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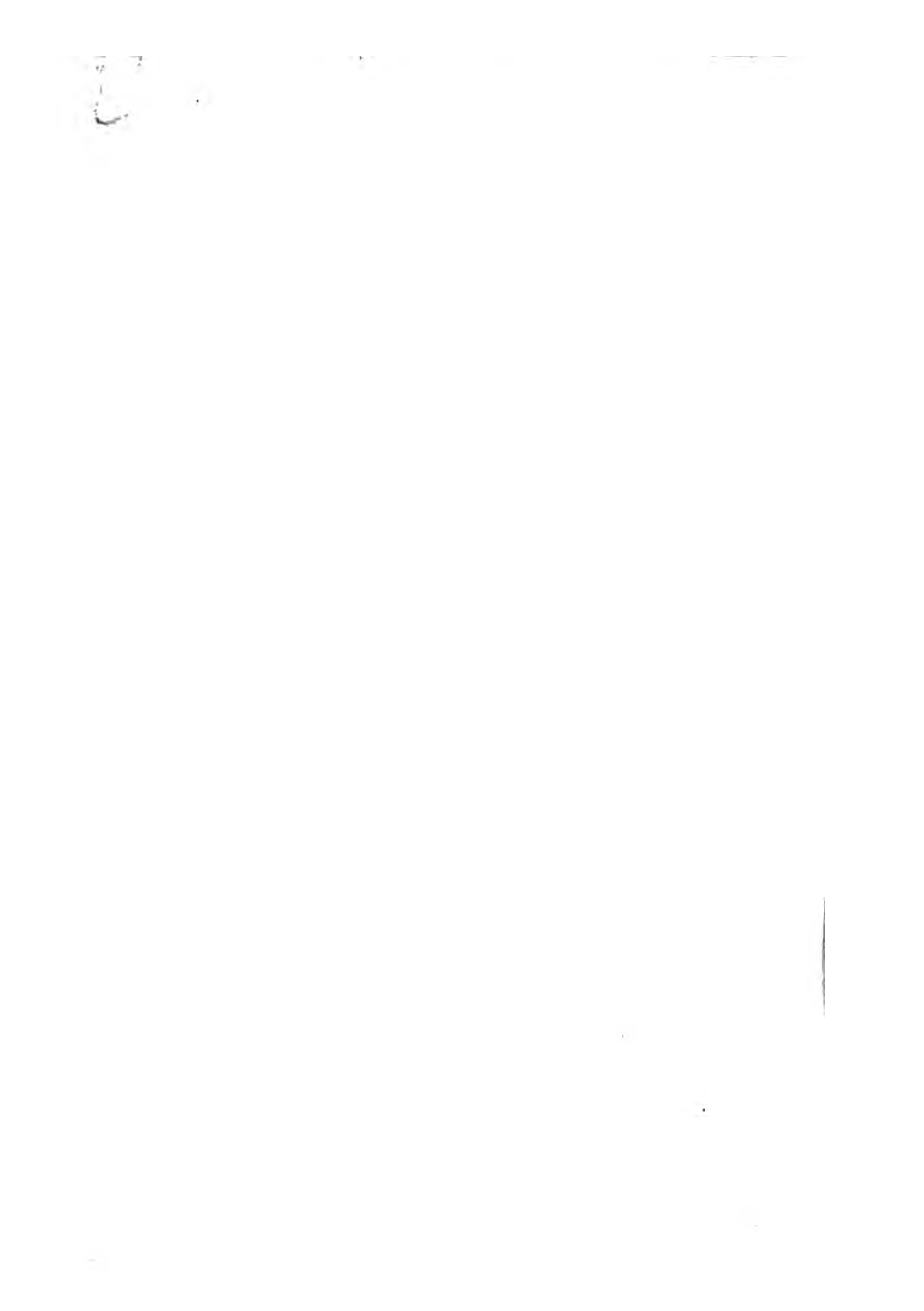
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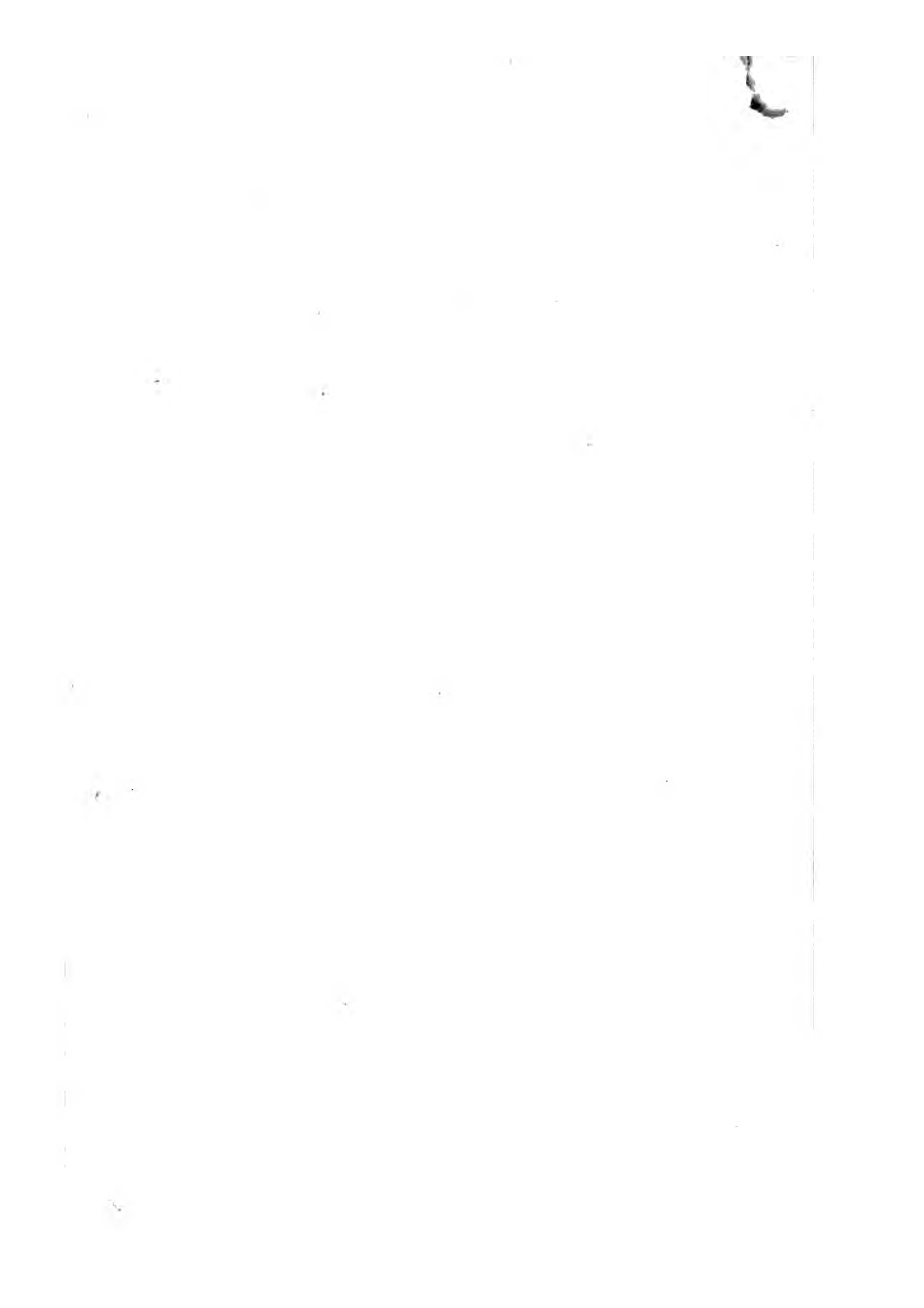




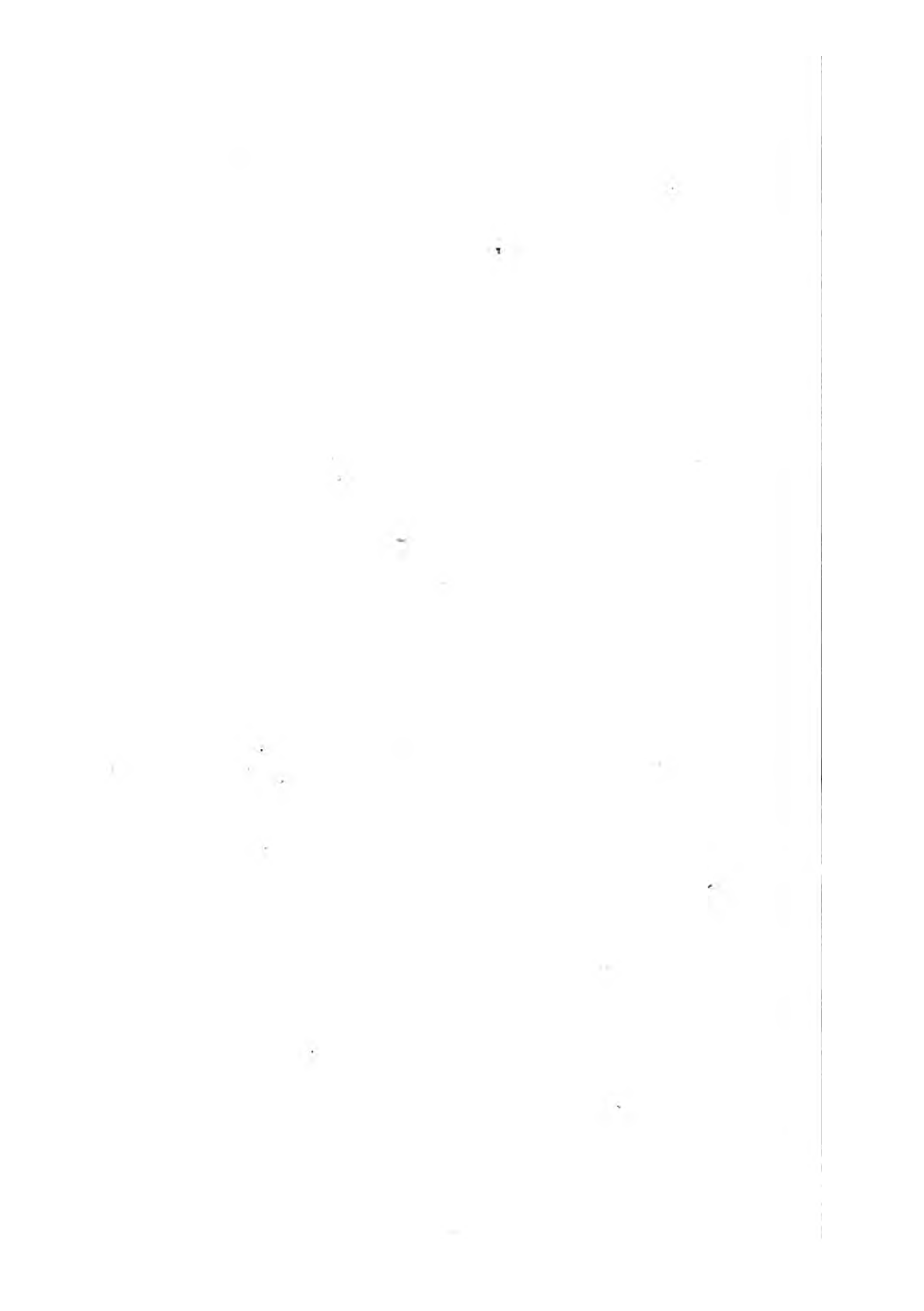
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THE EASY WAY TO GOD.

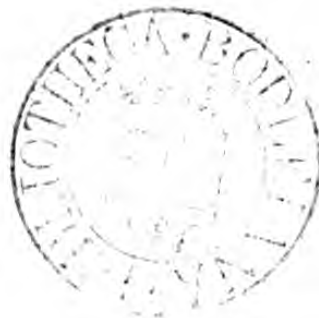


THE EASY WAY TO GOD:
A MANUAL
OF
EJACULATORY PRAYER.

BY
CARDINAL BONA.

TRANSLATED BY
HENRY COLLINS.

AUTHOR OF "SPIRITUAL CONFERENCES," "CISTERCIAN
LEGENDS," ETC., ETC.



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PREFACE TO THE READER,

I HAVE had much anxiety, Christian Reader, thinking over with myself, and revolving in my mind, how I might best hold conference with thee, in this threshold of my work. After long thought nothing occurs to me, unless to wish thee much prosperity from the bottom of my heart. Mayest thou, by the use of this book, obtain true and eternal salvation. Having given thee this good wish, why burden thee with a lengthy preface? It is better to stop, for what will that be, which I could further add? Something to court thy favour and praise? Spare

your words, I have no ambition for such things, Shall I seek thy good will with exquisite flowery speech? Good will is not obtained by words, but by mutual good offices and benefits. Shall I gather together rules, which may more usefully be read in the work itself, in their proper places? Shall I extol the profitableness and excellence of my matter? But thou seest already by the title and prospectus, that nothing can be better than an easy road to God, Shall I excuse, as many do, the form, style, and character of the diction? I have neglected enticing ornaments, following the verse of Manilius :

Ornari res ipsa vetat, contenta doceri.

Shall I preach about my zeal, and my labour, which has not been little? I have written, however, for the sake of piety, not for pomp. Shall I unfold to thee beforehand the scope of the work? This would be a vain task, for it is done already in the very first Chapter of it. Shall I ask thee to defend me against ill-tongued detractors? There is

no need. I despise and fly from all such men. If I do not escape them, it is God's cause which is at stake. He will plead for it, and defend it. Shall I make apology for my mystical terms and phrases? By no means, for I have abstained from the employment of obscure words, or if a few are to be found, it is because the matters treated of absolutely required it. It is the fault of the subject, not mine. Shall I forestall objectors, who may pull my study to pieces, and chide me with audacity? These pages are not for such readers at all, as seek strife, and are noted for enmities. Besides, I humbly confess that I have written of a sublime thing, not taught by my own experience, but by that of others: as it is written: *I believed and therefore have I spoken.* I will add, that it is a solace to me to debate about perfection, like sick people, who, not being in health, cannot refrain speaking of its advantages.

But, in conclusion, to endeavour to get up on high is a noble thing. Why then should I fruitlessly delay thee longer here? My only wish is that thou

shouldst love God, haste to Him, and gain me the grace not to stick on the way, without moving, having pointed out the way to others, who are speeding on their journey.—Farewell.

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EASY WAY TO GOD.

CHAPTER I.

The aim and use of this book. A prayer to God for direction. The two ways to God, and their differences.

THE thing I propose to myself in this book is to point out, in a short compendium, the way of a more holy life to those who would wish to know what they should do. For this purpose I shall use not instructions or rules of my own, but those of the ancient Fathers. I trust that the use of this treatise will be found neither unprofitable nor unpleasant. For since to many the way to God seems long, and thorny, they will perhaps be no little pleased in mind to hear proposed to them a most easy way, not commonly known, in which there is neither toil nor tediousness. Nor will my teaching of this way be a disadvantage to

me, though in act I run not on it. For, as a certain wise man writes : " A man who teaches learns by so doing, and whilst he speaks, he often hears together with those who hear him. For the teacher and the hearer have all one Master, who gives His dew to the higher mind, and to the lower reason."* Whilst, then, I direct the feet of others into the way of peace, I will myself begin to guard my feet from every evil way. And when I shall have perfected the steps of my hearers in the paths of God, I will exult as a giant to run that course which shall bring me to the top of the mountain, drawn by a direct road to the third heaven—to that darkness in which God dwells.

2. But as I am so sunk in sloth of heart, and as I carry about with me the images of this world's things, and cannot therefore rise to Him who has made darkness His hiding-place, unless He Himself help me, it is but just that I should first of all make my prayer, that He, the Lord of all knowledge, the Guide on the road to supernatural contemplation, and the hidden light, would vouchsafe to open my heart and to raise aloft my mind.

Do Thou, O Lord, Who knowest the hearts of all men, guide me to that highest pinnacle of the mystical oracles which is most clear with light, yet cannot be plainly shown : where the simple, unchangeable mysteries of divine science are laid open in that most bright darkness of a silence that teaches

* S. Clement.

hidden things—a darkness that in a most shadowy obscurity gives a light most clear, and with beams of fairest splendour overwhelms the blinded eyes of the mind in its exceeding fulness. For all my aim, the goal of all my longings, is to arrive at Thee, my beginning and my last end, the most desirable centre of my soul.

3. There are, however, as the most considerable men affirm, two ways by which the soul may go to God. The first is called scholastic and common, the second mystical and secret. Each of them is a heavenly gift, coming down from above, from the Father of lights; but they differ from each other in many ways. The first requires study and search, and is suited to a few endowed with more lofty learning. The latter may be had by all, everywhere and always. The first is speculative, the second is practical. The first has its proper place in the understanding, the second in the will. The first, exposed as it is to illusions, to pride and curiosity, has cause for fear. The second walks in security and simplicity, seeking nothing but God. The first works naturally, by the imagination and discourse, the second supernaturally, with the pure and simple intelligence. The first proceeds from acquired knowledge, the second from the infused gifts of the Holy Ghost. The first is narrow, not exceeding the limits of human speculation. The second expands the heart to the infinite, and transcends all measures of natural knowledge. The

first is long, laborious, and difficult. The second is short, quick, and most easy. The first beginning from the very bottom, from the rooting out of bad habits, and moderation of tumultuous affection, ascends, by zeal for virtue and the offices of the active life, to the summit of perfection. The second—by an admirable circle, beginning from love—goes on to love, and ends in love, by uplifted motions of the mind and inflamed aspirations.

Love, as was known even by Plato, is a circle, perpetually revolving from good to good. The first road, by the help of God, I have already taught in my "Guide to Heaven;" the second I would now here briefly unfold. But again I must apply to God by prayer that He would guide my mind and hand, and inflame my heart with love. For His hidden things are better understood and explained by loving than by reasoning.

1. Glory of our heavenly home,
Blessed, Holy, Spirit, come!
Comfort of the Saints on high,
Let us feel Thy Presence nigh;
Gracious Spirit, heavenly Guest,
In our hearts take up Thy rest.

2. Spirit of celestial light,
Terror of the sons of night,
Sweet salvation of mankind,
Beam on us for we are blind;
Gracious Spirit, heavenly Guest,
In our hearts take up Thy rest.

3. Holy wisdom's fostering ray,
Streaming from the eternal day,
Break upon us from above,
With the light of holy love ;
Gracious Spirit, heavenly Guest,
In our hearts take up thy rest.

4. Flame of heaven, breath divine,
Enter Thou these souls of Thine,
Burning up all sin's alloy,
Firing us with sacred joy ;
Gracious Spirit, heavenly Guest,
In our hearts take up Thy rest.





CHAPTER II.

There are two mystical roads : one active, the other passive. What they both of them are. Whoever wishes to arrive at the summit of the mystical knowledge of God must leave all things:



OUR business now is to treat of the mystical way to God, leaving aside that called the scholastic way. This mystical way, however, according to the teaching of the extatic Doctor Denys, the Carthusian, is twofold; that is, active and passive. This division is also to be collected from the great Denys, the Areopagite, who thus writes to Timothy. "Thou, then, dear Timothy, when exercising thyself intently in mystical contemplations, leave thou thy senses and intellectual operations—leave all sensible and intelligible things, and everything that is or is not—and, as far as thou mayest, rise in an obscure manner to union with Him, who is above all essence and knowledge; if thus, by a free, absolute and clear calling away of thyself from all things, thou mayest be borne aloft to the super-

natural ray of the divine darkness, all things being drawn under thee, and thou being set free from all." In another place also he says: "There is, too, a most divine knowledge of God, which is received by a not knowing, in accordance with the union which is above the understanding, when the mind, retiring from all things, and even at length abandoning itself, is united to God by rays shining from above, and is by them filled with light in that unsearchable deep of wisdom."

In these words both ways of contemplation are treated of. He treats of the active, which has its seat in our own will, yet so as not to exclude the need of divine help by infused light. This he does when he counsels Timothy to dispose himself for union by abstraction from all things of all sorts. The senses are to be left, because they perceive not the things that are of the Spirit of God, and all objects of the senses or understanding to wit, as the sources of knowledge, and of reasonings or discourse. He must leave those things that are, to wit, the unchangeable essential qualities of things—and those things that are not, by which are meant things that are accidental, and only for a time. Such things are with reason said not to be, on account of their fickle mutability. When he has thus cleared himself from all impediment, a future thing is promised to him, namely: that he shall be raised aloft, and drawn upwards to God to the supernatural ray of the divine darkness. For then the

soul is ravished by a divine influence and absorbed into God, which is a passive contemplation. This passive way, however, supposes the active as a prerequisite disposition.

