desire to obtain liberty and grace, then freely offering yourself into the hands of God ought to precede all your actions. For this is

¹ Jam 4

² 1Sam 7:9; Ps 51:19

³ Ps 84:2

⁴ Ezek. 18:22-23.

⁵ Isa 43:25

⁶ Isa. 53:5; Heb. 9:28.

⁷ This refers to our daily personal communion with God, not just the shared communal sacrament. – WHG

⁸ Prov. 23:26.

the reason why so few become illuminated and inwardly free: because they cannot wholly endure to deny themselves. My sentence stands sure: “Unless a man forsakes everything, he cannot be My disciple.”¹ Therefore, if you desire to be My disciple, offer yourself up to Me with your whole affection.

CHAPTER 9 - We ought to Offer up Ourselves and all that is Ours to God, and pray for All

The Voice of the Disciple.

YOURS, O Lord, are all things in heaven and earth.² I desire to offer myself up to you as a free oblation,³ and to continue yours forever. O Lord, in the simplicity of my heart I offer myself to you this day to be your servant forever, in humble submission, and for a sacrifice of perpetual praise.⁴ Receive me, along with this holy Oblation of your precious Body, which is an Offering I make to you this day in the presence of Angels⁵ who are invisibly attending; and may this further the salvation⁶ of myself and of all your people.

2. Lord, I offer to you, on your propitiatory⁷ altar, all my sins and offenses, which I have committed before you and your holy Angels, from the day in which I first could sin even to this hour – so that you may consume and burn them, one and all, with the fire of your love, and remove all the stains of my sins,⁸ and cleanse my conscience from all my offenses,⁹ and restore to me your grace which I lost by sin, sin, fully forgiving them all, and admitting me mercifully to the kiss of peace.¹⁰

3. What can I do with regard to my sins, but humbly confess and bewail them,¹¹ and unceasingly entreat your propitiation? I entreat you, hear me propitiously when I stand before you my God. All my sins are exceedingly displeasing to me; I wish never more to commit them; but I do grieve for them, and I will grieve as long as I live, being resolved to practice penitence, and to the utmost of my power to make restitution. Forgive me, O God; forgive me my sins for the sake of your holy Name;¹² save my soul which you have redeemed with your precious Blood. Behold: I commit myself to your mercy; I resign myself into your hands. Deal with me according to your goodness, not according to my wickedness and inquiry.¹³

¹ Luke 14:33.

² Ps. 24:1.

³ Lev 7:16; Deut. 16:10 – an oblation is a sacrificial offering for the forgiveness of sins, or as a tribute of praise – WHG

⁴ Ps 54:6; Heb 13:15

⁵ Lk 15:10

⁶ “Salvation” is not just conversion, but it includes the preservation and sanctification of the saints – **1Peter 1:8-9** “Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining [*present ongoing process*] the outcome of your faith: the salvation of your souls”. – WHG

⁷ Propitiation means turning away wrath. Christ is our propitiation, a sacrifice that has reconciled us to God. Without Christ, we remain “at enmity” with God, or at war with Him, and under his wrath. – WHG

⁸ Isa. 1:18

⁹ Heb 10:22

¹⁰ May perhaps include the “holy kiss” between the saints – Rom 16:16; 1Cor 16:20; 2Cor 13:12; 1Th 5:26 - WHG

¹¹ Ps. 32:5.

¹² Ps 79:9

¹³ Ps 25:7

4. I also offer up to you all that is good in me, though it is very small and imperfect, in order that you may amend and sanctify it, that you may make it pleasing and acceptable to you, and always perfecting it more and more; and bring me also, a slothful, unprofitable, and poor creature, to a good and blessed end.

5. Moreover I offer up to you all the pious desires of devout persons, the needs of my parents, friends, brethren, sisters, and all of those who are dear to me, or who have done good either to myself or to others, for your love. Also I commend to you all who have desired and begged me to pray for them and all theirs. . . . That all may feel the present help of your grace, the aid of your consolation, protection from dangers, deliverance from pain; and that, being rescued from all evils, they may with Joy return their abundant thanksgivings to you.