2. The blessed Bernard expounds this twofold way of tending to divine union in these words: "Some are drawn, and can say: '*Draw me after Thee!*' Some are brought in by guidance; these say: '*He brought me into the cellar of wine!*' Others are caught up by ravishment, as the Apostle '*was caught up to the third heaven!*' The first indeed are happy, who in their patience possess their souls. The second are more happy who of their own will confess to the Lord. The third are most happy of all. These, having, as it were, buried the liberty of their free-will in the abyss of the mercy of God, are caught up to the riches of His glory in the spirit of burning; despising and treading under all support of outward things, and of the senses, they do not mount step by step, but by unlooked-for and sudden ravishments are borne to the Father." The honey-tongued Doctor in the two first describes those in the active ways of contemplation; but the third is the passive. "The Most High God," according to the words of the excellent master, Deny the Carthusian, "when He sees the mind of man penetrated with a zeal after spiritual righteousness, on fire with love, and supported by purity of soul and every virtue—when He sees it thus aspiring greatly after divine things, He presently runs to

meet it most graciously, in lavish abundance helping it. He comes lovingly and with frequent recurrence, manifesting Himself to it, and, by an in-pouring of Himself, He communicates Himself to it, He elevates the soul to Him, ravishes her into Himself, kissing and embracing her. He offers and gives Himself to be looked at by her, tasted, and enjoyed. He takes great complacency in her, and, clasping her in a tight embrace, He renders her fruitful."

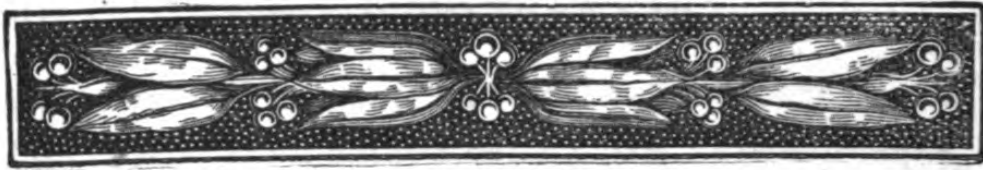
3. The supreme portion of our soul will then be ready for the reception of God, as the great contemplator of divine things, Ruisbroek, admonishes us in his mirror of eternal salvation, when she has become wholly naked, and void of forms or images, ever looking towards Him from Whom she first sprang. Nature can do nothing towards this, says Saint Bonaventure; our own industry can achieve little; small reliance, therefore, must be given to our own endeavours, much to the unction of God, little to words and writings, the whole to God's gift. Let us die, therefore, and enter this darkness; let us impose silence on our cares, our longings, and our imaginations. Let us pass beyond, with Christ crucified, to the Father, out of this world, that, having seen Him, we may say with Philip, "It sufficeth us." The true life is the flight man alone to God alone. So speaks Plotinus, the Platonic. But I better choose a Christian speaker. "Leave man, Angels, and heaven," says Tauler, "and lay

hold of the very essential good, the very essential truth, in its naked self; for whatsoever thou addest over and above shrouds it, and excludes unity." The Platonic philosophers, whose words and phrases are of frequent use with Denys the Areopagite, as Saint Maximus affirms, teach no lesson more frequently than that, to ascend to God, we must leave all things. Hence, in his *Phædo*, Plato teaches that philosophy is the withdrawing of the mind from the body—that is, its separation from affections of the body. The Pythagoreans were perfectly aware of this same truth. One of them, who was at one time the master of Justin Martyr, thus exhorted him: "Do not think that you will understand anything appertaining to true happiness unless first you wean your soul from sensible things, and, causing it to pass beyond to things of the understanding, so render it apt from virtue, and for the contemplation even of the supreme good."

4. This is true wisdom, proceeding, by a most blessed emanation, from the fountain of all good things, and divinely infused into the minds of the Saints. The soul, all steeped with this wisdom, with insatiable longings, and aspirations after union, desires not the gifts of God, but Himself the Giver. With affections on fire, she sighs for Him until she obtains Him. Such sighs were those of the Prophet, when he said: "Who will give me the wings of a dove, then will I flee away, and be at rest." But

if you would ask where that true rest is, behold, he says further : "Lo, I have got me away far off, and have remained in the lonely desert." For the eternal word is uttered only in the lonely desert, in that solitude which a man dwells in when he is abstracted from the multiplicity of affairs, leaving also himself, to become as one abandoned, and an exile. This solitude is the home of the Saints, whose sentiments are thus given, in the words of Tertullian. I have nothing to do with the market, the places of public assembly, nor the king's court. You do not find me watching for office on the pulpit, or at the courts of law. I am not seen worshipping the windows, or beating the benches of the theatre. I do not disturb people's rights, or bring people to law. I neither judge, nor fight, nor reign. I have retired from the people. I have but one business. My only business is that I may have no business. There is an old saying : "No one is born for another, to die to himself." Truly we are come now to Epicurus and Zenos. You call all the teachers of quiet wise men, who warily preserved quiet under the title of the most supreme and only pleasure.





CHAPTER III.

Mystical Theology; what it is. How it differs from other sciences. Whether it was known to the ancient Platonists. Its source and its aim.

QUIET, retirement, and abstraction, are the road by which to arrive at mystical Theology—that is, by which to reach to that unlearned wisdom superior to all the human wisdom, by which, without discourse or reasonings, the mind knows her God, and, as it were, handles and tastes Him. Mystical Theology is a most secret communing of the mind with God. It is a certain heavenly knowledge of God, springing from union of the will cleaving to God, or produced by a light from heaven. It is an experimental wisdom, with an affection towards God, divinely infused, cleansing the mind from all disorder, and uniting it intimately with God, by the supernatural acts of faith, hope, and charity. Various authors give

other definitions, but they all coincide with the above. For a thing so altogether divine, abstruse, and hard, cannot be circumscribed by surely fixed limits, or be defined with logical exactitude.

2. It is plain, from what has been said, that mystical Theology is not, properly speaking, a scientific knowledge, insomuch as such knowledge is an acquired habit. Mystical Theology, in so far as it is an act, is simply the fixing of the mind upon God, an admiration of His majesty, the soul suspended in the immense uncreated Light. It is a most fervent, quiet, and transforming gaze into the Godhead. Taken as a habit, it is in reality the very same thing as that most excellent gift of the Holy Ghost called wisdom, in its most sublime degree.

3. Scholastic and symbolic Theology differ from Mystical Theology. The scholastic deducing what it asserts from the dark principles of orthodox faith, whilst the symbolic explains language concerning God, that is couched in figures. Mystical Theology, by a certain simple and tranquil gaze, discerns the hidden things of the Divine wisdom, without any busy excursion of the reasoning powers. By scholastic Theology man learns to make a right use of things of the intellect; by the symbolic of sensible things; but by the mystical he is caught up out of himself to things above nature. Human knowledge is learned in the valley of the imaginative powers; this knowledge in the very

topmost region of the mind. Human knowledge requires much discourse, and is subject to error. This knowledge is taught and learned in a single simple word. It is also purely supernatural, both in its substance and in its mode of proceeding.

4. We read many things of the Platonic philosophers, which, at first sight, seem to argue that they had some experience of mystical Theology. Eunapius, in his life of Jamblichus, writes that sometimes he was raised above the earth fifteen feet. Porphyrius also, in his life of Plotinus, tells us wonderful things of his contemplation. Proclus, too, in his book on the theology of Plato—and even Plotinus himself—make mention in several places of ecstasies, and of such abstraction from the things of the senses as agrees with the defined rules of our wisdom. The author also of the Divine wisdom, according to the Egyptians, speaks thus of himself: Oftentimes my mind has been so wrapt in contemplation that, leaving the body behind, I seemed to be raised to the enjoyment of the supreme good, with a pleasure passing all belief! All the sayings and doings, however, of these men, never, as Tauler observes, transcended the limits of the natural order. Men of such grand and subtle genius could so refine the things of the imagination as to be able to represent objects to the understanding in a highly abstracted manner, with scarce a shade of anything sensible about them. And if, while thus occupied in the clear contemplation of sublime intellectual

things, images were suggested to the mind, then the intellect raised itself high up above them, and, so to speak, looked down on these clouds of the imagination beneath it.

However, it is not very plain what conclusion to come to on this matter, or how this state was brought about. Fromund Libertus, disputing on the matter with his usual acuteness in his *Christian Philosophy*, conjectures that these philosophers attained to these ravishments by the help of a certain interior light. Of this light Valerian the Great treats in his two-fold dissertation on mental lights. Fromund considers this dissertation to be obscure, without being learned. What opinion ought to be formed on this subject, we hope, by the help of God, to lay down more at large elsewhere. For, with respect to the Platonic Philosophers of a later age, it is quite certain that they are charged by Saint Augustin with being corrupted by a curiosity in the things of magic. The more ancient were puffed up by a spirit of pride. Knowing God, they did not glorify Him as God, but became vain in their thoughts. They were frigid speculators, without faith or charity.

5. Now the well-spring of all mystical Theology, and of the knowledge the soul has of God is, in its primary source, the very essence of goodness, the first cause of all things, the uncreated Trinity. This God, who is above all created things, has caused the redundancy of His goodness to pour its

flood upon us. All do not receive alike an equal share in the divine illuminations, some men having a greater aptitude for them than others, or a greater unsuitability and resistance. We say therefore, together with the most blessed Denys, that God, Who is the primary blessedness, Who alone has the Godhead by nature, the source of all that is divine, by which those are made divine who become so ; this God has conceded to men the gift of mystical Theology, that they may be saved and rendered divine. He has conceded this gift to some in a manner more immaterial and spiritual, not moving them to divine things from without, but from within, pouring upon them, in a manner discerned intellectually, the pure, clear light of His most divine pleasure. This wisdom has for its aim a continual love towards God and divine things, a most perfect knowledge of God, together with a divine participation, and enjoyment of this simple perfection. This blissful participation recreates with a spiritual food the soul that contemplates her God. It joins her with Him by a most close union, in a manner passing all description, and renders her divine. In this wisdom is to be found a power, far exceeding all human force—a working of the Godhead, by which the mind raised into God is initiated in the divine secrets, and is taught by God the science of His mysteries. But now we must consider how a mortal man may dispose himself, by his own acts, for the reaching a wisdom so sublime and heavenly.



CHAPTER IV.

*Dispositions for mystical Theology. Impediments
Who are incapable of learning it, who apt for it
Prayer and thanksgiving.*

THE Schoolmen lay it down as an indispensable rule, that a disposition towards anything must have a congruity with the form to which it disposes. Now, it has been said above, that mystical Theology is wholly supernatural. It follows from hence, by closest consequence, that a certain supernatural state, proportioned to it, is a pre-requisite for its attainment. Those who are disciples of mystical Theology may do nothing, says Saint Denys, in the very least way repugnant to the divine inspirations. They must in no way disagree with their inspirations, if they would be admitted to behold the divine glory, or aspire after it with becoming holiness. There is therefore a constant mortification required. He must not be at variance with himself or be divided who desires to be gathered up to unity. It is for

this very reason that so few spiritual and religious men have any knowledge of this mystical wisdom, because very few there are who courageously deny themselves, and are perfectly mortified. This remark is made by James Alvarez.

2. The next pre-requisites are supernatural acts of faith, hope, and charity. By these acts the mind goes directly to God. Faith gives perfection and life to the understanding, hope to the memory, and charity to the will in the mystic order. The Venerable John of the Cross gives a large and beautiful exposition of how they act in his most divine treatises: the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, the *Obscure Night*, and the *Lively Flame of Love*. The disciple must also have a great, fervent, and insatiable longing to reach perfection. He must be able to say with the wise man—"I have loved her, and sought her out from my youth. And I sought to take her to myself as a bride, and I became enamoured of her beauty." There is no doubt, says Richard, that, without a huge exercise, frequency of study, and a burning desire, the mind will never be raised up to attain perfectly to the sublime nature of this knowledge.

3. John Tauler, most expert in his knowledge of mystical things, prescribes six things to be observed by the man who would arrive at the highest climax of perfection. Three of these things concern the exterior, and three the interior. His clothing, and all things of the outward man, must be simple; in

such things he must seek to please none but God. His words must not be profuse ; they must be such as are necessary, and of things divine. Nothing must appear in his deportment which might offend the beholder. For the inward man he must seek God alone with a most pure intention ; so that, come what might, he would keep his peace of mind undisturbed. Antony Monelia, a Friar Minor, a great man among the Mystics, but scarcely at all known, teaches that there are six chains by which the soul is detained from ascending to mystical Theology. The first is negligence in spiritual matters, when he is not willing to exercise and mortify himself. The second is the vagabond wanderings of the senses. The third is the curiosity of the understanding after matters of knowledge. The fourth is a disordered love of temporal things. The fifth is a want of purity in works undertaken. The sixth is exterior occupations. Saint Bernard counts but four hindrances to the soul's ascent. He gives them in these words : " If any of you at any time should be caught up into this secret place, this sanctuary of God, and so hidden there as not to have been disturbed or called away, either by the demands of the senses, the pricking of cares, or the remorse of guilt, or by what is far harder to put away, the rushing in of bodily imaginations—such an one could indeed, when he came back to us, make boast and say : The King brought me into his chamber." By the demands of the senses he

would signify sensuality wanting overmuch, and troubling us by the disordered motions of its desires. The pricking cares are an anxiety about temporal things. The remorse of guilt is the sting of a bad conscience. The rushing in of bodily imaginations signifies those images which Saint Augustine calls the wounds of our soul inflicted by the senses. That we may find God all these things must be laid aside and rooted out altogether. "So long," says Richard, "as we receive comfort from anything created, we do not yet perfectly hold our Beloved." The moment we become such as to take no delight at all in earthly things, that very moment we shall behold what we so long for. This is the promise of Saint Augustine.

4. See how many dispositions are necessary for entering into mystical Theology. There are so many that we might well cry out, as was done in the ancient Liturgies : " Away all profane persons ! depart, depart !" Saint Denys warns Timothy to let none hear of these mystical things who still stick to the things of nature, and who imagine supernatural things to be as things natural ; who, steeped in material objects, have not, by the exercise of mortification and virtue, acquired the necessary candour of soul, but walking in things too wonderful, and too high for them, suppose themselves able to scan the secrets of God with their own bare reason. Against these we oppose the song of the Christian Poet.

Lo ! God is nigh,
Depart ye impious. Begone afar
All that to heaven hateful are,
For God is nigh.

As smoke flits by,
As wax dissolves before the flame,
So flee His foes before His Name
When God is nigh.

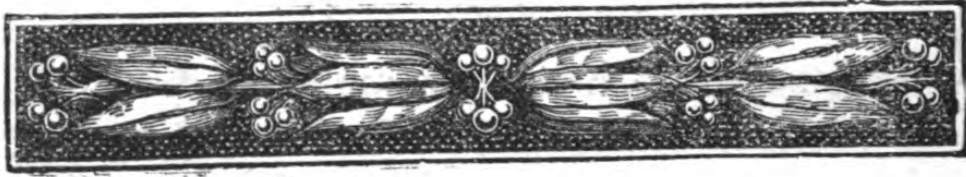
But this wisdom is given sooner, and in a manner more sublime, to the simple and ignorant, who with reverential fear care only for their salvation, than it is wont to be conferred on great and learned theologians, unless their learning be steeped with a sincere love of humility. Such is the sentence of that most excellent man Bartholomew of the Martyrs, Archbishop of Brachar. Saint Bernard, discoursing of this same matter, cries out: "O, curious man, that wouldst learn what it is to enjoy this Word, make ready for it, not thine ear, but thy mind. The knowledge of it is taught, not by the tongues of men, but by grace. It is hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed to the little ones." A similar doctrine has been delivered by many other men of wisdom—Bonaventure, Gerson, Victor Gelenius, Constantine de Barbunson, Suarez, &c. This same doctrine is confirmed by the writings and examples of many holy women, whose Master in this science was God Himself. There are the three Catherines of Siena, Genoa, and Bononi. To them may be added the Blessed An-

gela of Foligno, the great Saints Gertrude, Mechtilde, Battista Vernacia, Teresa of Jesus, and many others.

5. Such in sooth, was Thy good pleasure, everlasting God, king of heaven and earth. For Thou resistest the proud, and givest grace unto the lowly ; and Thy speech is with the simple. I thank Thee, O Lord, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to the little ones. Not with such light hast Thou shone within the puffed up hearts of the wise of this world, as Thou shinest in the minds of the little ones, the lowly ones, that abandon the earth. Verily, Thou art a hidden God, dwelling in unapproachable light. Yet to those who have the crucified Jesus imprinted on their hearts and bodies Thou dost lovingly communicate the plentifulness of Thy light—to those who have cleansed their souls from the defiling stain of pleasures. Souls such as these dost Thou deeply penetrate in living power, far otherwise than is Thy wont with those on whose minds thou pourest Thy ray, Thyself unknown, and their will still barren. Thou piercest to the very marrow of these souls. They feel Thy spiritual touch, how sweetly Thou caressest, and how with marvellous satiety Thou fillest full the immense capacity of their heart. Then out of the very abundance of the soul are uttered words, oh so good, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb ! From these souls have I learned that true wisdom

which is not found in the dry, unsavoury books of vain philosophers. They indeed relate to me their stories, but not like Thy law. Even so, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight.





CHAPTER V.

What is mystical union. How it comes about. What are its effects. What the reading of mystical Theology does for the ignorant and incapable. The Passage to Aspirations.

WHATSOEVER is written about mystical Theology tends to this end, namely, to draw the soul to an intimate union with God. The marrow of its wisdom consists in this. This is its chief secret. This union, however, is not one of place, in that God by His immensity is everywhere present, leaving no space void. It is not the union of sanctifying grace, by which the soul cleansed from sin is restored to God's friendship, and made partaker of the divine nature. It is not the union of charity of which the Scripture says, "He that dwelleth in charity, dwelleth in God, and God in him." The first of these unions is given even to things inanimate: the second belongs to all the righteous, and even to children who have not yet the use of reason: for these

unions have place in the substance of the soul. The third kind of union is common to all the good, who love God most ardently, but have not the gift of contemplation and mystical union. There is, therefore, a most blissful union, of a secret nature, the way to which is closed up to inexperienced persons, and its very nature is hard to explain. This union is in the powers of the soul ; to wit, the understanding and the will, which, finding God, are joined to Him by the vital actions peculiar to them. In this union this life's bliss reaches its climax, and has a kind of foretaste of the glory of the next. Of this union it is not for one so incapable as myself to treat at large. To soar up to such divine heights is not lawful for the impure and unclean. Let him who is worthy read the rich treasures which the most learned Thomas of Jesus has collected from holy Fathers concerning this union. This blessed man, like another Hierotheus, suffering divine things, has brought together the doctrine of all the Mystics, adding also many things from his own proper experience.

2. In this union the understanding beholds God, filled to the full with the most clear light of wisdom. Her gaze is fixed on Him, as on a certain whole, in which whole is every good, and so rapt is its contemplation as not to be able to be diverted to any other consideration. The will is braced up with burning love, so that, like as a fire sending

out torrents of flames on every side clears away and destroys everything, so the soul no longer pays attention to her natural actions, but, passing beyond with her whole affections into God, is united to Him in most strict embrace. Both of her powers are, so to speak, introduced into the most vast solitude of the Godhead, where the Father, stripping the understanding of all images, lifts it up above all reason. The Son of God pours forth into the understanding, thus emptied, the streams of His infinite brightness. The Holy Ghost, in the will, kindles an immense burning fire. He gathers up all the soul's affections together, and glues them to Himself, and our mortality is swallowed up in life immortal. Then the soul says, "*It is good for us to be here.*" For she has been introduced into "the cellar of wine," where she is soberly inebriated with the glad drink of the Spirit. Then she sings the song of the bridal chamber, "My Beloved to me, and I to him; I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." The soul, full of love, melts away, losing herself, and being, as it were, brought to nothing, she falls fainting into the bottomless deep of eternal love. There, dead to herself, she lives in God. She knows nothing, she feels nothing but love. She loses herself in the divine darkness, but such losing is a true finding.

3. O how happy is that holy soul which, being singularly visited by God, is elevated above all

created things, and above every work, to be transformed into God by mystical union. How apt for her are the words of the wise man, "All good things come to me together with it." For inasmuch as that most blissful union is an embrace and a tasting of the Supreme Good, from it there flow into the soul all good things, as rivulets of water from a welling spring. From this mystical union are derived that beauty and comeliness, the graces of the Holy Spirit, which adorn the soul with such marvellous excellence. From this source also come that beaming brightness, and clear illumination, those burnings of love, and ineffable sweetness. The contempt of all things of earth, and the insatiable longings for heaven flow from this. This teaches the soul the perfect imitation of Christ, exalts the senses by the overflow of the spirit, and makes wonderful changements even in the body. The soul is annihilated before God in a mystical death. The languishings and meltings of the soul, the fervours and spiritual inebriations, the interior silence, the kiss of the Word, the extacies and ravishments, which suspend the senses: these, and a multitude of other things, are the fruit of this mystical union. But I pass them by, for those who are worthy to experience them are taught concerning them by the unction only which they receive.

4. These mysteries are indeed exalted. They exceed the ordinary capability of men. But, as

Plato well says, "In divine matters credence must be given to the children of God, even though they bring forth no reasons for their proof." To mock at secret and sublime mysteries, because unknown to themselves, as if, therefore, they were false, is the part of fools. It is only for the wicked to refuse credit to men of tried honesty, when they tell their own proper experience of the things of God. The books of the Mystics are not to be thrown aside as useless, because they treat of lofty matters, and marvellous things above our ken. For, at least, we learn this from them, that we are yet far removed from the height of Christian perfection. We are not yet worthy to enter with Moses into the dark cloud. William of Saint Theodoric was once sick at the Monastery of Clairvaux, and Saint Bernard, being at the same time sick, expounded the *Canticle of Canticles* to him. "Now," says William, "when with unconscious benignity he expounded it to me, throwing upon its sentences the light of his intelligence, and of his own proper experience, and thus endeavoured to teach many things, of which, however, experience is alone the master, I, not having experienced these things, could not reach to the understanding of what he put before me: but this he made me to understand more keenly than before; namely, how far I was short of the understanding of such things."

5. Here I stop, for I hear voices full of complaints, addressed to me by my readers. And

where, they say, is this *easy way to God*, which in the beginning of your treatise you promised to show us. Up to now you have treated of mystical Theology, and of union with God, matters of the greatest difficulty, an arduous journey to a height quite above the reach of man's abilities. So elevated is this state, that we may each of us say with the Psalmist, "Thy knowledge is too wonderful for me, I cannot attain unto it!" For how can earthly man look down on earth, ascend the heavens, get beyond the Angels, and approach to the throne of God, stripping himself of everything human, in order to a most intimate union with God? We have read and heard these things gladly, but to gird ourselves to such an arduous task, when human frailty supplies us no strength for it, this we dare not undertake. Now this complaint would be all very well, if man's incapacity were the only thing to be considered. But it is ill said, if we look to the efficacious help of divine grace. This grace is offered to all who, being prevented by God, undertake this journey to Him. It will be present to me as I show the road, and perform the promise I have given.

6. I say then that *the easy way to God*, to the summit of mystical Theology, and to intimate union with the Word is the practice of aspirations, and upward movements of the soul. I will bring unexceptionable witnesses to the truth of this affirmation. My first witness is John of Jesus Mary,

a bare-footed Carmelite, who thus writes: "All authors whom I have ever read are of one sentiment in this, namely, that by the practice of aspirations the soul is elevated to the highest experimental sense and knowledge of God: so that it would be of much profit, if this angelic exercise were set before all others, celebrated with wonderful praises. Its power of stimulating the soul, and of setting it in flames with a divine fire, is of such excellence, that if only this one exercise were followed, with fitting circumstances and a zeal for virtue, it alone would bring our hearts to the highest purity and consummate perfection of the Christian life. For although it be true that union with God and the fruition of Him, ravishments, and revelations, and the internal caresses of a most loving Lord, are gifts, and are unattainable by our own efforts, howsoever strained; yet at any rate God bestows them, with greater munificence than can be conceived, on those souls that in a fitting manner prepare and adorn themselves for this marriage." To this testimony of John I will add that of Thomas of Jesus, of the same Order. He says, "If we are to credit the holy Fathers, and other Mystics, experienced in this way, no shorter road, or more easy, or more noble, is to be found of rising up towards God, than that which the Mystics term unitive wisdom, or unitive love. This way consists in aspirations, and upward movements of the soul, by which she endeavours to rise to

God and with greatest eagerness to cling to Him." I could fill pages and pages with the testimonies of others in confirmation of this truth. I could bring as witnesses Bonaventure, Henry Harphius, John Gerson, Denys the Carthusian, Constantine de Banbarson, &c. But for brevity's sake the two already named will suffice.





CHAPTER VI.

Aspirations, Upward movements, and Ejaculatory Prayers, what they are. Approbation given to them by the holy Fathers in word and example. Their excellence and profit.

IT is reported of Abaris Hyperboreus, a certain nobleman of the age of Pythagoras, that he had a famous carpet, woven of cloth of gold, on which, like the poetic Pegasus, he was borne, whither he would, swiftly through the air. He was on this account called *Æthrobrates*, that is, the air traveller. Such is the account given of him by Jamblicus, in his life of Pythagoras. But winged aspirations, all on fire, are a far better kind of golden carpet, for in a moment they bear off the devout soul into heaven, and carry her even to the throne of the Godhead. “The soul, in which dwells the fire of God,” says the great Abbot Antony, “is like a bird with two wings, with which it soars aloft through the atmosphere of heaven. Birds are distinguished from all other creatures by

the peculiar property of their having wings. But the virtue of God's fire serves for wings to a soul serving the Lord. With these wings she is able to fly upwards to heaven. If she have not these wings she can by no means raise herself upward into the air, for she has not that fire. She is like a bird stripped of her wings, that cannot fly. Such is the sentiment of Saint Antony. He makes an invisible fire to be the means, by which the Saints mount to heaven; a fire that is kindled in their hearts. If this fire fail, no one can aspire after heaven, no one can ascend thither.

2. Now aspirations are certain very short prayers, either wholly mental, or at the same time mental and vocal, conceived in the mind, and put forth by the mouth. The faithful soul should have the custom of applying herself to these frequently, in all places, and at all times. She should thus raise up her will to God, and her heart, day and night, at home and abroad, sitting and walking, in every affair, every action, every occupation. It is written, men ought always to pray, and not to faint. But as our nature is so unstable, and our care for the body and other employments often distract us, this angelic exercise of aspirations compensates for the continuousness of prayer. Aspirations are made in a moment and pass away, but their fruit endures permanently, and the prayer is continued by the continuation of a good desire, founded in charity. A good desire prays always, for the affec-

tion of a sincere love lifts up its voice continually before God. The blessed in heaven never cease from the actual love and knowledge of God. We endeavour to reach the same happiness by continual aspirations, saying, with the Apostle, "Our conversation is in heaven." Prayer is the ascent of the spirit to God. "By this ascent," says Saint John, "we make our escape from the society of brute animals, and gain that of the Angels." They are called aspirations or breathings, because by them our souls breathe towards God, and God breathes favourably on our endeavours. And since, in aspiring towards God, we breathe nothing but God, therefore the fervour of charity is no less sustained in the soul by these breathings, than the bodily life is by its breathing of the air. Aspirations are called upward movements, because by them we are drawn away from things of earth, and raised to things above, and at length are carried up to a blessed union with God. They are called ejaculatory prayers, because, like darts or arrows, they pass swiftly into the Heart of God. Into His Heart they are cast as the object of their aim, that from Him we may obtain heavenly gifts. Lastly, they are called affections, as being affections of the heart, and desires or resolves of the will. An aspiration is nothing else than what it is defined to be by Gelenius, namely, a ready affection towards God as the highest Good.

3. The holy Fathers give us various instructions

on aspirations, and patterns of how they should be made. Saint Augustine, in a letter to Probus, says, "The Brethren in Ægypt are said to make frequent prayers, but exceedingly short. They, in a manner, dart them off by snatches, lest their intention should fade and grow dull by longer delays: for a wakeful, aroused intention is very necessary for one who prays." Cassian, describing the rules of the Monks, says, "They consider short but very frequent prayers to be the most profitable. For we receive delight not from the multitude of verses said, but from the understanding of the mind." And in his Conferences he says, "Our prayers should be frequent but short, lest in prolonging them the enemy should be able to lay an ambush for us, and slip something into our hearts." Saint Chrysostom, to the people of Antioch, says, "Christ and Saint Paul ordained that short and frequent prayers should be made, with little intervals between. For if you extend your prayer out into a long discourse, you give an occasion to the devil to steal in by falling often into negligence, so that he overthrows you, and takes your thoughts off from what your lips utter. But if you make continually frequent prayers, interspersing all your time with them at brief intervals, then you will keep moderation, and be able with much attention to make your prayers." The Abbot Ælred says, "These devout sighs are so gracious in the eyes of Him that searches the hearts and reins, that He

cannot long hide the multitude of his sweetness which he has laid up for them that fear and love him." William, Abbot of Saint Theodoric, says, "Often from what we are reading some affection is to be drawn, and a prayer is to be formed from it. Our reading, it is true, is interrupted by the prayer, but such interruption is no hindrance to the understanding of what we read. On the contrary, the mind is by it restored to its task more pure than before. Little prayers of this kind Tertullian rightly calls "prayers without a troop of words." The Abbot Isaac, in Cassian, commends them as a true sacrifice, fat victims, pure libations, holocausts full of marrow. "These prayers, according to the Blessed Laurence Justinian, are the work of a spiritual bow, arrows shot against the foe, longing darts of fire. Christ's soldiers, with silent hearts, aim them into heaven. They strike from aloft. They are sent forth swiftly. They suffer not the enemy to come too near. Him that is mounting up they frequently lay low with a single stroke." Saint Chrysostom again says, "Say in your mind, *Have mercy on me, O God!* and your prayer is finished. For he who says *have mercy*, makes confession acknowledging his sin. And this for those who have fallen is to ask for mercy. He who says *have mercy* receives pardon for his offences. For he who has obtained mercy is not punished. He who says *have mercy on me* has obtained the kingdom of heaven. For he upon whom God has mercy is not only freed from

punishment, but is made partaker also of future rewards."

4. Our Saviour Christ taught us this mode of praying by His own example. For, in the garden, He said again and again those words: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me; nevertheless not My Will, but Thine be done." And on the Cross, when enduring great torments, he sent forth from time to time, with burning fervour, some ejaculation from these aspirations, as for instance:—"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Then: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" And lastly: "Father, into Thy Hands I commend my spirit." Nehemias, when questioned by the king, lifted up his mind to God before answering, despatching a most swift messenger from his soul to the throne of the Godhead. Judith, when about to strike Holofernes, took hold of his hair, and uttered from her heart this very short inflamed prayer, "Strengthen me, O Lord God, at this hour." The Saints in heaven rest not day or night saying: "Holy, Holy, Holy." Saint Basil advises sinners to follow the example of the Canaanitish woman, crying: "Son of David, have mercy on me." Saint Jerome writes of Marcella that she was ever chanting those words of the psalm: "Thy words have I laid up in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee." Saint Bernard, in his life of Saint Malachy, testifies to his frequent short prayers sent forth like arrows. Thais, once

a harlot, was taught by Saint Paphnutius thus to pray : "Thou who didst create me, have mercy on me." Cassian gives most elegant commendations of the frequent repetition of the verse : "O God, make speed to save me," in his Conferences.

From the lives of the Fathers many things may be brought forward on this species of prayer.

1. The Abbot Isaias saw the prayer of a certain Monk, whilst he was eating, ascend like a fire in the sight of God. Another Monk, whilst holding a conversation with others, made a hundred and three prayers. The Abbot Macarius, being asked by some persons how prayer should be made, answered : "There is no need of much speaking in prayer. It is enough to stretch forth the hands frequently and say, Lord, as Thou wilt and as Thou knowest, have mercy on me."
2. Moses the Ethiopian, formerly a captain of robbers, used to go through fifty prayers every day ; a certain Virgin seventy, and Paul the Monk three hundred.
3. Theodoret writes that Simon Stylites used to make frequent prostrations every day. A certain man watching him once counted a thousand, two hundred and forty-four. These were not the whole, for the man, growing weary, then ceased counting.
4. A Monk named Christopher used to pray a hundred separate times in the night. The Blessed Clare of Monte Falco adored God with a thousand genuflexions every day, making each time an ejaculatory prayer. Baptist Pergilius relates this in his

life of her. 5. For a whole night Saint Francis prayed: "My God and my all," repeating these words only. Father Didacus Martinez, who is styled the Apostle of Peru, said sometimes: "Thanks be to God," six hundred times. He exhorted others to do the like, saying that no prayer was shorter, and none more acceptable to God. 6. There was also another man named James Cerrutus, of the Society of Jesus. This man every day poured forth innumerable acts of love, and thanksgivings. These sometimes amounted to as many as twenty-four thousand. He renewed also his vows three thousand times every day. 7. There were some persons under the guidance of the Father Gonsalao Sylveria, who implored the help of God by a short prayer ten thousand times in a day. 8. A similar frequency of prayer was followed by Sebastian Barada and Francis Suarez of the same Society in late times. 9. I omit other examples, for were I to go through the histories of all the Religious Orders, and the acts of the Saints, there would be no end. More recent examples may be found in the "History of Virtues," by John Rho.

5. The practice of ejaculatory prayer is of such moment for the attaining of perfection, that it has ever been made much of by all who have been eminent for learning and sanctity. By it, as by a fire kindled in the heart, our sins are consumed and our vices destroyed. It takes from us all sticking to the earth, all that disfigures the soul,

making it unlike God and hindering it from union with Him. By means of it temptations are overcome and virtues are acquired ; the soul's powers are perfected, the understanding is imbued with heavenly light, supernatural acts are exercised, the intention is purified, the affections are elevated, the will is inflamed, the mind is disposed for contemplation, and the whole man is transfused into God. The Abbot Gillebert says : " Silent prayers are piercing prayers. They are secret, but seek not things secret. The voice is hushed but the mind intense. Words are not required, nor any form of prayer, but affections pure and full carry them up." That divine man, so versed in the school of love, the Bishop of Geneva, Francis of Sales, shows in a most learned and luminous manner that a zeal for prayer and the use of aspirations are one and the same thing with mystical Theology. As scholastic Theology has God for its object, so mystical Theology speaks of nothing but God. There are, however, three points of difference between them. The first treats of God as He is God. The latter as He is supremely amiable. The first treats of God as with men and amongst men, the latter of God with God Himself. The first tends to the knowledge of God, making men learned Theologians ; the latter tends to love, rendering men ardent lovers and friends of God. The principal exercise in the latter is the holding colloquies with God. The soul speaks to God by ad-

dressing to Him secret aspirations, known only to the soul herself, and heard by no ear but that of God. She also hears Him speaking to her in the bottom of her heart. Well has the Christian Poet sung of this thing :

“ He knoweth all my grief—aye, He alone,
Who heareth all our sighs and every groan.
Another knoweth not. Enough, for He
Alone is more than all beside to me.”





CHAPTER VII.

Various instructions how to use and practise aspirations.

THOSE who build a house begin at the foundations. So ought we, when about to give instructions for the use and practice of aspirations, to begin at the presence of God, which is, as it were, their basis and their lever. The Angelic exercise of aspirations hangs on the Presence of God. For we do not pour forth prayers and aspirations to one absent, because He could neither hear us nor be favourable to us. God is present everywhere, and to all. As a certain religious poet sings :

“ All things are filled by God ;
Above and below,—He is there ;
The heavenly orbs are His abode :
Under the sun, and under the air ;
'Neath the earth and ocean—still He is there.
All things are full of God.”

Seneca, the Roman sage, writes to his friend Lucil-

ius. "Our hands should not be lifted up to heaven, not our voices addressed to the image in the temple, as though its ears could hear us better. No! God is at thy side, is with thee and within thee. I tell thee, Lucilius, that the sacred Spirit sits within us, observing and keeping guard over all our actions, good and bad. As He is treated by us so He treats us. Without God no man is a good man." The Divine Presence considered in itself is most easy. For what is easier than to behold Him, who is everywhere present, to see Him in whom we live and move and are? But through the corruption of our nature, accustomed to stray after things that are vain and pleasing to the body, we are many of us blind, and cannot see that light whose beams are everywhere shining. The sun's light is present to a blind man, but he is absent from it. So the fool and the impious are far from God; not as if God were absent, but because, like blind men, they see Him not present. "A great misery this," says Saint Augustine, "for a man not to be with Him, Whom he cannot be without. For since man is in Him, he cannot be without Him. Yet if he does not think of Him, understand and love Him, he is not with Him." In order then to be with Him, let us ever look to Him: let us by constant aspirations kindle and increase our love of Him. For love so affects the eyes of our minds, that we do not willingly see what we do not love. Man continually thinks of, talks of, and aspires after the object of

his love. The Presence of God and the practice of aspirations fit in well with one another. The Presence of God breeds a desire of aspirations, and by the aspiration this Presence is nursed and cherished.

2. There are various methods laid down by different writers to help us to the conception of the Presence of God. Of all the modes, that is most preferable which does not hurt the head or the imagination, and which does not make people dull and abstracted in going through their ordinary actions, but rather helps to their more perfect fulfilment. There are two modes which answer this end. The first consists in the actual exercise of faith concerning three things. These three things are God's immensity, by which He fills heaven and earth ; His infinite knowledge, by which He sees and pierces all things, even our most secret thoughts; and thirdly, the concurrent help He gives to all our actions. By the simple seizing of these truths it is most easy to recollect the Presence of God. And, as in it there are no acts of the fancy or imagination, this mode is not subject to illusions, nor does it weary the head. The second mode is much more perfect than this. By it we do not consider God as outside of us, but as present in the secret of the heart, in the inmost sanctuary of the spirit.

There, with the most pure eye of the mind, we behold Him pouring His good things into us. "Know ye not," says the Apostle, "that ye are

the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" How great therefore is the blindness and ignorance of those who seek God without, as though He were far from them. For if, as faith teaches, He is in all things, it is certain that He is in us. He is more intimately present to us than the soul is to the body. For this reason the Platonic philosophers have called God the soul of the world. By this they did not mean to say that He was a part of the world or its intrinsic form, but that He gives to all things their being and operation, as their most perfect cause. But it is safer to seek God within ourselves than to seek and behold Him in other creatures. For oftentimes the external beauty of the creature takes hold of us and detains us, not suffering us to go in to the Creator Who dwells in it. It was for this reason Saint Augustine complained that he sought God without, when He was dwelling within. "Thou wast with me," he says, "and I was not with Thee." This method of the Presence of God was used by Saint Catharine of Siena. She built, says Raymond's life of her, a secret cell in her heart, and there she abode continually with God. Happy chamber, in which the soul hides herself from the tumult of creaturely things, and in great stillness waits upon God her Creator! The sentence of the Saviour is, "The kingdom of God is within you." The kingdom of God is really God Himself with all His treasures. To Him then, dwelling within

us in the fund of the soul, and its essence, we ought to turn by holy introversion, and inflamed aspirations. We ought continually to think of Him, that we may be found worthy of arriving at His embraces, and at a happy union with Him.

3. A holy soul, that is, a friend of the true Bridegroom, ought, as Richard teaches, to long after her Beloved with the greatest desire. She should be ever ready to meet Him when He calls, and to open to Him when He knocks. However, in this introversion, and practice of aspirations, it is necessary to remember the maxim, "*Nothing in excess.*" The soul should not exercise herself in them beyond her strength, lest the head be injured by too close attention, or the affections by intensity. Care is to be taken also not to stretch the understanding beyond its capacity, lest, by attempting too lofty a flight, it wander from its simplicity and be wrapt in interior darkness; for thus intolerable miseries and anxieties are wont to arise. Discretion is here needful, and simplicity joined with sweetness; as the Scripture says, "Hast thou found honey, eat as much as is sufficient for thee."

4. The aspirations should not be made in a hasty or perfunctory manner, but with mature serenity of spirit, and interior harmony, in such wise, as that the soul may feel that she seeks God, and wishes to find Him for no other end but to love Him with her whole heart, her whole strength, and her whole might. According to the doctrine of the

Seraphic Bonaventure, it is of profit sometimes that he who prays should lift up his hands to heaven, and should hear the utterances of his voice. To look up to heaven will also assist the raising of the heart's intention. But care must be taken that the spirit wander not out of itself; and that the aspirations be not barren, and without fruit, merely vocal. For the spirit is borne upwards into God, the eye of the understanding being well nigh shut, and its discourses put to sleep. Then, with holy silence and burning affections, the spirit is carried beyond itself into God. In this work a very little part is done by the understanding; far the greatest part by the will.