6. I also offer up to you my Sacramental prayers and intercessions for those especially who have in any matter hurt, grieved, or found fault with me, or who have done me any damage or displeasure. I do so for all those also whom I may at some time have aggravated, troubled, burdened, and scandalized by my words or deeds, whether knowingly or in ignorance. I pray that you would equally grant us all pardon for our sins, and for our offenses against each other. Remove from our hearts, O Lord, all suspiciousness, indignation, anger, and contention, and whatever may damage charity, and lessen our brotherly love. Have mercy, O Lord, have mercy on those who crave your mercy. Give Grace to those who stand in need of it, and make us worthy to enjoy your Grace, and move forward to life eternal. Amen.

CHAPTER 10 - The Holy Communion is not to be lightly forborne

The Voice of the Beloved.

YOU should often turn to the Fountain of grace and of divine mercy, to the Fountain of goodness and of all purity, so that you may be healed of your sins and passions, and continue to be made more strong and vigilant against all the temptations and deceits of the devil. The Enemy, knowing what exceeding great profit and restorative aid comes by the Holy Communion, endeavors by all means and on all occasions to withdraw and hinder faithful and devout persons from partaking in it.

2. This is why some persons, when they are preparing themselves for Holy Communion, suffer from the insinuations of Satan worse than before. That wicked spirit himself (as it is written in Job) comes among the sons of God¹ to trouble them according to his accustomed malice, or to render them over-fearful and perplexed, that so he may diminish their affections, or take away their faith by direct assaults. He does so to prevail on them, if possible, either to keep from communicating altogether, or at least to come to the communion table lukewarm. But pay no attention at all to his crafty and fanciful suggestions, however filthy and hideous; all such vain images are to be turned back on his own head. Believers must despise and laugh in order to scorn the miserable wretch; nor dare we omit the Holy Communion on account of his assaults, nor because of the disturbance he raises within us.

3. Often an excessive concern to reach a certain degree of devotion, or some anxiety or other arises about confessing sins, which perplex and hinder some as well. Follow the counsel of the wise² and lay aside anxiety and meticulousness; for it hinders the Grace of God, and it defeats the devotion of the mind. Do not omit the Holy Communion for every little concern and trouble; rather proceed at once to confess your sins, and cheerfully forgive others, whatever offenses they have done against you. And if you have

¹ Job 1:6.

² Prov. 13:1; [20:18](#).

offended anyone, humbly crave their pardon, and God will readily forgive you. ¹

4. What good does it do to delay the confession of your sins, or defer the Holy Communion? Make yourself thoroughly clean as soon as possible; spit out the poison with all speed; make haste to apply this sovereign Remedy. And then you shall find it is better for you than if you defer it. If you omit it today for one reason, perhaps tomorrow another reason of greater force may occur to you; and so you may be kept from Communion for a long time, and grow more and more unfit. As quickly as you can, shake off your present heaviness and sloth. For there is no use continuing in disquiet or with a disturbed conscience for long, or sequestering yourself from Divine service for every daily objection. Indeed, it is most hurtful to defer the Communion for very long, for it usually brings on a heavy spiritual drowsiness. Unfortunately, some people, who are lukewarm and undisciplined, willingly delay their confession; and they defer the Holy Communion; this is so they will not be obliged to keep a stricter watch over themselves.²

5. O how poor and cheap is their love, how weak the devotion of those who so easily put off the Holy Communion! How happy is the one, and how acceptable to God, who so orders his life, and guards his conscience in such purity, that he is prepared and well-disposed to communicate even every day if it were in his power, and this might be done without others taking notice. If a person does sometimes abstain out of humility, or by reason of some lawful cause which prevents him, he is to be commended so far as it arises from a feeling of reverence. But if a spiritual drowsiness has crept over him, then he must stir himself up, and do what lies within him; and the Lord will assist his desire, for the good will he has towards it, which is what God chiefly respects.

6. But when any valid hindrance does occur, he will still have a good and pious intention to communicate, and so he will not lose the fruit of the Sacrament. For it is in the power of any devout person, every day and every hour, profitably and without permission, to draw near to Christ in spiritual Communion. And yet on certain days, and at an appointed time, he ought to receive sacramentally, with affectionate reverence, the Body and Blood of his Redeemer, and seek the honor and glory of God rather than his own comfort.³ For he communicates mystically, and he is invisibly refreshed, as often as he devoutly calls to mind the Passion of Christ, and he is inflamed with the love of Him.

7. One who does not prepare himself except when a festival draws near, or when custom compels him to do so, will too often be unprepared. Blessed is the one who offers himself up as a whole burnt offering to the Lord, as often as he either administers or receives the Holy Communion. Do not be too slow or too hurried in celebrating; but keep the good customs of those with whom you live. You should not be tedious, and thus become troublesome to others; but instead, observe the received custom according to the appointment of our fathers, and yield yourself to the edification of others, rather than to your own devotion or feelings.

¹ Matt. 5:24; 6:14-15.

² Lk 17:3; 1Tim 4:16

³ 1Cor. 11:23-26.

CHAPTER 11 - The Body and Blood of Christ and the Holy Scriptures are most necessary to a Faithful Soul

The Voice of the Disciple.

O BLESSED, Lord JESUS, how great is the blessedness of the devout soul who feasts with you at your banquet; where no other food is set out to be eaten except Yourself, the only Beloved, who is most to be desired, above all the desires of the heart! To me it would also be a blessed thing indeed, being in your presence, to pour tears from the very bottom of my heart, and along with the grateful Magdalene to wash your feet with tears.¹ But where now is that devotion? Where is that plentiful effusion of holy tears? Surely in the sight of you and your holy Angels, my whole heart ought to be inflamed, and weep for joy. For in this Sacrament I have you truly present, even though hidden under another representation.

2. For to look upon you in your own Divine brightness, my eyes would not be able to endure it: nor could even the whole world stand in the splendor of the glory of your Majesty. In this, then, you have regard to my weakness, such that you veil yourself under this Sacramental sign. The One whom the Angels adore in Heaven, I really possess and adore. However, I possess and adore him for the present by faith, and only for a while; but they possess and adore him by sight, and without a veil. As for me, I ought to be content with the light of true faith, and to walk in it² till the day of everlasting brightness dawns, and the shadows of figures pass away.³ But when what is perfect has come, the use of Sacraments will cease⁴ because the Blessed, in their Heavenly Glory, do not need any Sacramental remedy. For they rejoice without end in the presence of God, beholding His glory face to face;⁵ and being transformed from brightness to the brightness even of the incomprehensible Deity,⁶ they taste the WORD of God made flesh, as He was from the beginning, and as He abides forever.⁷

3. While I think about these wonderful things, all spiritual comfort becomes heavy and wearisome to me, because as long as I do not behold my Lord openly in His own glory, I consider all that I see or hear in this world as nothing. You are my witness, O God, that nothing can comfort me, no creature can give me rest, but only you my God, whom I earnestly desire to contemplate everlastingly. But this is not possible as long as I linger in this mortality. Therefore I must gird myself to have great patience; and submit myself to you in every desire. For even your Saints, O Lord, who now rejoice with you in the kingdom of Heaven, waited in faith and with great patience while they lived, for the coming of your glory.⁸ What they believed, I believe; what they hoped, I hope; where they have arrived by your grace, I trust I will come. In the meantime, I will walk in faith, strengthened by the examples of the Saints. I also have holy books for my comfort and for the glass of my life; and above all these, I have your most Holy Body and Blood for a singular remedy and refuge.

¹ Luke 7:38.

² Isa 30:21; 2Jo 1:6

³ Heb 8:5,13

⁴ 1Cor. 13:10.

⁵ 1Cor 13:12

⁶ Rev 22:5

⁷ Heb 13:8

⁸ Heb. 10:35-36; 11:39-40.

4. For I perceive two things are particularly necessary for me, without which this miserable life would be insupportable to me. While I am detained in the prison of this body,¹ I acknowledge that I stand in need of two things, namely food and light. To me, thus weak and helpless, you have given your sacred Body for the refreshment both of my soul and body;² and you have set your word as a lamp unto my feet.³ Without these two things I would not be able to live well; for the word of God is the light of my soul, and your Sacrament is the Bread of life. These may also be called the two tables set on one side and the other in the treasury and jewel-house of the Holy Church.⁴ One table is that of the Sacred Altar, having the holy bread, that is, the precious Body of Christ; the other is that of the Divine Law, containing holy doctrine, teaching men the right faith, and stedfastly leading them onward even to what is within the veil, which is the Holy of Holies. Thanks be to you, O Lord JESU, you Light of everlasting Light, for that table of sacred doctrine which you have prepared for us by your servants the Prophets, and the Apostles, and other teachers.