5. The exercise of aspirations is most fitting for such persons as have now purged the soul from vice, and have made some progress in the illuminative way, by the practice of virtue and meditation. For when the soul has, by the practice of mental prayer, been drawn from the love of the world, and now feels the divine fire kindled in her, she may then leave the state of meditation, and pass to that of aspirations. From this she at length passes on to contemplation and reaches to mystical Theology. Saint Nilus rightly says, "If thou art a Theologian thou wilt pray truly. Wouldst thou be a Theologian, pray truly, and a Theologian thou wilt be." And Saint John Climacus says, "Thy prayer will make manifest to thee thy state. For Theologians rightly teach that prayer is the

Monks' mirror." All mystical writers agree that after vocal prayer and meditation, then come aspirations, as a more perfect mode of prayer, by which a passage is made to internal, divinely infused, prayer. On this matter should be read two eminent Capuchin writers, the *Rule of Perfection* by Benedict, an Englishman, and the *Practice of Mystical Theology* by Victor Gelenius. Saint John of the Cross in his *Ascent of Mount Carmel* gives three indications as to the time when meditation should be discontinued. The first sign is if you be unable to meditate or use the imagination; and if by your efforts your mind gets no refreshment, but on the contrary remains perfectly dry. The second is—if it is neither grateful nor pleasing to your soul, to have the imagination industriously occupied, and fixed on some object. The third is when the soul takes pleasure and delight in remaining alone, in a certain interior peace and quiet, with an amorous attention to God, but without any discursive act of her powers. Those who would safely pass from meditation to a sublimer kind of prayer, must be careful to see first, that there is in them a concurrence of these three marks.

6. There are other things also requisite for the practice of aspirations, as, for instance, cleanness of heart, purity of intention, perfect renouncement, and nakedness of all images, and creaturely representations. The soul must fly curiosities, useless conversations, human consolations, and vain em-

ployments. There must be a continual desire of advancing, humility of soul, and a mind free and detached from all earthly pleasure. Spiritual reading and conversation upon things divine are also needful, with an internal and external practice of silence, as it is written, "He that is less in action shall receive wisdom" (Eccles. xxxviii. 25). A very little inordination, the least affection to a created thing, a but slight offence, or exterior distraction, retard the speed of the soul hastening to union with her God. Gerlac says that "Howsoever much progress we may seem to make externally in apparent spirituality, and in the reputation for sanctity, yet all is little and empty, unless the inner man be reformed and made conformable to God."

It is plain from what has been said that genius and much knowledge are not required for the gaining of this wisdom, but rather simplicity and a pure ardent affection, with the assistance of the Holy Ghost, who rests upon the little and humble. It is therefore much to be bewailed that some content themselves with external exercises only, neglecting the inner fund of the soul, and holy union with God. For even if the soul abounded in all spiritual riches, yet never could it be satiated without this touch of love, and unless it obtained an intimate union with God. "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord," says Saint Augustine, "and our heart is restless, till it repose in

Thee." This means, "till it be joined by a most close bond of love."

7. The practice of aspirations is wont to seem hard and difficult to those not accustomed to it. Nature, unstable and independent, used to a variety of thoughts and desires, shrinks from subjection to the bridle of divine love. And as the fruit does not at once appear, she despises her labour as not worth anything. In every matter the beginning is difficult, but constancy in the labour overcomes all things. When a praiseworthy custom has taken firm root in the mind, it becomes as it were a second nature, and attention is given to divine things with no more difficulty than one has in breathing and living. The help of divine grace is also added, and this help ought to be constantly sought for; because, as Saint Chrysostom says, to hold conference with God is above the strength of man, unless the power and action of the Holy Ghost is with him. Now as heat disposes for more heat, so does prayer dispose for more prayer. But if the mind is sometimes in such a sorrowful state, as with difficulty to produce aspirations, then some pious meditation should be used, till, the heart growing warm, there is gendered again an aptitude for aspirations. This is the teaching of Gelenius. He adds that each one, for this end, should make colloquies with God, deploring his vileness, and his unfaithfulness in the practice of virtue and mortifications. Abundance of such colloquies may be

had by those who want them, from the meditations and soliloquies of Saint Augustine. If the heart cannot be excited, either by meditation or by colloquies of this kind, we still must not lose hope. In this case we must persist in making aspirations, though it be done with difficulty, coldness and aridity, until, our fidelity being proved, the victory is mercifully granted to us by the Lord. The increase we obtain by holy exercises is like the growth of plants. Plants grow daily, although their growth is not apparent. In process of time you will see that they have grown, though you could not behold the growth itself.

8. When we make aspirations we should keep in view the object to be gained by them. This object is, that by them we may purify the soul, render it apt for contemplation, and dispose it for union with God. If we stop at the mere saying of the aspirations, without the ultimate aim of union with God, we are doing nothing. We are standing still; and, according to that most common maxim of the holy Fathers—not to go forward in the way of the Lord is to go back. He who does not ascend, descends. The whole fruit and object of prayer is, according to Saint Bonaventure, to cleave to God. Its aim is that the soul should become one spirit with Him, melted into Him by a most pure love, and a clear serene knowledge; hidden in the face of God from the tumult of worldly affairs by an excess of most quiet enjoy-

ment. Then all the powers of the soul gathered together from their dispersions, and fixed on the one, simple, and supreme Good, are transformed into a certain likeness of the firmness and steadfastness of the Eternal. The powers of our soul are given us by our Creator, not that we may sink them in earthly things, but that, by holy aspirations, we may carry them into God. We were created that we might possess Him, and it is by these arms we embrace Him as our bliss and all our good.

9. He who would gather plenteous fruit from this most wholesome exercise, should never let it go, not for a single day; nay, if possible, not for an hour. For, as it is not a continuous work, but interrupted by pauses, therefore between its acts there are almost always intercessions, whether the person making them be talented or of dull intellect. Excellently does Saint Ephrem say: "It is good always to pray and not to faint," as our Lord tells us. Wherefore, working or sleeping, or when on a journey—whether you be eating or drinking or lying down, take care never to cease from your prayer. Whether you be in the Church, or at home, or in the field feeding flocks, or building, or in the banqueting room, never cease from praying. Of old, God ordained that the fire on His altar should be kept always burning, and that the priest should every day feed it with fresh wood. Gregory the Great says that the altar of God is our heart, on which God bids us to keep a fire always burning,

that is, that there must ascend from it continually to the Lord the flame of charity. Some persons there are who daily exact from themselves a particular task of aspirations. This practice I would hardly approve of, unless followed with discretion, and under the advice of a spiritual Guide. In aspirations we ought to follow our leanings and the attraction of the Holy Ghost, which can be subjected to no certain rule. A certain man, having read that Saint Bartholomew the Apostle prayed every day a hundred times, in order to copy him, made himself also a hundred aspirations to God. He did this by means of certain litanies, invoking God by His various names and attributes. The method of doing it is found in the writings of James Alvarez. Practice and unction teach however more.

10. I conclude this chapter with some rules to be observed carefully by those to whom has been granted by God the grace of aspirations. In the first place, far from boasting of this gift, let them confess themselves wholly unworthy of it, and having very low thoughts of self, let them hide the grace of God with the veil of humility. In the second place let them take care not to despise those who have none of this grace; for it may be that such have a greater charity, and are, in their simplicity, more pleasing to God. Thirdly, when prevented with consolations and spiritual sweetness, let them beware of a too great liking for them; for the Psalmist says: "If riches abound, set not thy heart

upon them." For it is better and safer to glory only with the Apostle, in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, than in spiritual consolations and sensible devotion. When God ceases to work, let them have recourse to their own efforts, bearing patiently the subtraction of grace. Fourthly, when there is an influx of grace, let them so satisfy themselves as not to injure their health ; for surfeiting in spiritual things is fraught with great peril, inasmuch as the sweetness of grace urges to greater fervour than the bodily strength is able to support. Discretion must be kept to. Fifthly, the bountiful supply of divine grace is to be directed towards the mortification of self, and the practising of virtue. No one ought to be so swallowed up in devotion, as to allow himself to neglect works of mercy, and the duties of the active life. These admonitions are given by Thomas of Jesus in his Books on Divine Prayer. The Holy Spirit will suggest others also to true disciples.





CHAPTER VIII.

The Fountains of Aspirations. Their matter and order. The three degrees of persons, beginning, advancing and perfect.

THE most abundant fountains from which may be drawn, or may spring, an immense fund of aspirations, are as follows : the consideration of the heavenly country, the weariness of this miserable life, the desire of seeing God, the greatness of the mercy and goodness of God ; God's wisdom, power, justice, and His other attributes ; sorrow for sin, gratitude towards God, love to God, zeal for souls, the Passion of the Saviour, God's love 'to us, admiration of the providence of God, and desire of suffering for Christ. To these may be added acts of renouncement, penance, charity, humility, and all other virtues. All these things may be made materials for aspirations. Each one may take from them what is in accordance with his own liking or devotion. Or he may use for this purpose the words of Holy Scrip-

ture, or sentences from the Fathers and other devout writers. The sacred Scriptures, especially the Psalms, yield an abundant store of pious affections. And these are preferable to others, for nothing can be more pleasing to God than to address Him in words dictated by the Holy Spirit. Next follow the works of the holy Fathers and of mystical Theologians, which supply abundant matter of aspirations ; especially the Confessions of Saint Augustine, his Soliloquies, his Meditations, and Manual. There are also the works of Saint Laurence Justinian, Denys the Carthusian, Lanspergius, Thomas A'Kempis, Blossius, and some more recent authors.

2. Thomas Massutius has written three kinds of books containing matters suitable for aspirations. The first is exceedingly large, always open and visible to all men. The second is small, secret, of an utterly invisible nature, and intelligible to few. The third is large and small at the same time, open and shut, visible and invisible, and intelligible of itself. The first book is the world, which, as Saint Basil writes, is equal to any printed book, openly testifying to and preaching the glory of God. There are four pages to be turned over in this book, to wit, by Whom the world was made, for what end, by what means, and with what variety of ornaments it is decked out. Some persons read this book, but do so unprofitably. These are vain and curious persons, the wise of the world. Such were those

unbelievers, who, when they knew God, glorified Him not as God, but became vain in their thoughts. Others read it to their own ruin : like children ignorant of their alphabet, they look at the outside beauty only of created things ; and, cleaving to this beauty, they make of it an occasion to depart from their Creator. Others again read it with profit and spiritual fruit. These contemplate God in His creatures. In all His works they admire the wisdom, goodness, and power of the Creator. The rest of His attributes also they set forth, praise and admire. The second book is conscience, or our heart, bad, deep, and unsearchable. In this book must be read what man was, what he is, and what he will be : what he could do, what he can, and what he will be able to do : what he has done, what he may do, and what he will do. Then it must be considered by whom this book has been written, what is written in it, and for what end. The writing is both by God and ourselves, but the two styles are very different. God writes in golden characters, by inspirations, laws, admonitions, and the dictates of right reason. We write in it with letters of ink by faults and imperfections. The third book is the Sacred Scripture, whether it be historical, prophetic, moral, or mixed. Each pointing has a mystery, each word is an incentive to the love of God, if so be it be read with the same spirit with which it was written.

3. There is no methodical order for aspirations.

They are made quite promiscuously. Love is exceedingly fertile, and breaks out without any attention to order, law, or method. Sometimes it requires no words, no voice at all, but is content with upward sighs alone. This is especially the case when the will is all on fire. Then as the Seraphic Virgin Teresa admonishes, all the discourse of the understanding, and the noise of words must be put aside, lest, overlaid with fuel, the spark of love should be choked and quenched. One character of aspirations is suited to beginners, another to the perfect. But sometimes a beginner takes up with aspirations suited to the perfect, or to those who have made some progress, in order that he may learn to lift his heart to higher things. The perfect also sometimes use the aspirations of beginners, so as not to lose humility by always soaring so high. The affections suitable to beginners are a horror of hell, a detestation of sin, fear of God's justice and judgments, contrition, petitions for pardon, hatred and contempt of self, a knowledge of the vileness of self, and a consequent feeling of shame. For persons advancing, the proper affections are the imitating Christ and His Saints, gratitude, perfect self renouncement, love of virtue and a desire to acquire it. For the perfect or spiritual joy, an admiration of the Divine Majesty, love of God, a great desire that His Name may be hallowed, and His kingdom may come.

4. There are three stages in the spiritual life.

For, as Saint Gregory says, the commencement of a virtuous course is one thing, progress in it is another, and perfection yet other still. In the first stage the beginners are but raw recruits, in the second they have made progress and finished their apprenticeship; in the third, as perfected, they are veteran soldiers. Saint Maximus, the Martyr, compares the first to slaves, the second to hired servants, and the last to children. The Angelic Doctor likens these three states to the ages of childhood, youth and old age. Thus Saint Augustine teaches that "by the working of the divine mercy charity is born; being born, it grows and is strengthened; and being strengthened it is lastly perfected." The first state is one of purgation, the second of illumination, the third of perfection. These are the three operations of the Angelic and human hierarchies, as described by Saint Denys the Areopagite. Saint Bonaventure gives to charity three manners of working in the soul, according to this triple state. The first he calls the *vigour of virtue*, because by the *vigour* of grace the soul is purged from sin. The second he styles the *splendour of truth*, because by the pursuit of mortification the soul is enlightened with the knowledge of divine things. The third is entitled the *ardour of charity*, because by force of love the soul is transformed into God. The purgative way purifies and perfects the senses; the illuminative way does the same thing for the rational powers, the

unitive perfects the spirit or mind, which is the superior part of the soul. The purgative way is assigned to God the Father, to whom power is wont to be attributed, the illuminative to the Son, both as being the Wisdom of the Father, and because this way consists in the imitation of Christ: the unitive way belongs to the Holy Ghost, whose proper operation it is to bring about union by love. In the first stage man learns himself: in the second he searches into God, in the third he aims at being united to, and transformed into God. All the spiritual life may be reduced to these three points, what man is, what God is, and how there may be effected a union between these two by love. When fire works upon green wood, it first expels the cold and moisture, which are obstacles to its operation; then it infuses dryness and heat, as necessary prerequisites to its own entrance; then, lastly, it is united intimately to the wood. So for union of the soul with God, first all impediments must be removed out of the way, then the requisite predispositions must be procured; and, these things being done, union infallibly follows.

5. Sinners after their conversion enter into the state of purgation. In it they have to punish their past sins, and endure combats, that they may not relapse into them again. They must cast out corrupt habits and slay their passions. For this purpose they have to chastise their flesh with fastings, watchings, labours and other austerities, to-

gether with tears and contrition. Those who are advancing study to lay aside all affection to things of earth, seeking great purity and the acquisition of virtue: for virtue is the true and proper light of the soul. In order to urge themselves forward, they make frequent meditation on the virtues and doctrine of Christ, taking Him for their model. Those who have reached the third stage are at peace. The eye of the mind being now purged and single, they are found worthy of being united to God in a mystic embrace, enjoying that peace which passes all understanding. The charity after which all aim is one and the same, but the degrees and growth of it are various. But it happens sometimes by the disposition of God, that new apprentices are enriched with the privileges of the perfect, and are exalted with but a brief delay to the sublime heights of divine contemplation. This is done perhaps, lest dreading the hardness of the acquisition of virtue and the pressure of temptation, they should throw up the project of the journey they have set out on. On the other hand it happens sometimes that more perfect souls are infested with the most cruel temptations. God permits this, as the apostle bears witness of himself, lest they should be lifted up by the greatness of the revelations vouchsafed. For when penitents have tasted the sweetness of the spirit, then the world and the flesh lose their savour for them. And when a perfect man endures the troublesome combats of

beginners, he despises himself, and toils more intensely as being yet far distant from the heights of perfection.

6. From what has been said three things are to be gathered, to which attention should be given. The first is that, as the spiritual life is active and contemplative, the two first stages belong to the active, the third to the contemplative life. The second thing is, that the love of which we speak, and in which consists Christian perfection, is not that love which they call *effective* and *affective*; but is a love effective, practical, and obedient; one which draws away the will entirely from the consideration of its own good, and subjects that will to God, making it conformable to the Will of God, both in commands and in counsels. Tender and soft affections are cowardly and sluggish, and nothing is sooner dried up than a tear. If any master had a servant who should sit at home idle, in continual contemplation of his wealth and magnificence, and giving him no other service than this, surely such a master would reprove this servant as unfit for his place, and would remove him from his service. Christ therefore commands the observance of his precepts, and the holy Fathers recommend a zeal for good works above all else. To this practical love should all aspirations be directed, for from thence arises a true and solid devotion, pure joy, and the acquisition of virtue. The third thing to be noticed is this, that though we have distinguished

the three above-named stages with their offices and exercises, to wit, as the states of purity, light and love ; yet this must not be so understood as to exclude purgation from the two other stages, illumination from the first and third stages, or love from the first and second. The stages in fact interpenetrate one another. In the purgative stage there is illumination of truth and the love of God, as well as purging from sin, and so of the other stages ; only the higher the stage the more excellent the acts exercised. Each stage has, however, its peculiar office to fulfil, as its most essential and fitting work, and to this work whatever it possesses of the exercises of the other stages should be subordinated. In the first stage light and love should be directed to purification, in the second purgation and love to illumination, in the third purity and light to the increase of love. This intercommunication of acts takes place that sorrow may be sweetened by love, and that love may be more secure and more intense through the consideration of causes for sorrow. By this minglement of the acts of one stage with those of another, beginners are made to aspire continually after greater things, and those that are advancing, with the more perfect, keep in remembrance and value those first principles of sanctity which are the foundation stones of all perfection.



CHAPTER IX.

The passage from Aspirations to Contemplation. An instruction concerning passive Aspirations. What Contemplation is. Its aim and cause.

ASPIRATIONS are as wings to the soul by which she soars aloft to a most happy marriage with God. For by the use of them that may fall out which the Abbot Alois said: namely, that, if a man will, in a single day up to the evening, he reaches to the measure of the Godhead. However, to arrive so quickly must be most difficult, and is hardly credible, and we will discuss below the duration of the state of aspirations. We have now to see in what way the soul passes from them into contemplation. It is thus. The powers of the lower man are turned inwards by means of the activity of aspirations. Then the mind is raised up to God by upward-rising movements, and the affections being set all on fire, the rational spirit directs its inward gaze to the scanning of heavenly things. Thus, set free from the shackles of the passions and

the deceits of the world it passes to the state of the most lofty divine contemplation. "Thy lightnings," says the Psalmist, "have shone forth on the whole world; the earth saw it, and was moved." Aspirations are, as it were, flashes of light, which by their brilliancy set the earth of man's heart in a marvel at the things of heaven, so that, leaving what is earthly, it soars up to things above. The upward motions of the soul pass in a moment, unless she reject the impertinent thoughts that suggest themselves, and in their place make quickly another aspiration, so as to keep the distraction under. Unless this be done, the mind is of a nature so vagabond that she quickly falls, and wanders off to exterior and sensible things. Saint Augustine thus deplores his own experience of this misery. "Thou sometimes bringest my soul into a strange affection, and to a certain sweetness of I know not what nature. And if it should be perfected in me, I know not what it would be, or what indeed this life would then be. But, alas! I fall back, miserably weighed down, and am re-absorbed into accustomed things, and am held captive by them. I weep much for this, but my chains are strong. Of such force is the burden of custom, I can easily be here where I do not wish to be. There where I would be I am unable to fly. These are two miseries." Great travail therefore must be gone through that the spirit, being introverted and set free from destructions and inordinate affections, may burn like fire,

sending forth sighs and desires like gleaming sparks, well affected in herself, and united with God.

2. A devout disciple is delayed in the state of aspirations not longer much than a year, according to Gelenius, and then he passes to the firm gazes of contemplation. The fire which used to shoot out momentaneous sparks in upward movements of love, now spreads itself abroad into the breadth of the spirit. Those, however, who have received a great plenitude of grace and light from God, may arrive at a good contemplation in a much shorter time, even in two months, as some mystical writers affirm.