5. Thanks be to you, O Creator and Redeemer of mankind, who, have prepared a great supper to manifest your love to the whole world,⁵ in which you have set before us to be eaten, not the typical lamb, but your own most sacred Body and Blood;⁶ rejoicing all the faithful with this sacred banquet, and replenishing them to the full with the Cup of Salvation⁷ in which are found all the delights of Paradise; and the holy Angels feast with us, but with a still more happy sweetness.

6. O how great and honorable is the office of God's Priests! To them it is granted to consecrate [the Sacrament of] the LORD of Glory with sacred words; to bless it with their lips, to hold it with their hands, to receive it with their own mouth, and also to administer it to others. O how clean those hands ought to be, how pure that mouth, how holy that body, how unspotted that heart where the Author of purity so often enters! Nothing but what is holy, no word except what is good and profitable,⁸ ought to proceed from the mouth of the Priest who so often receives the Sacrament of Christ.

7. The eyes that want to behold the Body of Christ ought to be simple and chaste; the hands that are used to touch the Creator of Heaven and earth should be pure and lifted up to Heaven. In the Law, it is said especially to the Priest, "Be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy."⁹

8. O Almighty God, assist us with your grace, so that we who have undertaken the office of the Priesthood may be able to wait on you worthily and devoutly, in all purity, and with a good conscience.¹⁰ And if we do not live in innocence as greatly as we ought to do, then at the least grant us to worthily lament the sins which we have committed; and in the spirit of humility, and with the full purpose of a good will, grant us to serve you more earnestly for the time to come.

¹ [2Cor 5:4](#)

² John 6:51.

³ Ps. 119:105.

⁴ [Ezek. 40:39-40](#); Ps. 23:5; Heb. 9:2-4; 13:10.

⁵ Luke 14:16.

⁶ John 6:53-56.

⁷ Ps. 23:5; Wisd. 16:20, 21.

⁸ [2Tim 3:16](#)

⁹ Lev. 19:2; 20:26.

¹⁰ [1Tim 1:5](#); [Heb 13:18](#)

CHAPTER 12 - He who is about to Communicate with Christ ought to Prepare Himself with great Diligence

The Voice of the Beloved.

I AM the Lover of purity and the Giver of all sanctity. I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of my rest.¹ “Make a large upper room, furnished, ready for Me,² and I will keep the passover at your house with My Disciples.”³ If you want Me to come to you, and remain with you, purge out the old leaven,⁴ and make clean the habitation of your heart. Shut out the whole world,⁵ and all the throng of sins: sit as a sparrow sits alone on the house-top, and think over your transgressions in the bitterness of your soul. For everyone who loves another will prepare the best and fairest place for his beloved; by this the affection of the one who entertains his beloved is known.

2. Notwithstanding, know that no merit of any action of yours is able to make this preparation sufficient, even if you prepared yourself for a whole year, and had nothing else on your mind. But it is out of My mere grace and favor that you are permitted to approach My table. It is as if a beggar were invited to a rich man’s dinner, and he had nothing to offer in return for his benefits, except to humble himself and give him thanks. Do what lies in you to do, and do it diligently; do not do it out of custom or necessity; but with fear and reverence and affection, receive the Body and Blood of your beloved Lord God when He deigns to come to you. I am the One who has called you; I have commanded it to be done; I will supply what is lacking in you; ***come and receive Me***.

3. When I bestow on you the grace of Devotion, give thanks to your God: not because you are worthy, but because I have had mercy on you. If you do not have it, but rather feel yourself dry, be in prayer instantly; sigh and knock, and do not give up until you are fit to receive some crumb or drop of saving Grace. You need Me; I have no need of you.⁶ Nor do you come to sanctify Me, but I come to sanctify you, and to make you better. You come so that you may be sanctified by Me, and united to Me; so that you may receive new grace, and be stirred up anew to rectify your life. See that you do not neglect this Grace, but prepare your heart with all diligence, and receive your Beloved into your soul.

4. However, you should not only prepare yourself for devotion *before* Communion, but also carefully preserve yourself in it *after* you have received the Sacrament. Nor is carefully guarding yourself less required afterwards, than devout preparation was required beforehand. For a good guard afterwards is the best preparation again for obtaining greater grace. For if a person too quickly surrenders himself to outward consolation, he is thereby rendered overly indisposed to devotion. Beware of much talk;⁷ remain in some private place and enjoy your God: for you have Him, whom all the world cannot take from you. I am He, the One to whom you should wholly surrender yourself, so that you may no longer live in yourself, but in me,⁸ free from all anguish of mind.

¹ Ps. 24:4; Matt. 5:8.

² Mark 14:14-15; Luke 22:11, 12.

³ [Mat 26:18](#)

⁴ 1Cor. 5:7.

⁵ Ex. 24:18.

⁶ [Ac 17:24-25](#)

⁷ Prov. 10:19.

⁸ [Gal 2:20](#); [2Tim 1:14](#); [1Jn 3:24](#);

CHAPTER 13 - The Devout Soul ought to seek Union with Christ in the Sacrament with the whole Heart

The Voice of the Disciple.

I wish that I might obtain this favor, Lord: to find you alone and by Yourself, to open my whole heart to you, and enjoy you even as my soul desires; and that from now on, no one may look upon me, nor any creature move me, or be regarded by me; but that you alone may speak to me, and I to you, as the beloved might speak to his beloved, and as a friend might feast with his friend.¹ This I beg of you, this I long for: that I may be wholly united to you, and that I may withdraw my heart from all created things, and by means of sacred Communion and its frequent celebration, may I learn more and more to relish heavenly and eternal things. Ah, Lord God, when will I be wholly united to you, and absorbed by you, and entirely forget myself? “You in me, and I in you;”² so also grant that we may both continue together as one.

2. Truly, you are my Beloved, the Choicest among thousands,³ the One in whom my soul is well pleased⁴ to dwell all the days of her life.⁵ Truly, you are my Peacemaker, in whom may be found the greatest peace and true rest, in whom no labor, sorrow, or infinite misery exists. Truly, you are a God who hides Yourself,⁶ and your counsel is not found with the wicked, but your speech is with the humble and simple of heart.⁷ O how sweet is your Spirit,⁸ O Lord. In order to display your sweetness toward your children, You deign to refresh them with the Bread which is full of all sweetness, which comes down from Heaven.⁹ Surely there is no other nation so great,¹⁰ which has gods so near to them, as you our God are present to all your faithful ones, to whom you give Yourself to be eaten and enjoyed for their daily comfort, and to lift up their hearts to Heaven.

3. For what other nation is there of such high renown, as the Christian people? Or what creature under Heaven is there so beloved as the devout soul into which God Himself enters, to nourish it with His glorious Flesh? O unspeakable grace! O admirable condescension! O unmeasurable love specially bestowed on man! But what shall I give to the Lord in return for this grace,¹¹ for charity so unparalleled? There is nothing else that I am able to present which is more acceptable than to offer my heart wholly to my God, and to unite its depths to Him. Then my whole inner being will rejoice when my soul is perfectly united to God. Then He will say to me, “If you are willing to be with Me, I am willing to be with you.” And I will answer Him, “Deign, O Lord, to abide with me; I will gladly be with you. This is my whole desire: that my heart be united to you.”

¹ Ex. 33:11; Cant. 8:1, 2.

² John 15:4.

³ Cant. 5:10.

⁴ [Mat 12:18](#)

⁵ [Ps 23:6](#)

⁶ Isa. 45:15.

⁷ Prov. 3:34; [Ps 1:1](#).

⁸ Wisd. 12:1.

⁹ [Jn 6:33,50](#)

¹⁰ Deut. 4:7.

¹¹ Ps. 116:12.

CHAPTER 14 - The Fervent Desire of some Devout Persons to receive the Body and Blood of Christ

The Voice of the Disciple.