The time when a disciple may pass from aspirations to contemplation may be thus indicated. If he find by experience that his ejaculatory prayers are deprived of their wonted fire, and his whole inward disposition inclines to look at God, and to cleave to Him in a purely spiritual manner, not by a transitory glance or savour, but by one which lasts and is durable ; then this is a sign that the time is come. But there are some persons who are straitened in the spirit of their bowels, like new wine wanting vent, which bursts new vessels (Job xxxii.). These, little mindful of the changeableness of man, and of his inconstant nature, are carried to God by a most impatient desire, as though they would swallow down all divine things. But they miserably deceive themselves ; for by-and-by, being wearied out, they fall away, and lose and ob-

scure that serenity of mind which is so necessary for the work of contemplation. Others, again, in-advicably abandon the state of aspirations, lest they should seem to be advancing less than others, whom, by hearing or reading, they learn to be in a higher state. Such as these, without advice or humility, are close on a precipice, and run risk of destruction. Without a guide, without the help of divine grace, they start on a most difficult journey, ignorant of the road. Some there are again, who, content with the bare discourse and speculation of a subtle intellect, fancy that they can possess God without the love that makes us resemble God. These are like those ancient philosophers, who became vain in their thoughts, and adored their own imagination as their God.

All speculation of the understanding is a human thing, which detains us bound in its own prison. Love is a thing divine, elevating us, and transporting us out of ourselves, and transforming us into God. Saint Denys, therefore, warns Timothy to transcend all intelligible things. And writing to Caius he says, "The darkness of God covers up all knowledge. If any one, having seen God, knows that which he has seen, then it was not God Himself that he saw, but a something of his things which exist and are known."

Maximus the Martyr has the like sentiments. He says, "There is one God, without beginning, incomprehensible, having in Himself entirely the

whole force of His being, throwing back completely all notions as to when and how He exists, for by none of those things which are can He be known, as by a natural representation. Those walk in an insecure pathway who think to be able to know and contemplate God otherwise than by love. For being destitute of the solid foundation, they will, by a miserable relapse, turn back to the deceitful pleasures of the world.

3. Besides the aspirations already spoken of, we must not leave altogether without notice that kind of which Saint John of the Cross treats in his *Lively Flame of Love*. For there is a certain mystic, hidden, and passive aspiration which God wonderfully works in the soul, breathing on it by His Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost absorbs the soul to Himself in the most profound manner, inflaming it with the love of Himself with a glory passing all understanding. God's secret dwelling is in the centre of each soul ; but there is a difference. For in some souls He dwells as a stranger in another man's house, giving no commands, and effecting nothing. In others He abides with pleasure, as in His own home, ruling and governing the soul. In such souls there are no longings, no images or figures of created things to be found. God intimately communicates Himself to them, embraces them, rests in them, and unveils Himself to them. He excites them to seek Him ; and, in proportion to the knowledge vouchsafed to them of His God-

head, He breathes graciously on them, filling them with His Holy Spirit, with His glory and goodness. But this passive aspiration is effable. It can scarce be understood by those who so happily enjoy it. Passing over, therefore, any explanation of it, some little must be said of contemplation, which follows on the state of aspirations.

4. Contemplation is the proper exercise of mystical souls. It is the most excellent possession that man can have in this life. Its scope and object are God Himself, as S. Thomas bears witness. It consists in a certain view of eternal truth: still, sweet, and amiable. It gazes at and penetrates the truth simply and plainly, without any variety of discourse. It beholds it with admiration and immense love, and with such clear certitude that it may be said, like Moses in the Scriptures, to see God face to face. They have not this vision of Him as the blessed have in heaven, but they see Him with a certain lesser light. This light is obscure, leaning on faith, a faith, however, made very perfect and clear by God. By knowledge love is kindled, and in turn knowledge increases through love. For love is a fire, burning and shining. When it burns in the will it illuminates the understanding. It impels us to fix our eyes there, where our treasure is. And, since the goodness and beauty of Him whom our heart loves is immense and infinite, the sight of Him kindles yet fiercer flames of love in the heart. Then there springs from thence a

still stronger desire of beholding Him, and so there is no ending, till the soul is glued to her Beloved, becoming one Spirit with Him for ever. Excellently does Clement of Alexandria say, "He that seeks will not cease seeking till he find, and when he has found he will admire, admiring he will reign, and reigning he will be all at peace."

Contemplation, according to the meaning of the Latin term, is the consideration of hidden things, or the investigation of the truth. Theologically speaking, it is the goal of meditation, or of consideration, and gazes on the truth sought and found. The author of the book on the *Soul and Spirit*, found among the works of Saint Augustine, thus defines it: "Contemplation is a glad admiring of evident truth." Saint Bernard's definition concords with this: "Contemplation is a true and sure intuition of the mind concerning anything: it is a laying hold of the true without doubtfulness." Richard of Saint Victor gives another definition, and various others in various fashions. Saint Thomas gives this short one: "Contemplation is the simple gaze at divine truth." James Alvarez gives a longer and a clearer one: "It is a free, clear, and sure beholding of God and of divine things. It carries admiration with it; it ends in love, and springs from love." It is called *beholding*, because there is no need of the discourse of the reason to inquire into the truth, as there is in meditation. There is only need of the intelli-

gence to inspect truth simply and without discourse. It is called *free* on the part of *man*, because he ought to be free from sins, from inordinate affections and superfluous cares ; on the part of the *act* itself, because the mind, disengaged from things of earth, wanders, like a bird in the air, with free motion, whithersoever God carries it : on the part of the *object*, because it is contemplated, stripped of sensible images, or made plain to the soul in them. It is *clear*—that is, evident, open, and conspicuous—not in the light of glory, as in heaven, but in the light of faith, rendered perfect and completed by the light of wisdom. The beholding is *sure*, also, though the obscurity of faith is not excluded by it, but *sure* since the more clearly we behold divine things, the more certain we are of them. This beholding carries with it the very greatest *admiration* ; for, though the things we contemplate are already known to us, and have been examined, yet, as they are proposed to us in a new and unwonted mode, they seem stupendous and strange.

Lastly, contemplation begins from and ends in the love of God ; for though, in its essence, contemplation is an act of the understanding, its beginning, nevertheless, is in the will ; for it is by charity that we are incited to the contemplation of God. And since the end corresponds to the beginning, the end is also in the affections, for being delighted by the vision of the object loved, our very delight excites us to love more still.

5. Contemplation has many objects for its exercise. God and His infinite perfections are its chief object, as has been already said. Then comes Christ, our Redeemer, and all that concerns Him; the Blessed Virgin, the Angels, Saints and their gifts and prerogatives: the state of the Church militant, with its triumphs and persecutions: the visible world, and all creatures in so far as they lead us to think of and to love God. In a word, whatever is taken as a subject for meditation is also material for contemplation, only meditation investigates and contemplation feeds on with relish. Meditation runs to and fro round its object, contemplation simply gazes at it. Contemplation is caused by the Holy Ghost, that is, by means of His gifts, especially those of wisdom and understanding. Wisdom it is which confers on the understanding a most high and simple knowledge of divine things, with a certain strange sweetness and delicious savour. The gift of understanding is super-added to the natural understanding, in order that it may penetrate intimately the things of faith, and in a subtle manner lay hold of them. The gift of knowledge makes plain the truths of faith by reasons adapted to our capacity, and elevates our spirit from creaturely things to the Creator, setting loose the heart from them, and teaching us to behold in them what they have from God, and the good He confers upon us by them. The gift of counsel perfects our mind, making it more docile to the dic-

tates of God, so as to distinguish on every occasion what is to be done, and what to be avoided. The gift of piety gives a bloom to the will, excites in it an affection to the things of divine worship, and a tender mercy to our neighbour. Contemplation is not an idle gazing at God, but ought to be practical. It should direct us not only to love and knowledge, but also to execute and carry out what God bids us do. The gift of fortitude strengthens us to execute very difficult works, exceeding the powers of nature; so that from contemplation we go forth like lions, terrible to the demon. The gift of fear impresses on the heart a great reverence towards God, subjecting the soul, both in prosperity and adversity, most perfectly to the Divine Will. Mystic writers treat at large of these gifts. Denys Richelius, besides the gift of the Holy Ghost, enumerates three other things which induce contemplation—to wit, a burning love of God, abstraction of the mind from busying itself concerning creaturely things, and the effort of the mind to stretch forward towards God and lose itself in Him. *Love*, by an admirable circle, is the cause and effect of contemplation, as has been before noted in the definition of it. *Abstraction* pertains to the preparation of one's own self, as Denys elsewhere writes. That which he writes of *effort* must be understood with discretion, for contemplation is the gift of God, and cannot be procured by our own industry or labour. Nevertheless, as we may dispose ourselves for it, as they say, we ought to use an

effort to this end, so that we may make ourselves ready for it in dispositions—to wit, by self-renouncement, mortification, purity of life, meditation, the continual Presence of God, and the exercise of aspirations. For, according to Hesychius, “This divine state is born in our mind through the continual remembrance of God, and a constant invocation of Him.” It is by an active and practical life that we are introduced, says Olympiodorus, to that which is one of theory. By this road we arrive at the contemplation of the lofty heights of divine things. As, however, it is not safe to swim in one’s clothes, so neither, writes Climacus, is it safe to aim at theology when impeded by any passion. Having duly made, therefore, these requisite preparations, we must knock at the doors of the Divine Wisdom with great patience and steadfastness, till by His own favour we are introduced to His contemplation. Then, at length, we shall be lifted up to a mystic union with God, which is the end of contemplation and the supreme beatitude of man’s life here below.





CHAPTER X.

The names of writers on Contemplation are given. How many kinds of it there are. Its degrees and states. Examples of divine trial and of patience in desolation. The division of the soul and its powers according to mystical writers. A Hymn to God.

HAVE comprehended in few words what had to be said about contemplation. What need of more? we can consult mystical writers, who professedly treat of it. There is Richard of Saint Victor in five books, Denys, the Carthusian, in three books, and smaller treatises, James Alvarez in the fifth book of the third volume on the "Spiritual Life," Louis de Ponte in his "Spiritual Guide," and most excellently Thomas of Jesus in six books. To these I add the great servant of Christ, the most eminent Saint Teresa. If any one would examine mystical matters in the rigorous fashion of the schoolmen, let him consult Suarez, so well versed in both kinds of theology, in his book on prayer, and Maximilian Sandy, in his *Mystical Theology*, and in his *Key or Onomasticon*,

2. Among the heathen there were divers wise men given to contemplation. This is plain from the writings of the Platonic Philosophers, and from history. But as Albert the Great truly remarks, their contemplation had for its aim the perfecting of those who contemplated. They never went beyond their own understanding. They falsely imagined that, neglecting the care of the will, they could, by the illumination of the understanding alone, arrive at a union with the Supreme Good. Our contemplation is for the love of God, and therefore passes beyond the understanding, reaching its effect by love. Contemplation is divided into acquired and infused. The acquired is arrived at by our own industry and exercise, but not without the divine co-operation and grace. The infused flows solely from grace, and the divine inspiration. The first has its source in the habit of faith, and the other theological and moral virtues; the second is the gift of the Holy Ghost. The first is long and hard, the second easy, prompt, and sweet. The first is called rational, the latter experimental. Those who have the first discourse excellently about it and its rules, though destitute of its experience. Those who have the latter are little skilled in speech, but excel in use and experience.

Contemplation is also divided into pure and mixed. It is called mixed when the understanding depends for its working on the imagination in its contemplation; pure when it works with any images.

This latter kind is hard and scarce. Its existence is denied by Schoolmen, but admitted by the Saints and mystical writers, as is plentifully proved by Sandy and Thomas of Jesus.

There is another division into positive and negative. Several of the ancients and the Schoolmen give their approval to these two modes of contemplation, by teaching that some names are attributed to God positively, other names negatively. God being infinite, we attribute to him whatsoever of perfection is to be found in created things. But as in created perfections there is ever found somewhat of imperfection, it is by removing this that we rise to some notion of God—that is, by negations. These two modes are aptly explained under the two symbols of a painter and a sculptor. He who paints a picture delineates it on the canvas by the addition of various colours. A sculptor, on the contrary, by the gradual cutting off of chips of wood or marble, brings at last his statue to perfection. Thus, when we affirm of God that He is wise, good, powerful, just, merciful, so we ascribe to Him the perfections of His creatures, adding them like colours to a picture. When, however, we say that God is not being, nor life, nor wisdom, nor power, nor any of the other things after our manner of conception, we chip pieces off the statue we are forming. This, as Saint Maximus observes, is to know God by a not knowing of Him, and is proper to Mystical Theology. Saint Denys uses this similitude, and

Maximus Tyrius, a Platonic Philosopher, uses one, not unlike it, of a body clothed and stripped.

Again, contemplation is divided into clear and obscure. The clear is that of the blessed in heaven, the obscure that of pilgrims on earth. This obscure contemplation is more sublime than that called pure, and differs from it by a closer approximation to divine union. The divine obscurity is, as the first master of mystics writes, that unapproachable light in which God is said to dwell. This light cannot be seen, because of its intolerable brightness ; it is unapproachable, because of the effusion of super-substantial light that issues from it. This contemplation, then, seems to be the gazing of the mind upon a light, of such a nature as to beat back the eye of the intelligence, its immensity being too great for its capacity, so that it remains hidden by reason of this immensity.

There is another kind of contemplation of a very eminent kind, and loftier than that termed obscure. In this God ravishes and elevates the mind to divine things, not by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, but by Himself alone. The mind thus elevated apprehends God, not by the symbols of bodily similitudes, but by a higher, ineffable mode. Such I think was the rapture of our holy Father, S. Benedict, when, elevated beyond this world, he saw it, as it were, gathered together under one beam of the sun. Thomas of Jesus and Sandy treat at large on this kind of contemplation. It is this kind of con-

templation that Saint Augustine, I fancy, most elegantly describes in the Ninth Book of his Confessions, when relating the talk he had with his mother about the kingdom of heaven.

3. There are, then, several degrees of contemplation of different kinds, although contemplation is itself ever one. It is difficult to say exactly how many kinds and degrees there are. God communicates Himself to the contemplative soul after many fashions. The Spirit breatheth where, and when, and how, He wills. Who can tell the mind of the Spirit, or who shall dare to fix a bound to His admirable workings? The explanation of such sublime mysteries must be looked for from men taught of God, to whom God, who is wonderful in His Saints, has made manifest the uncertain and hidden things of His wisdom.

Richard of Saint Victor counts six kinds of contemplation, which he explains learnedly, elegantly, and richly in his work on the grace of contemplation. The first is in the imagination, and uses the imagination only. The second is in the imagination according to the reason. The third is in the reason according to the imagination, the fourth is in the reason according to the reason. The fifth is above the reason, but not beyond it. The sixth is both beyond and above the reason. There are, then, two degrees in the imagination, two in the reason, and two in the intelligence. How the reason differs from the intelligence will be explained

below. These degrees the author of the book on *Soul and Spirit* (and Saint Bonaventure after him) arranged in a different order.)

Saint Thomas, following Denys, distinguishes these different kinds of contemplation, using the symbol of local motion ; to wit circular, straight, and aslant. The soul moves in a circle, when from contemplating sensible things it returns to itself. It moves straight when it ascends from itself to a substance distinct from itself. It moves aslant when elevated in the contemplation of divine truth.

James Alvarez, embracing all that the holy Fathers and spiritual men have taught concerning contemplation, makes fifteen degrees, which he explains and confirms by sentences of the Saints. I will just give the names, but refer the reader for the explanation to himself. They are these following : the beholding of the truth ; the inward retiring of the soul ; spiritual silence, quiet, union ; the hearing of God's voice ; spiritual sleep, ecstasy, rapture ; the bodily appearance of Christ and His Saints ; imaginary apparitions ; intellectual vision ; obscure vision of God ; admirable vision of God ; clear and intuitive vision of God. This last degree is proper only to the blessed in heaven. But some theologians teach that certain very holy men have been favoured with it in this life.

Thomas of Jesus, mingling among the choirs of Angels, applies to the human mind the three angelic

hierarchies, with the three orders in each hierarchy. He thus makes nine degrees of contemplation. The first has its seat principally in the imagination, the second in the understanding, the third in the summit of the mind. The first, from the knowledge of sensible things, draws us to the contemplation of things invisible. Its first degree consists in the beholding with admiration this visible world; the second, in searching deeply into the inmost sense of the Scriptures; the third is occupied about the Incarnation of the Word and all the mysteries of Christ, in Whom are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God. The second hierarchy, by the beholding of invisible things, elevates the mind to things above, so as to behold God, Trinity in Unity. The first degree teaches us to ascend to God by the contemplation of His own image, the rational soul. The soul is thus contemplated in its gifts of nature and grace, and in its end—that is, heavenly glory, and the beatitude of the Saints in heaven. The second degree, leaving created things, contemplates God and His attributes. The third passes from the Unity of God to the most Holy Trinity. The third hierarchy rises to God by negations, and enters the divine obscurity. The first degree is pure contemplation, without the admixture of images; the second is contemplation of God in obscurity; the third is mystical union with God.

Victor Gelenius published at Cologne, in the

middle of the seventeenth century, a practical summary of mystical theology, digested into two parts, in which are described, with greatest accuracy, seven mystical states through which the soul passes before it arrives at the climax of sanctity. The first is the state of meditation, the second of aspirations, the third of contemplation positive and negative. These three proceed in an active, human, and natural manner, though they are grounded on a supernatural principle, and sometimes receive divine assistances. The rest of the states belong, in their mode of action, to the supernatural. No one should dare to pass to them, unless called of God so to do. For these are the mystic and most secret gifts of God. These gifts no man knows, but he that receives them ; no one receives but he who desires, and no one desires but he whose desire is enkindled by the Holy Ghost. The fourth state is a state of rigorous privation, by which the soul is disposed for supernatural states. It is the bridge between the natural and supernatural states, a preliminary requisite for supernatural workings. In it discourse ceases and the use of images. The soul is stripped and deprived of its human and natural mode of working. It is bared of all help, of all its external exercises, of all sensible consolation. All its powers dwell languid in the fund of the soul, in desolation. The vivacity of the intellect is deadened and dulled. Virtuous actions are performed merely in their essence. There is no glad-

ness here, but inexplicable torment. Let those say what it is who have experienced it. Saint Bernard calls this state a spiritual death, which he calls the death of Angels. Ruisbroek calls it the wrestling of the Divine Spirit with our spirit, and a kind of desperation. Tauler calls it a crushing within. Horphius styles it an infernal sickness, a division of soul and spirit. Barbanson also says it is a division of nature and the spirit. Mary Vela, a Cistercian nun, terms it a horrible martyrdom; Saint Catherine of Genoa, a frightful and shocking torment. Saint John of the Cross paints it under the symbol of an obscure night, and likens it to purgatory. Thomas of Jesus calls it the purgatory of this mortal life. Blessed Angela of Foligno had rather be in hell than endure such a privation, a thing very wonderful in her. Saint Teresa, in her life and writings, tells what she had to endure in this pressure. I pass by what others have said, and go on to another state. The fifth state is that of mystic union, when the soul, relieved from the pressure of rigid privation, begins to revive. Then her interior hope rising from its prostrate position, she receives light and love, and passes into the liberty of the Spirit by little and little. And in proportion as she mounts higher, so much does she the more easily raise up the capacity of the spirit to the things above, till, drawn upwards by God, she arrives at a most blissful union with Him.

The sixth state is that of transformation by the

gift of wisdom. This transformation is not substantial. God forbid that we should hold with the condemned error, held by some, that the soul of man ceases to have an individual being, and passes into the substance of God. But the soul enjoys a most close union with the Supreme Good. She becomes partaker of the divine nature in a most perfect manner. She is transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord, so that she obtains in this bliss the very greatest perfection of her mystical profession. There are two modes of this transformation. By the one she is said to descend from above to the lower parts, and by the other to ascend from the lower to the upper parts. "Love," says Saint Bonaventure, "mounts to the upper parts that there it may repose. It descends to the lower that it may bring them back to itself. It moves upwards that there it may abide. It goes downwards in order to return." Furthermore, it is here the soul gets that quiet enjoyment of mystic silence, till she beholds her spirit on high above herself. For although, in the state of union, she experiences a most high enjoyment of the spirit, yet she has not obtained a full rest and satiety of the appetite, because she frequently falls back into a want and cessation of union. Still, she does not thereby suffer the troublesomeness of distractions, or rebellion of the passions, or any interruption of spiritual joy. The seventh and last state is that of the

Saints in the Church militant, whose souls are endowed by God with a very plenteous grace, or eminent holiness in life, the gift of miracles, and other graces called freely given graces. The ecstasies, raptures, and other marvellous things wrought in this state, ought to be held in reverence and admiration, but not coveted.