O HOW great is the abundance of your sweetness, O Lord, which you have stored up for those who fear you!¹ When I call to mind some devout persons who approach to your Sacrament, O Lord, with the greatest devotion and affection, I am often confounded, and I blush within myself, that I have come with such lukewarmness, even coldness, to your Altar and to the Table of sacred Communion. I grieve to think that I remain so dry and without affection of heart; that I am not wholly inflamed in your presence, O my God. Nor am I so earnestly drawn and affected as many devout persons have been, who out of a vehement desire for the Communion, and an emotional affection of their heart, were unable to keep themselves from weeping; but with the mouth of their hearts and with their bodies alike, from the depths of their being, they panted after you, O God, the Fountain of life.² They were unable to allay or satisfy their hunger any other way, but only by receiving your Body with all delight and spiritual eagerness.

2. O the truly ardent faith of those persons, which amounts to probable evidence of your sacred Presence! For they truly know their Lord in the breaking of bread, whose heart within them so vehemently burns, while You, O blessed JESU, walk and converse with them.³ Such affectionateness and devotion as this, love and fervency so vehement, are too often far from me. Be favorable to me, O JESU, merciful, sweet and gracious Lord; grant to me, your poor needy creature, sometimes at least, in this Holy Communion, to feel just a small portion of your hearty affectionate love; do this so that my Faith may become stronger, my Hope in your goodness may be increased, and so that Charity may never decay, having once been perfectly kindled within me after tasting this Heavenly Manna.

3. Your mercy, however, is well able to grant me the Grace which I long for; and on the day when it pleases you, it will visit me most benignantly with the Spirit of fervor. For although I do not burn with a desire as vehement as those who are so especially devoted to you, yet by your Grace, I have a desire for this great inflamed desire; I am praying and longing that I may participate with all those who are your fervent lovers, and be numbered among them in their holy company.

CHAPTER 15 - The Grace of Devotion is obtained by Humility and Denial of Ourselves

The Voice of the Beloved.

YOU ought to seek the grace of Devotion earnestly, to ask for it fervently, to wait for it patiently and confidently, to receive it with gracefulness, to keep it humbly, to work with it diligently, and to commit to God the length and manner of this heavenly visitation, until it pleases Him to come to you. You should especially humble yourself when you feel little or no devotion inwardly; yet do not be too dejected, nor grieve inordinately. God often gives in one short moment, what He has denied for a long time; sometimes He gives in the end, what He deferred to give at the beginning of your prayer.⁴

¹ Ps. 31:19.

² Ps 42:1

³ Luke 24:32, 35. – *On the road to Emmaus.*

⁴ Dan 10:12

2. If Grace were always given quickly, and were available with just a wish, then weak man could not bear it well. Therefore, the grace of Devotion is to be waited for with good hope and humble patience. Nevertheless, you should impute its delay to yourself, and to your own sins, when this grace is not given to you, or when it is secretly removed. It is sometimes only a small matter that hinders and hides Grace from us; at least, if anything can be called small, and it is not instead a weighty matter that obstructs so great a good. And if you remove this hindrance, whether great or small, and completely overcome it, then you will have your desire.¹

3. For as soon as you give yourself to God from your whole heart, and seek neither this nor that according to your own pleasure or will, but settle yourself wholly in Him, then immediately you will find yourself united with Him and at peace. For nothing can afford so sweet a relish, nothing can be so delightful, as the good pleasure of the Divine will. Therefore, whoever with a single heart lifts up his intention to God, and keeps himself clear of all inordinate liking or disliking of any created thing, will be the most fit to receive Grace, and be prepared for the gift of true Devotion. **For the Lord bestows His blessings where He finds the vessels empty.**² And the more perfectly a person forsakes these lowly things, and the more he dies to himself by lowering himself,³ the quicker Grace comes, and the more plentifully it enters in, and the higher it lifts up the freed heart.

4. Then he will see, and flow together, and wonder, and his heart will be enlarged within him,⁴ because the hand of the Lord is with him, and he has put himself wholly into His hand, forever and ever. Behold: in this way the man who seeks God with his whole heart,⁵ and does not regard his soul in vain, will be blessed. This man, in receiving the Holy Eucharist, obtains the great Grace of Divine Union, because it is not done with regard to his own devotion and comfort, but *above* all devotion and comfort, it is done to the honor and glory of God.

CHAPTER 16 - We should lay open our Needs to Christ and crave His Grace

The Voice of the Disciple.

O most sweet and loving Lord, whom I now desire to receive with all devotion: you know my infirmities, and the needs which I endure; how great the evils and sins are in which I am involved; how often I am weighed down, tempted, disturbed, and defiled by them. I come to you for remedy; I entreat you for consolation and support. I speak to you who know all things, to whom all my inward thoughts are open, and who alone can perfectly comfort and help me. You know what good things I stand most in need of, and how poor I am in all virtue.

2. Behold, I stand before you poor and naked, calling for grace, and imploring your mercy. Refresh your hungry suppliant; inflame my coldness with the fire of your Love; enlighten my blindness with the brightness of your presence. Turn all earthly things into bitterness for me; turn all things that are grievous and contrary into patience; turn all lowly and created things into contempt and oblivion. Lift up my heart

¹ [Jn 15:7](#)

² [2Kgs 4:3](#)

³ [Lk 9:23](#); [Rom 14:8](#); [1Pet 2:24](#)

⁴ [Isa 60:5](#)

⁵ [Deut 4:29](#); [Jer 29:13](#)

to you in Heaven, and do not send me away to wander over the earth.¹ May you alone be sweet to me, from now and forevermore; for you alone are my meat and drink, my love and my joy, my sweetness and all my good.

3. O that you would wholly inflame, consume, and transform me into Yourself by your Presence. O that I might be made one Spirit with you,² by the grace of inward Union, and by being melted with ardent love! Do not allow me to go away from you hungry and dry; but deal mercifully with me, as you have often dealt wonderfully with your Saints. It is no marvel that I am wholly inflamed by you, and that by myself I decay and come to nothing; for you are a Fire always burning and never decaying; you are Love purifying the heart and enlightening the understanding.

CHAPTER 17 - Fervent Love, and the Vehement Desire to receive Christ

The Voice of the Disciple.

WITH deep devotion and ardent love, with all affection and fervor of heart, I desire to receive you, O Lord, as many Saints and devout persons have desired you when they were partakers of your Holy Communion. In holiness of life, they were most pleasing to you, and in devotion they were also the most fervent. O my God, everlasting Love, my whole Good, Happiness which can have no limit, I do desire to receive you with the most earnest affection, and with the most suitable awe and reverence that any of the Saints ever had or could feel toward you.

2. And although I am unworthy to entertain all those feelings of devotion, nevertheless I offer to you the whole affection of my heart. I do so, as if I were the only person who had all those most grateful and most ardent longings for you. Indeed, I offer and present to you all that a dutiful mind can conceive and desire, with the deepest reverence and most inward affection. I desire to reserve nothing to myself, but freely and most cheerfully sacrifice to you myself and all that is mine. O Lord my God, my Creator and my Redeemer, I do desire to receive you this day, with such affection, reverence, praise and honor, with such gratitude, worthiness and love, with such faith, hope and purity, as your most holy Mother, the glorious Virgin Mary, received and desired you. When the Angel declared to her glad tidings of the mystery of the Incarnation, she humbly and devoutly answered, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.”³

3. Your blessed forerunner, the most excellent among the Saints, John Baptist,⁴ rejoicing in your presence, leaped for joy by the Holy Ghost while he was still in his mother’s womb;⁵ and afterwards, seeing JESUS walking among men, he greatly humbled himself and said with devout affection, “The friend of the bridegroom who stands and listens for him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice.”⁶ In the same way, I also wish to be inflamed with great and holy desires, and to offer myself up to you from my whole heart. Which is why I offer and present to you, for myself and for all those who are commended to me in prayer, the triumphant joys, the ardent affections, the mental ecstasies, the

¹ Gen 4:12-14 (*the curse of Cain*); Ps 105:13 (*the Jews wandering from nation to nation*)

² 1Cor. 6:17. (*That is, we long to subjectively experience what we know to be objectively true – WHG*)

³ Luke 1:38.

⁴ Mat 11:11

⁵ Luke 1:44.