4. These are the states and degrees of the contemplative life. I have endeavoured, with the help of God, to give as clear and brief an explanation of them as I well could. They may be found more fully and profoundly explained by the authors quoted. Which of the sets of divisions above given is to be preferred, I do not presume to determine. But I may remark that Richard of Saint Victor distinguishes the grades according to the working powers of the soul in her contemplation. The angelic doctor has regard to the soul's mode of working. James Alvarez describes not so much the degrees as the properties and effects of contemplation. Thomas of Jesus comprises in the first and second hierarchies all the objects contemplation has for its sphere. In the third he lays down the mode by which the soul may most perfectly attain to the contemplation of her primary object. Victor Gelenius does not give degrees of contemplation, but describes various successive stages of the mystic and contemplative life, observing the method and order by which the soul is wont to advance from the lowest to the highest through

the middle stages. We read of one who went from the lowest to the highest without touching the middle stages. Such cases are extraordinary. God works them when He wills, being almighty. We must not scrutinise them too closely, nor draw any consequence from them. The wisdom of God is infinite, His providence most righteous, His judgments a deep abyss. Sometimes the grace of contemplation is given to the imperfect, and denied to the perfect. To one God gives five talents, to another only one. I will say with Saint Augustine, "No one comes to God, unless he is drawn. Wouldst thou be drawn? Pray that thou mayest be drawn. But why God draws this man and not that do not presume to judge, if thou wouldst keep thyself from error." If, by the beneficence of God, you are raised to a sublime state, keep your treasure with meekness and thanksgiving. If you are left in a lower grade, beware of being lukewarm or negligent, and strive to become ever more perfect in meditation and aspirations. For it is better, as the Abbot John in Cassian teaches, "to be devout when professing little than to be indevout when making great professions.

5. But why is it, we may here inquire with amazement, that there are to be found such a scanty number of persons who apply themselves to mystical theology and contemplation, when there are an immense number of pious religious men, with gifts of grace and of the Holy Ghost. The

wonder increases when we consider that the more noble an occupation is, the more easily do we give ourselves to the work. Since, then, all persons in a state of grace have within them, as an infused habit from the Holy Ghost, the gift of wisdom, why out of so many thousands, is there scarce one to be found given to the contemplation of divine things? Truly it is strange, and we may lament with the prophet, saying, "The ways of Sion mourn, because there are none to come to the solemn feast." To scrutinise the causes of this desolation would require more leisure and space than can be given, but I will touch on some briefly. Caliguritan, proposing this question, thinks the chief cause is that few choose seriously to shun slight faults, and to keep the heart continually pure. If this were done, the divine image would be seen with ease reflected on a pure soul. Caliguritan speaks the truth therefore, for the wise men among the heathen were not ignorant of this truth. Hierocles says that man can only then be divine when he has put off whatsoever is human. Masonius, in the *Aristides*, says, "Cast out of the soul whatsoever you find dead in it, and you will then discover God." Plato says that the mind must be separated from the body, in order to be joined to God. Some give as the cause the inaptitude of some bodily temperaments for mystical operations. Gregory the Great says that some persons are so restless, they cannot sit down with Mary at the

feet of Christ. But as Saint Francis of Sales says, such ought to overcome nature by the help of divine grace, which is given to all who ask for it : to him that wills nothing is hard. Da Ponte gives another reason, namely, the singular providence of God in the government of His Church, in which there are divers offices and degrees. Each one, then, ought to attend to his own call, following the voice that invites him, and removing every hindrance. Most excellently says Saint Bernard : “ We all complain that grace is wanting to us, but surely more justly might grace complain of some that the wanting is ours, not its. The grace of devotion, which we seek, is a thing of the heart, and he defrauds himself of this gift who cares not to open for it its proper receptacle.”

‡ 6. But if we would speak, not simply of contemplation, but of that passage from the human and natural to the divine and supernatural, then it must be owned that to enter on the supernatural state is not vouchsafed by God till after a long and very hard trial in the state of privation, as already described. The disciple has need to be forewarned of this, lest, wearied out with the length of the toil, he should lose hope, and turn back from the journey begun. That I may not seem to speak unadvisedly, I will bring examples.

Ubertine of Casalis toiled fourteen years before being admitted to a very inferior perfection. Saint Teresa suffered intolerable straits for eighteen

years. Saint Francis pined away for two years with most fearful grief. Blessed Clare of Monte Falco suffered privation for fifteen years. Saint Catherine of Genoa describes her martyrdom herself in her *Dialogues*. Saint Catherine of Bononi had a desolation of five years' duration, given to the storms and assaults of the demons. Saint Mary of Egypt was afflicted for seventeen years, and so purged away purely the dross of her soul. Saint Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, first for five years and then for other fifteen, endured such scorching dangers, that she seemed to be abandoned by God. Blessed Henry Suso for ten years was deprived of all consolation. Balthasar Alvarez, of the Company of Jesus, had to labour in the mystical life for sixteen years of darkness, till he received the light of the divine illuminations. Thomas of Jesus, after toiling twenty years, could not tell what union of the soul with God is. At length the divine goodness revealed it to him. If these things have been done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? We ought, therefore, with unbroken spirit, to persevere in the way of the Lord, and not faint under His discipline; for, as Saint Lawrence Justiniani says, God does not abandon those that are occupied in good: unexpectedly, in their ignorant obscurity, He is wont to visit them. Saint Bernard would have this hope stretch itself to the very end of our life in patient waiting. He says, "There are many who

tend this way their whole life, yet never reach the goal. But if they have done their endeavour with piety and perseverance, then there is given them, as soon as they pass out of this life, that which, by the dispensation of God, was denied to them in the body. Grace alone finishes the journey for them, bringing them to the goal whither, by the help of grace, they were tending; so that, being perfected in a short while, they may fulfil a long duration.

7. I should now finish, but that I have before promised to explain the division of the soul and the powers according to the mystics. Marius Victorinus Alfer distinguishes in man two souls, two minds, two reasons, a heavenly and earthly. It is plain man has two natures, bodily and spiritual. His method of working must be therefore twofold, bodily and spiritual. Looking then at the order and direction of the powers to their own proper end, the mystics distinguish man into *animal* and *spiritual*. He is so, not substantially, but by the quality of his desert, as says Paulinus of Aquileia. The seraphic Bonaventure gives six powers of the soul in order to contemplation, viz., the senses, imagination, reason, intellect, intelligence, and the summit of the mind, or synderesis. Philosophers deny that reason, understanding, and intelligence are different powers of the mind; they allow them, however, to be different acts or stages of the understanding. For the power of the intellect, when it is exercised by mode of discourse, is called

reason ; when it is exercised by a simple intuition, it is called understanding : in an act of contemplation of the Godhead, by simple apprehension, it is called intelligence.. These remarks are made by Richard of Saint Victor.

Synderesis, which is the habit of practical reason, created together with the soul, by which it recognises first principles naturally in things of practice, is very rightly called by mystical writers the summit of the mind, and the primary spark of the reason and intelligence. This name is given to it, because by it the soul has a certain immediate relation with God, and can be immediately touched and illuminated by Him. Its proper natural sphere is to be in things above, and to be elevated in things divine. It sheds upon the soul the splendours of knowledge, and kindles in it the burning inclination towards good. These are the sentiments of Saint Bonaventure. Others go a different road. They call the soul by the name of soul when working by the senses and appetites, by the name of spirit when working by the rational powers. The mind, or highest point of the spirit, is bare, and is the deiform fund of the soul, that is, the simple essence of the soul marked with the image of God. By the fund of the soul, however, I understand its guiding principle and chief part. It is a word of the stoics, but I use it in a different sense. In my conception the soul is as a transparent vessel capable of receiving lights and shadows from all

kinds of things. Now, as the lowest part of a vessel is called its fund or bottom, holding and retaining all that is poured upon it, so the principle part of the soul, or highest point of the mind, gets this name. When, then, all images of creaturely things are emptied out of it, there will remain apparent in the fund of the soul only the simple and amiable face of God. Of this fund Tauler and other mystical writers have said much. Diadochris, Bishop of Photica, who is thought to have lived about the end of the fourth century, uses this expression. I have thought good to mention this, lest any one should charge it with novelty.

8. Having arrived thus far in my writing of this guide of mystical theology with the help of God, we must now descend to the practical method of aspirations. First, however, I will sing a hymn, to give thanks to the primary cause of all things, and to ask strength to finish what yet is wanting.

1. "O Fountain of Eternal light,
Unwavering starry radiance bright,
Thou very Fire divine, and pure,
Heart's strength, that dost for aye endure.
2. With lips, and mind, and heart aflame,
I praise and hymn Thy sweetest Name,
Due to my King such praises are,
From morning sun to evening star:
3. Thou art my hope, and guerdon Thou,
Port whither faith doth point her prow,
Trusting to Thee I erst have borne
Dread, angry storms, and nights forlorn.

4. My bitter pains and tears atween
Thy light of mercy bright did gleam,
To cheer my spirit and to quell
The malice of the powers of hell.
5. All hail supernal Fire of Love,
Pouring Thy radiance from above,
I turn to Thee, invoke Thy Name,
O clothe me with Thy mystic flame.
6. Descend, descend as erst Thou didst,
From Angel's choirs and thrones amidst,
To lighten my poor wayward heart,
And wound it with Thy flaming dart.
7. Therefore to Thee I wholly turn
That in Thee I may ever burn
With flames of love,—finding in Thee
My only true felicity.
8. O happiest lot, O joy supreme,
Of earthly things no more to dream,
But slumbering on the Eternal breast,
Find there repose in sweetest rest.
9. Eternal praise to Him be given,
Who reigneth gloriously in heaven,
To Son and Holy Spirit be
Coequal praise eternally."





CHAPTER XI.

The Groans of a Repentant Soul for Beginners.

THOSE who are well practised in aspirations may be able without difficulty to rise to God by motions of their own, each one out of the quiver of his own heart sending forth the arrows of prayer. But lest, these falling short, the disciple should find himself dry, and the mystic fire be extinguished on the altar of the heart for want of fuel, I have gathered, out of the Scriptures and holy Fathers, some faggots of aspirations for beginners, the advancing, and the perfect. I have already explained how they are to be used and put in practice. They are distributed into decades, the better to be committed to memory. Some days ought to be given to this work. For what is the use of having a multitude of aspirations written in a book, if they are not written also in the memory; nay, so engraved there as to be ready for use at every hour and moment? But I propose to set down, in the first

place, the groans of the penitent soul, following the natural order in teaching ; because, in order to become what yet we are not, it is necessary to purify that which we are, and to expiate all by tears.

DECADE I.

O LORD, my God, I am a most vile sinner. I am not fit to burden the earth, have mercy on me, and save me.

2. O my Lord, Who art my Sovereign Good, how far I have departed from Thee by sin, dwelling in this distant country of miseries, where I have lost myself.

3. O loving Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee, and am no longer worthy to be called Thy son ; make me as one of Thy hired servants.

4. I am grieved, O my most sweet Lord, that I have sinned ; I am grieved exceedingly that I have transgressed Thy law : wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

5. O my Lord God, I detest my sins, I am grieved for all my wickednesses ; I acknowledge my ingratitude, and I flee to the altar of Thy mercy for refuge.

6. Wash me, O Jesus Christ, in Thy precious Blood, and cleanse away all my sin.

7. Heal my soul, O Lord, for it is wounded with

sin : anoint my sores with the oil of Thy grace, and do not despise me, I beseech Thee.

8. O most gracious Lord God, never will I again transgress Thy law, never more will I consent to any sin from this hour. I had rather incur any pain or disgrace, even death itself, than sin again.

9. O most loving Father, make me to bring forth worthy fruits of penance, that I may punish my sins with the chastisement they deserve.

10. I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost, but now I hear Thy voice saying to me, "though thou hast committed fornication with many lovers, yet return to me, and I will receive thee.

DECADE II.

NOW I have begun, O Lord, yes, now I begin to live, not in my own strength, nor in the might of my own arm, but in the multitude of Thy mercies. Establish Thou what Thou hast wrought in me.

2. Thou didst give me, O Lord, a sound mind and a teachable heart ; but, alas ! unhappy me, that I have abused miserably all Thy good gifts. Still Thou art a merciful Father, Thou hast called back the sinner, and hast delivered me from the pains of hell.

3. I am distressed exceedingly for the multitude of my sins, with which I have offended Thee, my most tender Redeemer. I have sold myself as a slave to the devil, and have provoked Thy indignation against me.

4. O, most loving Father, O that I had never transgressed Thy commandments ! O that I had never fallen into such miseries and calamities ! Happy those who have never lost their innocence, who have kept undefiled the grace of their baptism.

5. Most high God, I resolve in future to sin no more. I make now a most firm resolution not to transgress Thy commandments. From my heart I determine, with the help of Thy grace, to fulfil all Thy law.

6. Look upon me, O Lord, with the eyes of Thy mercy, and blot out my sins past : grant me, through Thy goodness, the grace of amendment.

7. How slothful have I been up till now ! The time given me for repentance I have lost. I have cast away the helps of Thy grace, and have turned a deaf ear to the callings of Thy voice. And now, Lord, what shall I do ? I am grieved that I have sinned. Have pity on me.

8. Alas ! O Lord God ! What wounds I have ! what weakness and corruption ! To heal my wounds Thou wast crucified, and slain.

9. Be favourable, O God, to me a sinner. Jesus, Son of the living God, have mercy on me.

10. O Ruler of my life, Thou seest that in me is no good thing. There is no health in my soul. Miserable and blind, I can do nothing, and I am nothing, without Thee.

DECADE III.

O MOST dear Saviour, Thou knowest what a number of ills I have done, and how many good things I have left undone. Be merciful to me, and save me.

2. O great house of God, how little did I esteem thee, and how shamefully have I despised thee for a nothing !

3. Most just Judge, I rightly deserved to be thrust down to hell, and Thou hast spared me in Thy goodness.

4. I confess, O Lord, that in the whole world there is none so bad as I have been ; but still I put my trust in the plenteousness of Thy goodness. If my sins are without number, Thy mercies are without number also.

5. Thou, God, knowest my foolishness, also my sins are not hid from Thee. Remember not my ignorances, and the sins of my youth.

6. My most merciful God, give me grace, for the sake of Thy Beloved Son, to embrace virtue and to abhor vice, to tread under the things of earth, and to thirst after those in heaven.

7. Woe to the time when I did not know Thee, the sovereign good of my soul. Woe to that blindness which held my eyes from beholding Thee.

8. O Lord, my God, when shall I wholly die to myself, and live to Thee ? When shall I be quit of all earthly things ? When shall I fully bridle my

senses and my passions, and all that is corrupt in me?

9. O that I might despise the world, and tread under foot all earthly things! O that I might count as dung all that worldlings prize and cherish!

10. Would that, clean from all corruption, and from all inordinate affection, I might then be worthy of the visits of my God, and the favours of heavenly graces.

DECADE IV.

DEADEN my passions, O Lord; restrain them: moderate them by Thy love, and thy presence, that they may not trouble me. Make them rather to help forward what is good, since for this end Thou didst give them to me.

2. Remove from my heart all vain thoughts. Let me fear to resolve in the secret chamber of my soul, where Thou dwellest, what I should blush to think of, could it come to the knowledge of men.

3. May all creation be of little account in my eyes, that nothing but Thou Thyself may satisfy me.

4. Sweetest Jesus, how desirable is Thy grace, how sweet is Thy friendship! Cast me not away from Thee on account of my sins.

5. Cast me not away, O God, from Thy presence: make haste, I beseech Thee, and deliver my senses from the mire and clay.

6. Cleanse me, O Lord, with Thy precious

Blood. Heal me by Thy Wounds, and hallow me by Thy most bitter Passion and Death.

7. Thou, who didst fashion me with Thy Hands, and didst redeem the world by Thy Cross, help me and have mercy on me.

8. Open to me the bowels of Thy loving-kindness, O most merciful Father, receive me into Thy favour, and forgive me all my sins.

9. O Lord, strong and patient, give me such a contrition as Thou knowest I ought to have for my sins ; I have sinned, be merciful to me.

10. Here burn me, here cut, that in the other world Thou mayest spare me. Here chastise me, and do not reserve my sins for future vengeance.

DECADE V.

MY sins, O Lord, are more in number than the sands of the sea-shore. I am not worthy of Thy mercies, but Thy compassion is greater than are my sins.

2. Hast Thou not said, O Lord, that there is joy in heaven over one sinner doing penance? Make this joy to be felt for me.

3. Thou, O Lord, who willest not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live, grant me this life of which I am deprived.

4. Didst Thou come to call the righteous, or sinners to repentance? And if sinners, behold me of all sinners the chief, and draw my soul to Thee.

5. Have mercy on me, O Lord, according to Thy great mercy, and according to the multitude of Thy mercies blot out my iniquity.

6. Wash me, O Lord, with Thy Blood, and I shall become whiter than snow.

7. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and purge away the filth of my soul.

8. O Thou Redeemer of my soul, how long turnest Thou Thy face from me, and wilt not give me aid in my groaning?

9. Behold me, Thy prodigal child, worse than the prodigal, yet give to me the ring and the first garment, and make me worthy of Thy embrace.

10. Let not Thy Blood be shed for me in vain, sweetest Saviour, but let it be to me salvation, and life everlasting.

DECADE VI.

HOW long, O most skilful of Physicians, dost Thou delay to heal my wounds? See, O most merciful Jesus Christ, how blind I am in beholding what is right, how lame in my prayers, and how palsied in working. Have mercy on me, and heal me.

2. Let Thy Blood be my medicine, O Lord, and let Thy Wounds be a balm to mine.

3. Rebuke me not, O Lord, in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy indignation.

4. Behold, I am Thy servant, and the son of

Thy handmaid ; gladden the soul of Thy servant,
O Lord, for to Thee have I lifted up my soul.

5. I am not worthy to be called Thy son, yet
Thou art my Father. Be to me a Father, that I
may be to Thee a son.

6. Thou knowest, O God, my foolishness, and
my transgressions are not hid from Thee. Let me
not perish in my folly.

7. I said, I will confess against myself my un-
righteousness to the Lord, and so Thou forgavest
the iniquity of my sin.

8. Let not the foot of pride come against me,
and let not the hand of the sinner cast me down.

9. Who knoweth his transgressions? From my
secret sins cleanse Thou me, O Lord ; and from
those of others spare Thy servant.

10. Remember, I beseech Thee, that Thou hast
fashioned me as clay, and into dust thou wilt bring
me back again.

DECADE VII.

ENTER not into judgment with Thy servant, O
Lord, for in Thy sight shall no man living be
justified. I stand in need of mercy, I seek peace,
not judgment.

2. Look on my low estate, and my labour, and
forgive me all my sins.

3. I show to Thee, O Father, those crying sins
which I cannot hide from Thee. If I could blot
them out from Thy sight with my own heart's blood

I would willingly give it. But one drop of that of Thy beloved Son will wash them all away. O that I were thus cleansed, that the foulness of my iniquity might not appear before Thee.

4. Alas! Lord, I have become worse than the devils. This is plain by my evil deeds, for I have committed more sins than they.

5. O my God I acknowledge my abominations, that I may praise Thee. I bring my sins before Thee, not as loving them, but that I may love Thee more, the light of my eyes, and the fountain of mercy.

6. O most pure and holy God, I had rather die a thousand deaths than offend Thee in the smallest matter.

7. No enemy do I fear so much as I fear myself. Who will guard me against myself? Unless Thou keep me, O Lord, in vain do I strive to watch myself.

8. Come to me, O Lord, for I have wandered far from Thee. Teach me how to come to Thee, for unless Thou, who art the way, teachest me, I can in no wise accomplish it.

9. I abhor my sins, O my God, with the Heart of my Saviour. As the Heart of Jesus wept over them, so do I hate them, and mourn over them.

10. O that my contrition were great as the sea, that rivers of tears might flow from it, and entering it again, come forth in everlasting streams.

DECADE VIII.

TEARS of sorrow, where are ye? Leave all others and come plenteously to my aid, who am guilty of such crying sins.

2. O, how good it would have been for me that I had never been born, or seen the light of life, to offend Thee, my God.

3. O Thou sun, eye of the world, before whose sight I have so often sinned, may I never be seen by thee for the time to come but in tears and in sorrow.