⁶ John 3:29.

supernatural illuminations, and the celestial visions of all devout hearts, along with all the virtues and praises celebrated and to be celebrated by all creatures in Heaven and in the earth, so that you may be worthily praised by all, and glorified forever.

4. Receive, O Lord my God, my wishes and desires to give you infinite praise and blessing that has no bounds, which according to the measure of your ineffable greatness, are most justly due to you. These praises I render to you, and I long to render them every day and every moment. And with all entreaty and affectionateness, I invite and beseech all Heavenly spirits, and all your faithful servants, to render with me thanks and praises to you.

5. Let all people, nations, and languages praise you,¹ and magnify your holy and most delicious Name with highest exultation and ardent devotion. And let all who reverently and devoutly celebrate your most high Sacrament, and receive it with full faith, be considered worthy to find grace and mercy at your hands, and pray with humble supplication on my behalf, a sinner. And when they have attained their desired devotion, and joyful Union with you, and have departed from your Holy Heavenly Table, well-comforted and marvellously refreshed, may they deign to remember poor me.

CHAPTER 18 - A Man should not be a Curious Searcher into the Holy Sacrament, but a humble Follower of Christ, submitting his Sense to Divine Faith

The Voice of the Beloved.

YOU should beware of curious and unprofitable searching into this most profound Sacrament if you do not want to be plunged into the depths of doubt. One who scrutinizes My Majesty will be overpowered by its glory;² God is able to work more than man can understand.³ A dutiful and humble enquiry after the Truth is allowable, provided we are always ready to be taught, and provided that we are studious to walk in accord with the sound opinions of the Fathers.

2. It is a blessed simplicity when a man leaves the difficult ways of questions and arguments, and goes forward in the plain and firm path of God's commandments. Many have lost their devotion when they sought to search into things too high for them. Faith is required by you, and a sincere life; not the height of understanding, nor the depth of the mysteries of God. If you do not understand or grasp the things that are beneath you, how will you comprehend those which are above you?⁴ Submit yourself to God, and humble your sense to faith, and then the light of knowledge will be given to you in whatever degree will be profitable and necessary for you.

3. Some are badly tempted about faith and the Holy Sacrament; but this is not to be attributed to themselves, but rather to the enemy. Do not be anxious about this; do not dispute using your own thoughts, or give any answer to doubts that are suggested by the devil. Instead, trust the words of God; trust His Saints and Prophets; and the wicked enemy will flee from you.⁵ It often is very profitable to the servant of God to endure such things. For the devil does not tempt unbelievers and sinners whom he has already secure possession of. Instead, he tempts and disquiets faithful, religious, and devout persons in

¹ Prov. 25:27 [Latin vers.]; Ps. 117:1.

² Ex 33:20 Wesley's commentary on Ex 33:20 probably quotes this line.

³ Isa 55:8

⁴ Jn 3:10-12; Mk 4:13

⁵ Jam 4:7

various ways.

4. Forge on, therefore with simple and undoubting faith, and with the reverence of a suppliant, draw near to the Holy Sacrament. Whatever you are not able to understand, commit securely to Almighty God. God does not deceive you; someone who trusts too much in himself is the one deceived. God walks with the simple;¹ reveals Himself to the humble, gives understanding to the little ones,² opens the sense to pure minds,³ and hides Grace from the curious and proud.⁴ Human reason is feeble and may be deceived, but true Faith cannot be deceived.⁵

5. All reason and natural curiosity ought to follow Faith, not go before it, or break in on it. For Faith and Love specially take the lead here, and work in hidden ways in this most holy, most supremely excellent Sacrament. God, who is eternal, and incomprehensible, and of infinite power, does things great and unsearchable in Heaven and on earth.⁶ There is no tracing out His marvellous works.⁷ If the works of God were such that they might be easily comprehended by human reason, they could not be justly called marvellous or unspeakable.

THE END

¹ Ps. 19:7; 119:130; Matt. 11:25.

² [Prov 9:4-6](#)

³ [Tit 1:15](#)

⁴ [Jam 4:6](#); [1Pet 5:5](#)

⁵ [1Tim 4:1](#)

⁶ [Job 5:9](#); [Ps 145:3](#)

⁷ [Rom 11:33](#)