4. Tremble, all ye members of my body, at the awful name of sin. All ye creatures of God, punish me for offending your Creator.

5. O what a God have I offended, how amiable and how loving to me; a God of charity, beneficence, and goodness!

6. What iniquity did I find in Thee, O good Jesus, that I should so cruelly and wickedly deal with Thee?

7. O, if I could undo what I have done; if I could annul the past, how gladly would I part with life to regain my lost innocence!

8. I am grieved for having sinned, O my God, and shall ever grieve. Oh that I could grieve with an infinite sorrow for having offended Thee!

9. Convert me, O Lord, and deliver my soul; save me for Thy mercies' sake.

10. Look, O Lord, on the exceeding bitterness

of my distress, for there is none that can help me, but only Thou, my God.

DECADE IX.

DOST Thou then allow such an unworthy creature as I am to burden the earth, O Lord? O how great is Thy goodness and mercy.

2. Be appeased, O Lord, and show Thy face peaceable to me.

3. Behold thy God, O my soul, who blotteth out thy transgressions. See how much He hath suffered for thee, and with how great charity He loveth thee, and do not depart from Him any more.

4. One thing do I ask of Thee, O my God, grant me that, sinning no more, I may know and do Thy will.

5. Come into my heart, O Lord, make a scourge of small cords, and cast out of it all things that profane Thy house.

6. Give me, most gracious Jesus, one of those tears which Thou didst shed so plenteously for me, that I may offer it to the Father as an atonement for all my sins.

7. Receive Thy runaway, most loving Father. Open the door to me knocking, take me in, fleeing from my enemies.

8. Kill and pluck out of me whatever displeaseth Thee. Quicken and increase all that is

pleasing to Thee, O Thou who killest and makest alive.

9. O most loving Father, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. Heal my soul, for I confess my sins.

10. O that I were without fault! O that my senses were kept from all unlawful objects! O that I were as I should be, both within and without! When, O when shall I be pure from all stain? When shall I be so clean and well ordered that nothing in me shall offend the eyes of those who see me? Help me, O Lord, my God, and wash away the filth of my sinful soul.





CHAPTER XII.

Pious Desires for those Advancing.

THE soul that had gone astray from God is, after having returned into a good way, like the children of Israel, when delivered by God, with a mighty arm, out of the bondage of Egypt. For as they, coming out from Egypt, advanced under the guidance of Moses into a land flowing with milk and honey, so the soul ought to advance to things beyond. She ought to despise the temptations of the enemy, which entice her to return into Egypt. For God is our helper ; He fights for us ; He is our strength and a secure refuge. To him we should lift up our hearts with movements of fervour, imploring him without ceasing for help by godly desires and aspirations, such as suit specially the state of those making advance. Some decades of these are added below for use, and as a pattern.

DECADE I.

ENLIGHTEN my eyes, O Lord, with the light of faith and wisdom, that I may ever look on Thee as the model of all my actions.

2. O sweetest Jesus Christ, perfect and re-fashion the powers of my soul by those of Thy own most holy soul. Would that I were made after Thy image in both mind and body.

3. O my God, the life of my soul, who am I, and what is my father's house, that Thou shouldest load me with such benefits. I was created by Thee and for Thee. Thou art my rest. Thou art the true centre of my soul.

4. O Good Jesus, my hope and my refuge, I hail and adore Thy most sweet Wounds. Plunge me in them ; hide me completely in them. Print them on my heart, that I may be all on fire with love, and that I may compassionate Thee from the marrow of my soul.

5. Give me, O Lord, a single eye, that with filial love I may seek in all things thy honour and good pleasure. Give so true and perfect a heart, that I may not seek spiritual comfort, but in desolation of soul may covet only to cling to Thee.

6. Take from my heart that excessive love of myself, and pour into it a perfect love of Thee ; take from me the heart of the slothful and unprofitable servant, and give me a childlike heart, full of holy trust in Thee.

7. If I could only always recollect Thee, I would think of Thee alone, love Thee alone.

8. Would that I might shut all the doors of my senses to worldly things, and be decked with every virtue, that I might please Thee in all things.

9. O, if thou wouldst give me grace to collect my mind from wandering upon many things, I would centre it all on Thee.

10. Early will I seek thee, my Sovereign Good. O immense beauty, Thee will I exceedingly covet ; I will swiftly run to Thee, the only true rest of my soul,

DECADE II.

DEPART from me all things created, I desire not to be burdened with your cares, lest ye would hinder the salvation of my soul, and cut off from me the constant thought of my God.

2. Let me not stick fast lukewarm in the mire. Let me not be held by the darkness of ignorance, but set free my powers, that I may run swiftly on a perfect road.

3. I throw myself into the bath of Thy precious Blood, that it may swallow up all sins and imperfections, confirming me in meekness, patience, and all virtues.

4. One thing only I desire, O Lord, one thing I covet and ask for, that Thou wouldst look on me with the eyes of Thy mercy.

5. Enlighten my understanding, kindle my affections, give force to my hands, that I may attain that degree of perfection for which Thou didst create me.

6. Grant me, O Lord, by a perfect self-denial, that I may arrive at a perfect love of Thee. Thou hast commanded that I should love Thee. Give me what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt.

7. My soul is tossed in a storm of temptation. Speak peace, Thou who hast given bounds to the sea, and hast said, "So far shalt thou come, and here thou shalt break thy swelling waves."

8. O King of Sion, adorn the bridal chamber of me Thy bride, that nothing may be found there but what is fit and comely, nothing that shall displease Thy eyes.

9. O that I were truly meek and humble of heart, poor and naked in spirit.

10. I set myself, O Lord, in the lowest place. Behold me beneath every created thing, for I am a sinner, most wretched of all things.

DECADE III.

I POUR all my will into Thine, O Lord. May Thy Will be done by me, and concerning me in time and in eternity.

2. O sweetest Jesus, let me be conformed en-

tirely to Thy image, and let my whole soul be turned inwards to Thee.

3. Instruct, direct, and help me in all things, that I may speak nothing, think nothing, do nothing, wish nothing, but what is acceptable in Thy sight.

4. I bless and give thanks to Thy almighty loving-kindness, O Lord God, for whatsoever I could receive of Thy bounty, Thou hast given me in a fulness altogether beyond my desert.

5. O Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Make me live according to Thy own heart.

6. Give me, O Lord, a peaceable mind, and stir up in me the fire of chaste love.

7. My soul panteth after Thee; enlighten mine eyes, lest the darkness of death lay hold upon me.

8. Hail sweet Jesus, who didst vouchsafe to die for me! Do not let me be lost, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy most precious Blood.

9. How good a thing it is to suffer for Christ, to be afflicted, despised, and to die for Christ.

10. O sweet companionship to be ever with Christ! O sweet life to live with Christ, to suffer and die with Christ.

DECADE IV.

LET all that I do, think, or speak, be done for Thy glory, O Lord God. Let every work be begun and ended in Thee.

2. I am Thy servant, O Lord ; give me understanding, that I may learn Thy commandments. I do not wish to be my own, but Thine, only Thine.

3. How sweet it is to sit solitary, and to be silent : to speak only of Jesus, to think of Jesus only, in whom are all good things.

4. Implant in me, O Lord, the seeds of every virtue, and make them to grow up into good works, lest I be unprofitable, like a barren tree, in the house of my God.

5. O sweet Jesus, the well-spring of every good, the fountain of all grace, direct my steps in Thy paths, and teach me to do Thy Will.

6. Empty my heart of every created thing, and all that might be a hindrance. Make me pure and simple, wholly fixed on Thee ; that I may regard nothing and love nothing in creatures but what is Thine, and that for which they were made.

7. Give me the fervour of Thy Spirit, O blessed Jesus, and kindle in me that fire which Thou camest to send upon the earth, that I may study to please Thee alone, and may desire to be despised by all men for Thy sake.

8. O dearest, dearest Jesus, leave me not comfortless in this land of exile, but as Thou didst promise, go and come again at fitting seasons, till, the time of my trial being over, Thou takest me altogether to Thyself.

9. O Lord, my strength, be Thou blessed in all things in which Thou dost afflict me. Accomplish Thy Will in me, for I know that Thou never canst act unrighteously.

10. I pray Thee, O my God, free my wandering mind from the bondage of all lusts and bodily images. I would wish to find Thee alone in my enlightened soul, since Thou didst fashion me after Thy own precious and incorruptible image.

DECADE V.

MY God, and all my good, when wilt Thou fill me with such grace and charity as to make me feel that Thou indeed art all things to me, and that out of Thee all things are a very nothing.

2. Rise on me, O Light everlasting, and let the shades of my vanity be scattered. Let not anything, however small, remain between me and Thee, no shadow on the fulness of Thy Light.

3. How sweet, O Lord, is Thy Spirit! How sweet are Thy words unto my mouth! Grant that I may be ever mindful of them to do them.

4. O Lord God, I desire to praise Thee for all those that know Thee not, for all who blaspheme Thy Name, whether on earth or in hell.

5. Regard me with the eyes of Thy mercy, but keep the hands of Thy justice far away, my God and my all.

6. Thou knowest, O Lord, that I love Thee, keep far from me whatever is displeasing to Thee.

7. I have nothing that I can offer Thee, unless the tears of a contrite heart that loves Thee. Receive them and mingle them with Thy Blood, most gracious Jesus.

8. For Thee, O Lord, I take care of my body ; for Thee I preserve my life : give me strength to serve Thee.

9. O that all the joys that are or will be in this world were for love of Thee, most sweet Creator, in whom alone is true joy, and true consolation.

10. Take possession of my heart, good Jesus, and fill it with Thy grace.

DECADE VI.

IN Thee, sweetest Jesus, will I live and die. In life and in death will I sing to Thee, for Thou art good, and Thy mercy endureth for ever.

2. Swallow up, O Lord, all my covetings in that sweetness of Thine which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee. Let not my taste be allured or deceived by vain pleasures, putting bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.

3. Let my soul flee for refuge, O Lord, under the shadow of Thy wings. Safe hidden in Thee from the burning heat of worldly thoughts, let it sing "In peace together will I sleep and rest."

4. Give, O Lord, to my heart, to desire Thee, desiring to seek Thee, seeking to find, and finding to love Thee.

5. ¹ Make me wholly to die to this world, and to

forget all passing things, through a great love and fear of Thee, so that I may neither love nor fear anything that passeth away.

6. Lead me, O Lord, in Thy righteousness, because of mine enemies; direct my way before Thee.

7. Save me, O Lord, for the holy one hath failed, and Thy truths are diminished from among the sons of men.

8. Perfect my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.

9. O Thou, who hast said, 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink,' give to my thirsting soul ever to drink of Thee, that out of my belly may flow living waters according to Thy promise.

10. Put away from me, O God Almighty, a boasting spirit, and move my heart with full compunction. Abate my pride and fill me with true humility. Deliver me from the snares of my enemies, and preserve me in Thy good pleasure.

DECADE VII.

LET me know Thee, O Lord, my strength; let me find Thee the desire of my heart; let me love Thee, the life of my soul.

2. To Thee be glory, to Thee praise, to Thee thanksgiving, for ever and ever, O blessed Trinity, in room of all the mockeries with which the wicked insult Thee.

3. I praise and glorify Thee, O sweetest Love,

in all and for all the good things, which Thy glorious Godhead and blessed manhood have wrought in us by the most noble instrument of Thy Heart, and for all it shall ever work.

4. Thou art He that took me out of my mother's womb, go not far from me, for Thou art my God.

5. The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?

6. Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.

7. Let it be Thy good pleasure to deliver me, O Lord. O Lord look upon me to help me.

8. Plead Thou my cause against them that hurt me; fight Thou against those that fight against me. Lay hands upon the shield and buckler and arise and help me. Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

9. Be merciful to me, O Lord, be merciful to me, for in Thee doth my soul put her trust.

10. My soul hath thirsted after Thee, O God, and my flesh also, O how many times!

DECADE VIII.

HAVE pity on me, O God of all, and show me the light of Thy mercies.

2. O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise Him and magnify Him for ever.

3. Come hither, and hearken, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul.

4. O God make speed to save me, O Lord make haste to help me.

5. Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise, that I may sing of Thy glory and greatness all the day long.

6. O Lord God of hosts, who is like unto Thee? Thou art mighty, O Lord, and art girt about with truth.

7. Goodness, and instruction, and knowledge teach me, for I have believed Thy commandments : O teach me Thy statutes.

8. Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy Presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there ; if I go down to hell, Thou art there also.

9. To Thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul; my God, in Thee put I my trust, let me not be put to confusion.

10. I saw the transgressors, and fainted away, because they keep not Thy words.

DECADE IX.

WHOO is like unto Thee, among the mighty, O Lord? Who is like unto Thee? Marvellous in holiness, terrible, and to be praised, and doing wonderful things.

2. I wish, O Lord, to be patient, meek, and re-

signed. Vouchsafe to supply for me, where in myself I fall short.

3. O how I desire a lowly spirit. O most humble Jesus give me of the treasure of Thy meekness.

4. How much I desire to suffer for Thee, dearest Jesus. If Thou bring all Thy waves over me, yet I will bear all gladly for love of Thee, and by Thy grace.

5. Remember, O Lord, that Thou art my father. Behold my soul is naked, clothe it with Thy righteousness. It is the property of a father to clothe his poor child.

6. What do I desire but Thee, O Lord, or what will all things profit me without Thee? Thou only art sufficient for my soul.

7. How vain are those men, who do not seek Thee! How wretched and greedy are they for whom Thou art not enough.

8. I would wish to have the hearts of all the men that have been, are, or will be, that I might love Thee with them immensely, my best and only Good.

9. In Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust, I shall never be confounded. And if an Angel from heaven were to tell me that I was a castaway from Thy Presence, I would not believe him. And if Thou, O most high God, seem not to hear my prayers, yet will not my confidence fail. For though Thou slay me or sink me in hell, yet will I put my trust in Thee.

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10. Give me, O Lord, of Thy Wounds. When I see Thee so cruelly wounded, and crucified for me, I cannot live unless I myself am wounded too.





CHAPTER XIII.

Sighs of a Loving Soul, for the Perfect.

CALL those perfect who are not so in every point, for who is so in this life? Nay, as Saint Bernard truly observes to the Monk Drogo, "No one is perfect who does not long to be more perfect. And in proportion as a man tends to higher perfection in such proportion does he prove himself to be already perfect." By the perfect, then, I mean those who are purified from sins, adorned with virtues, who have made much progress in humility and charity, and who with fervent affection aspire after a close union with God. As perfection consists mostly in the love of God, the aspirations appertaining to the state of the perfect are principally taken from love, as appears by the examples given below.

DECADE I.

O SWEETNESS of my heart, O life of my soul,
O essence of my being, and delightful rest of

my spirit, draw me away from all created things that I may repose alone in Thee.

2. O Lord my God, my hope and my refuge, O Beloved of my vows, when wilt Thou take away from all imperfection, and all that makes me unlike Thee?

3. O most beloved of the beloved, O Spouse crowned with flowers, O Bridegroom with honey flowing lips, when wilt adorn me with those jewels, by which I shall be pleasing in Thy sight?

4. Draw me after Thee, O most sweet Bridegroom, that with readiness, purity, and perseverance, I may run to the odour of Thy ointments.

5. Make me to be one according to Thy own Heart; prepare in me a pleasant dwelling for Thyself, that Thou mayest come to me, and make Thy abode with me.

6. Make me drunken with the wine of Thy love, O Thou fairest lover of mine; unite me closely to Thee, and change me wholly into Thyself.

7. O Fire uncreated, when wilt Thou consume me wholly with the vehement flames of Thy love? When shall I cease to be my own, that I may be altogether Thine?

8. O my Beloved, whom alone I seek, when wilt Thou open the door for me, knocking and sighing? When wilt Thou manifest Thyself to me, and say, lo, I am thy Salvation?

9. O immense sweetness, when wilt Thou ravish

me wholly into Thyself, swallowing me up, and hiding me altogether?

10. O happiness of my soul! O my entire and only joy! when wilt Thou remove every hindrance, and bring me into the chamber of Thy glory, uniting me inseparably with Thyself?

DECADE II.

I HAVE sought Thy face, O Lord. Thy face, O Lord, will I seek. All my toil is in vain, unless in seeking Thee.

2. I will not follow Thee, O Lord, by the way of comforts and delights, but by the way of true and pure love. I do not desire that which cometh forth from Thee, but Thyself. Thee alone do I wish for. I desire only Thee. Out of Thee there is nothing for me.

3. In Thee, O Lord, is all my being, all my delight, all my joy. If I call anything mine, if I speak of myself, it is Thee alone I would understand. Thou only art mine, and all my being is in Thee.

4. My soul is to Thee like earth without water. Pour upon it, O most gracious God, a plenteous benediction of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the land of the living.

5. O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens, and come down, that my hardness might melt and flow away: that, all on fire with love of Thee, I might call upon Thee with unutterable groanings.

6. Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged,

that I am compelled to live where I would wish not to be, and to be absent from Thee, with whom I so much long to dwell.

7. O hidden Love, how little known art Thou, I desire nothing else, O God. Give me Thy Heart, and take Thou mine.

8. O that I could swiftly pass through the whole world, crying out with a loud voice everywhere, The love of Jesus Christ ! The love of Jesus Christ for ever.

9. O brightest and most blessed Trinity, One God, feed me with the influx of Thy ways. O most simple, most glad, and unchangeable Good, fill me with Thyself. Let me pass into the very source of my being, and bring me to Thee in the centre of my soul.

10. O blessed spring of my life, when shall I happily find Thee? When shall I love Thee with burning charity? When wilt Thou transport me wholly into Thyself? When wilt Thou entirely absorb me, and unite me to Thyself without anything to go betwixt us?

DECADE III.

WHEN shall I sleep, and rest in Thee, O most exquisite peace? When will the odour of Thy Godhead pour full on me its breathings? When will the everlasting day arise, when I shall see Thee face to face?

2. By Thy pierced Heart, O most loving Jesus, transfix my heart with the arrow of Thy love, so

that it may keep in it nothing of earth, but may itself be kept only by the preventing influence of Thy Godhead.

3. Hail Jesus! Sweetest Bridegroom, I salute and do Thee homage with the love of all Thy chosen ones. Stir up all the movements of my heart, and rule them with Thy quickening Spirit.

4. O my Love and all my joy, when will the shadows of this mortal life flee away, and the day breathe which shall be everlasting? When shall I lay aside the burden of the body, that I may praise Thee with Thy Saints for ever and for ever.

5. Receive me, O my Bridegroom, into the most sweet embraces of Thy love. Clasp me close to Thee, that my whole spirit may burn with vehement flames.

6. O Good above every good, O end without end, when shall I enjoy Thee without measure or limit?

7. Thou art beautiful, O my Beloved, and exceedingly desirable, not by flesh and blood, but by a believing soul with a clean heart, set on things unseen.

8. O my Lord and my God, I will love Thee alone for Thy own sake, and I will love nothing out of Thee.

9. O most sweet splendour of heaven, burn my heart with the most mighty flames of charity. I give Thee my whole inward self, that Thou mayest kindle within me an everlasting burning.

10. I desire, O Lord Jesus Christ, that, as often

as I draw in the air, I may draw Thee into my soul with heart-felt affection. I desire that all my thoughts, words, and actions may be joined closely with Thy thoughts, words, and deeds, that so they may be offered for the greater glory of God.

DECADE IV.

GRANT me, O Lord, to behold Thee without any bodily image, without any species of the imagination, without any created light. Draw me after Thee, and outside of all created things.

2. I had rather, O Lord, endure the most bitter torments of hell without end, if such were Thy Will, than be made heir of everlasting joys without Thee.

3. Let the little drop of my spirit, O Lord, be lost in the boundless ocean of Thy goodness. O my Beloved, drown me, and swallow me up wholly, in the bottomless depth of Thy mercies without end.

4. Come, Thou desired rest of my loving soul, that I may have neither day nor night without Thee, that in sleep I may be Thine, that to Thee alone I may live and die.

5. Who am I, and who art Thou, my Love? Is it not a great thing that Thou allowest Thyself to be loved by me? but Thou even commandest me to love Thee, Thou threatenest me with everlasting death, if I will not love Thee.

6. O most sweet Father, let that be done which Thou didst will should be done from all eternity, before ever I came into being. Howsoever grievous

Thy Will may be to me, it is dearer than the freedom to do as I would.

7. When wilt Thou gladden me in Thy kingdom, O Lord God, with the glory of Thy countenance? When in all that I read, hear, or believe of Thee and Thy glory, shall I also behold Thee in clear and manifest vision?

8. Let all creatures before Thee hold their peace, my God. Thou only speak to me, be with me, and enlighten me, Who art all in all, lovely, and glorious above all things.

9. So wound my heart with the mighty arrow of Thy love, that all earthly comfort may be made bitter to me, and that I may willingly lack all solace of creaturely things.

10. Sweep away from my heart, O Lord, all images of outward things. Let me neither seek nor find peace or delight anywhere but in Thee, most glorious Lord, my God.

DECADE V.

○ JESUS, my Love, my God, make me I pray
Thee one with Thee, as Thou and the Father
art One,—and it is enough for me.

2. Would that I were inflamed, O most sweet Jesus, with the fire of the Seraphim, with that also with which Thy Mother and Thou Thyself wert inflamed.

3. O that I could take from the hearts of men every love not directed to Thee, and give them Thy

love in exchange, that all might burn and languish with love of Thee.

4. I love Thee, my God, because Thou art from everlasting. I love Thee because there is no limit to Thy immensity.

5. As a token of love, I rejoice with Thee, O my God, because Thou art God, art simple, eternal and most perfect. I rejoice that Thy perfections are Thy very self, inseparable from Thee.

6. I wish that my thoughts, words, and actions had always been from the pure love of Thee. O that I had ever loved Thee.

7. O, if I could only go over my years again, O my God, and fill up all the past time with acts of love. O that I had never loved anything out of Thee.

8. My nothingness went before me, O ever-living God, from the days of eternity. But now I rejoice in Thee my Creator. May every earthly affection in me be brought to nothing, that Thou alone mayest live in me.

9. O eternity, how clear is thy light, how pleasant thou shinest whole and entire in one point. In thee I withdraw from this world of sensible things. In thee is my comfort, and refreshment after the tumult of life is over, the weariness of a life that slips away.

10. O Thou Desire of the everlasting hills, sweetest Jesus. Thou desired of all nations, Thou Bridegroom, and King of hearts. Thou art my Love, and all my Good. !

DECADE VI.

THOU knowest, O Lord, that if I could do so, I would give Thee all the praise, glory, and honour with which Thy angels laud, magnify, and glorify Thee, with all Thy elect. But as I am helpless to do so, receive at least my desire and my goodwill.

2. Shut out from my soul, O God, all that hindereth Thy glory, and so set me in a state that I may be able to give greater praise to Thee.

3. O everlasting bliss, grant me to possess Thee in the midst of my soul. O sovereign sweetness of my heart, let me ever possess Thee.

4. I surrender myself, O my Creator, into Thy hands. I accept purely for Thyself, whatsoever office, place, lot, or event may fall to me, and whatsoever state of body or soul Thou art pleased that I should experience.

5. I ask nothing of Thee, O Lord, I wish for nothing but only what is for Thy greater glory. If in ignorance or error I ask anything amiss, I desire not to be heard.

6. If it should be equally for Thy glory, I would rather have affliction than comfort, that for the love of Thee I may suffer distress of soul.

7. Since without Thee I am unable to suffer for Thee, give me a great and plenteous grace, that I may suffer much and mightily for the love of Thee.

8. Thou art far above all our praise, O my God. I rejoice that it is so, and that whatsoever mere creatures can do for Thy service is a homage utterly unequal to the worthiness and greatness of Thy Majesty.

9. Whatsoever acts of virtue or piety are to be found in books, and whatsoever else can be done pleasing and acceptable to Thee, I praise, and would with Thy grace wish to perform.

10. O that I could at this moment, my God, do something that would exceedingly please Thee! What I now do is with the desire that Thou mayest find great pleasure in my endeavours.

DECADE VII.

I BESEECH Thee, O my God, not to suffer in me anything that is not altogether Thine, and full of Thee. If anything else exists within me be pleased to pluck it thence.

2. If I knew, O my God, that I should one day altogether cease to be, I would still serve Thee with my utmost power. I serve Thee not for my own sake but for Thee.

3. Grant, O good Jesus, that Thy prayer may be fulfilled in me: that as Thou art in the Father, and the Father in Thee, so I should be one with Thee, in will, love, work, manners, and life.

4. Give me no place, O Lord, in the hearts of men, nor let them find place in my heart, but let me be crucified to the world, and the world to me.

5. Send me, O God, whatsoever distress or cross Thou pleasest, and grant that in every tribulation I may confess myself guilty, and knowing this may despise myself.

6. Up to this time I have loved some who did not love me. Now I will love Thee, the eternal Lover, who didst love me before I knew Thee: to love whom is the highest virtue, and to be loved by whom is happiness.

7. Out of the deep of my heart do I cry to Thee, O Lord. Take away from me the most vain love of the comeliness of the body, and transport me wholly into the most pure love of Thy excellent beauty.

8. Enter, I pray Thee, O my God, into the inmost sanctuary of my heart. There imprint on my soul Thy most sweet and exquisite image, that in the delights of Thy presence I may repose.

9. Come, Lord, my love, my joy, my crown. Come and make no long tarrying, lest I faint with exceeding desire.

10. Write Thy Name, blessed Jesus, on my heart, and engrave a lasting memory of Thy most sweet love on my breast.

DECADE VIII.

LET Thy most bountiful goodness overcome the naughtiness of my heart, O Lord. Acknowledge Thy image in me, though it be disfigured.

2. I come back to Thee from whom I drew my

being. Thou art my beginning and my last end. Be Thou henceforward the only and entire object of my thoughts.

3. O divine Unity, Thee only my heart desireth, deliver me from vain varieties.

4. I will love Thee, O Lord, according to my power, as it is given me to do so. Though this love be but little and not according to Thy desert, yet it is all I am able to give. I could love Thee however more, if Thou wouldst accord me this favour; never could I love Thee as Thou deservest to be loved.

5. O how blessed are they that eat and drink at Thy table, in Thy kingdom. They love Thee with a burning love. They enjoy Thee in gladness and exultation, but I perish with hunger. I am cast forth, in ashes and darkness, from the sight of the light of heaven.

6. I thirst to know Thee clearly, I hunger to love Thee perfectly, nor know I how I may obtain my desire. I beseech Thee, O Lord, if I have found favour in Thy sight, show me Thy Face.

7. Do to me, O Lord, whatsoever shall be pleasing in Thy eyes, I am in Thy hands, my body, soul, and spirit. Whatsoever cometh to me I will praise Thee, and will exceedingly rejoice.

8 Satisfy my soul sighing after Thee. Thou art my happiness, fill the hungry with good things.

9: Let all idols be cast down from the throne of Thy glory. Do Thou alone reign there in my

heart, and let me not again be so unstable, such a wretched wanderer from Thee.

10. Let the Word of God make me one with Himself. Let the everlasting Wisdom beget Himself without ceasing in me. Then I will hold it as nothing if heaven and earth, and all that is in them, despise me. But if Thou, my Lord, refuse me the kiss of Thy mouth, all things beneath Thee will give me no comfort.

DECADE IX.

COME, joy of my soul, and light of my eyes. Come, my Love, Thou Light incomprehensible, fill all the powers of my soul within and without, that I may see, think of, love, and desire, only Thee.

2. Thou hast said, Lord, I will lead her into the solitude, and there will I speak to her soul. What is that solitude but to love Thee alone, to rest solely in Thee.

3. O Divine solitude, so desired by my longing soul, when will the day come that I shall rest altogether in Thee.

4. Alas ! that I do not well love Thee, O life of my soul, for if I truly loved Thee, I should have Thee ever in my heart, as it is written, "Where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also."

5. Gather us into one, O most mighty Lover, for all power is given to Thee in heaven and in earth.

6. Draw me after Thee, O sweetest Redeemer,

who hast said, "When I shall be lifted up from the earth I will draw all things to Myself."

7. Kindle Thy fire in my heart, O Lord. Thou art a burning Fire, and Thou makest Thy ministers a flaming fire.

8. Thou art my God, for being rich exceedingly in Thy goodness Thou canst have no need of my goods, nor of any other thing. In this I exult and rejoice that no perfection can be added to Thee, for Thou art perfect beyond all imagination.

9. O Lord Jesus, how deeply do they love Thee that know Thee. The Father loveth Thee. The Holy Ghost loveth Thee. The Saints and Angels love Thee. All Thy friends burn with love for Thee, I only am cold.

10. Deliver me, O God, from the much speaking, which I suffer within, in my mind. For though I be silent outwardly, yet not always inwardly, in thoughts. Many are my thoughts, as Thou knowest, and Thou knowest the thoughts of men that they are vain. Grant me not to consent to them, not to dwell on them, lest they hinder me from loving Thee.

DECADE X.

O LOVE, how little art Thou known and loved !
Come to me, O Love, and if Thou find no other place to rest in, pour Thyself into my heart, and there repose, O Love everlasting and most sweet.

2. Let the fire of Thy love be kept always burn-

ing on the altar of my heart, and create such a furnace there, as to consume not the sacrifice only, but also the altar itself.

3. Let nothing give me joy but only Thou, O Lord Jesus Christ. Let nothing give me sorrow but to offend and sin against Thee.

4. Thou art my only desire, O eternal Wisdom ; Thou art the treasure I seek after, Thou art the happiness I sigh after.

5. How beautiful art Thou, my beloved, how beautiful art Thou with delights ! O that the love of Thee might destroy in me all other loves. Whatever I behold, hear, or feel, do Thou alone enter into me, and wholly possess my heart.

6. O most mighty Love, who turnest mire and clay into God, do Thou transform me altogether into Thyself. My heart is utterly stony, unless Thou soften it with Thy Blood. It becometh scattered everywhere unless gathered up into Thy Side.

7. O true Love, O loving Eternity, O eternal Truth, Thou art my God. After Thee I sigh day and night. Thee I love with all affection, and I desire to love Thee even more, for Thou hast wounded my heart with Thy Word, so as to make me love Thee.

8. What is sweeter than love, what more secure, what more delightful ? Why then is not my heart pierced with its arrows ? Doth Thy love surround me on all sides, and yet I know not what it is ?

Why do I remain so insensible? Why doth the creature win my heart rather than the Creator?

9. Most beautiful Jesus, my Life everlasting, by whom I live, without whom I die: sweet and delectable Life, grant me to be knit to Thee, to embrace Thee, and in the sweet sleep of charity to slumber in Thee.

10. When shall I behold Thee, O most glorious God? When shall I come to appear before Thy face? When shall I pass on to Thy marvellous dwelling-place? When shall I see Thee in the land of the living. In this land of exile we cannot with our animal eyes behold Thee, but in the country of the Angels we shall see Thee as Thou art.





CHAPTER XIV.

The Praise of Virtue consists in Action.

Acts of Divers Virtues.

ALL who are versed in the first principles of philosophy know that all the force and praise of any virtue is to be found in the acts of it. The habits of virtue, whether infused by God, or acquired by ourselves, ought to go forth in action when opportunity occurs. The primary office of habits is to be the spring and source of good actions, and to dispose the powers they enter to an alacrity of operation. The reason why some persons make so little advance in the spiritual life is not the want of knowledge, or of desire, but the want of practical action. It is one thing to know where there is much wealth, and another thing to possess it. Knowledge does not enrich but possession. The actions by which virtue takes its rise or increases are two-fold, inward and outward. This is not the place for treating of the outward actions, and opportunity for their performance is not always

at hand. The inward actions are more perfect, and are put in execution by the mind and will alone. These we are able to apply ourselves to every hour, and everywhere, on all occasions. Some persons select a virtue for each month, studying particularly that virtue, and making a particular examination on that head. This is very necessary for those who desire perfection, as I have more at large explained in my "Clock of the Christian Day."* Bernard of Rosignole has written an excellent treatise on virtuous actions, drawn from Scripture and the Fathers, which I earnestly commend to my readers. Meantime I propose a few patterns of the acts of the principal virtues, by short aspirations, which must be made with fervour. This mode may be followed also in all the other virtues, the acts being written down for daily use and practice.

ACTS OF FAITH.

I MOST firmly believe, O Jesus Christ, the author of faith, that all those things are true, which by Thy revelation Holy Church believeth and teacheth, and for fidelity to these truths I would be willing to lay down my life.

2. Increase that faith, O Lord, which Thou hast implanted in me: make my life agreeable thereto, that what I believe in my heart I may express in my actions.

3. Thy testimonies, O Lord, are become to me

* *Horologium Christianæ diei.*

exceedingly credible, O that I may live ever according to them.

4. All those things are most true, which are contained in the Sacred Books, the Apostolical Traditions, and the Decrees of the Church. Gladly would I die for them.

5. It is true altogether that there is one God in substance, and a Trinity of persons. Neither fire nor sword would make me fall from this faith, through the help of Thy grace.

6. Would that all had preserved the faith entire and sincere, such as Thou, O Lord, didst deliver it, and such as Thy apostles preached it.

7. I believe in Thee, O sovereign Truth. But as faith without works is dead, grant that my faith may be lively, full of patience, and charity, and the other virtues.

8. I give Thee thanks, O Lord, that Thou hast given me faith to know Thee :—that Thou hast made me a Christian and a member of Thy Catholic Church. In this faith do I desire to live and die. Gladly would I die for it.

9. I believe in Thee, the Father unbegotten, and Thy only begotten Son, and in the Holy Ghost from both proceeding. May I ever believe in Thee and possess Thee, for Thou, O God, art my beginning and last end, my everlasting bliss.

10. I believe that Thou, O Son of God, didst for my salvation take upon Thee our human nature : that Thou didst suffer and die for me on the cross.

I believe that Thou, God and man, art, after a marvellous fashion, present in the Sacrament of the altar. These things, and all whatsoever the Church teacheth I believe, and in believing them I adore and love Thee.

11. Open my eyes, O Lord, and I will consider the wonderful things of Thy law. How sweet are Thy words to my throat, sweeter than honey in my mouth.

12. O that I could tell out Thy faith in the whole world, that all unbelievers might be converted to God. How willingly would I suffer most cruel torments thus to save souls.

13. O that I had in my power the understanding and affection of unbelievers, that I might believe in Thee with their understandings, and love Thee with their affections, and serve Thee with all their strength.

14. Depart from me all ye wilful heretics. Ye are children of the devil, destroying souls. I abhor and abominate all heretics and anathematize them, as doth the Church of God.

15. Whatever is the teaching of faith I believe as surely as if I saw it with my eyes. Increase, O Lord, and confirm my faith. With this faith for my guide I may safely go before Thy judgment seat, whensoever Thou are pleased to call me, for I believe and hope to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living.

ACTS OF HOPE.

MOST merciful God, although I have committed many and most grievous sins, yet I put my trust in Thy loving-kindness, and I hope, through good works, wrought by the help of Thy grace, to obtain everlasting glory.

2. If I had upon me the guilt of all the sins in the world, I would still trust in Thee, for Thy loving-kindness overpasseth all iniquity.

3. I rejoice, O Lord, that I have nothing in me in which I could put my trust. I rejoice that there is nowhere any hope left for me but in Thee, who art my only refuge and my stronghold.

4. Thou hast said, O Lord, and it is very true : "Without Me ye can do nothing;" what is there then left for me but to direct my eyes unto Thee, that Thou, O goodness, mayest help me ?

5. Be Thou my helper, forsake me not, neither despise me, O God of my salvation. I am become as a monster unto many, but Thou art my strong helper.

6. To Thee do I flee for refuge, O Lord, that by patience and comfort of the Scriptures I may have hope, and hoping in Thee I shall not be confounded.

7. All my trust, O good Jesus, and the surety of my confidence is in Thy precious Blood. I take hope again through it. Trusting in Thy Blood I desire to arrive at Thee, not having mine own righteousness, but that which is from Thee.

8. However rough and troublesome Thy providence hath permitted my path to be, O most kind Father, still I will always trust in Thee : for I am sure that even were I sunk in the pit of hell, even thence wouldst Thou deliver me,

9. Thy mercy is exceedingly great, O Lord. In Thy mercy I place all my hope and consolation.

10. Magnify Thy mercies upon me, Thou who savest all them that trust in Thee. Keep me as the apple of Thine eye. Protect me under the shadow of Thy wings.

11. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in man ; it is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in princes.

12. O God of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee. By Thee I shall be delivered from temptation. By the help of my God I shall pass over the wall.

13. With my whole heart do I trust, O almighty God, that I shall obtain from Thee whatever is needed for my salvation. Thy Son, my Redeemer, has merited for me all good gifts. Having confidence in His merits, I feel as sure of obtaining the good things I desire as if I already possessed them.

14. I have put my trust in Thee, O Lord : I have said Thou art my God, my lots are in Thy hand.

15. O that Thy kingdom may quickly come. This kingdom it is which is my sovereign good. This I hope for, this I expect, this I long for with

my whole heart. May Thy kingdom come, an everlasting kingdom, the full possession of every happiness.

ACTS OF LOVE TOWARDS GOD.

I ASK Thee, O my God, to be the guiding principle of my heart. O my most desired Good, let me never love aught else but Thee.

2. Set me in flames with the desire of Thy beauty, O most comely Prince of my heart. My heart and all that is within me I offer in sacrifice to Thee.

3. Rule over me just as it pleaseth Thee, O King of my soul. O how gladsome to be reigned over by Thee for ever and for ever !

4. O that I had a thousand hearts, that I might give them all to Thee, that so I might love Thee most perfectly.

5. I would wish to bring under Thy yoke all the children of Adam, O most loving Lord, that they might seek only Thee, love only Thee.

6. Conquer and overcome me, O my Love. O Light of my eyes, let all things beside Thee be counted as vile and refuse.

7. O Thou Ruler of my soul, Thou sufficest for me, I wish for nothing else but Thee.

8. What joy it is to me that Thou art God, altogether good, perfect, immense, and infinite ; most just, most wise, almighty, and incomprehensible. I love Thee purely for Thy own sake, and I rejoice

at Thy good things for Thy sake, because they are Thine.

9. To Thee I am carried with my whole heart's affections, O my sovereign Good. I rejoice at Thy most glorious goodness, and that the Angels and Saints ever adore Thee and praise Thee.

10. O that I could love Thee as Thou deservest to be loved ! But as this is above the strength of the whole creation, at least grant me to love Thee as much as I can and ought.

11. Fill my soul, O my God, with Thy love, that I may be all on fire with love, burning with vehement love, so as to die of love.

12. I am sorry that I ever loved anything out of Thee. O that I could recall past years and fill them with acts of love.

13. O sweetest Life of my soul, O that my heart could melt into Thee ! What have I in heaven but Thee, and what is there on earth that I desire besides Thee.

14. One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require, to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

15. May my last breath with which I breathe out my soul be a breath of love. May I die of love, O my God. As I did not begin my life with love, at least let me end it with love. Let the last act of my life be an act of love.

ACTS OF LOVE TO THE NEIGHBOUR.

GRAFT in our hearts such an affection of love, that we may love one another, as Thou lovest us, O Lord, and may bear one another's burdens.

2. Give me, O Lord, to love not in word and tongue only, but in deed and in truth, that whatsoever I would that men should do to me, I may also do to them.

3. I am sorry, O Lord, that I have not hitherto given to my neighbour the help and solace I could have afforded him.

4. I detest from my heart all the injuries and offences I have ever done to my neighbour; in word, thought, or deed. I am willing to do satisfaction where I ought. Inspire me that I may know my duty, and give me grace to do it.

5. O Lover of men, I pray for all those who persecute or slander me, or who have in any wise offended me. Give them health of body and mind.

6. O that all sinners might repent and be converted to Thee, my God.

7. I beseech Thee, O Lord, that all who persecute Thy Church may be put to confusion by the power of Thy right hand, and so may acknowledge Thy truth.

8. I purpose, O Lord, by Thy grace to endure calmly all injuries and offences, and never to hate any man, however bitterly he may war against me.

9. I would willingly even shed my blood for the salvation of my brethren ; especially for those who have injured and troubled me do I offer this sacrifice. Confirm this good will in me, O Lord.

10. Grant, O Lord, by the bowels of Thy mercy, I beseech Thee, that all who cleave to earthly and fleshly things may be truly converted to Thee.

11. If only I could by the sacrifice of life convert all sinners to Thee, I would willingly give it.

12. O that the whole world knew Thee and believed in Thee ! Let the people praise Thee, O Lord, yea, let all the people praise Thee. Let all the earth worship Thee and sing to Thee.

13. I love Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart, and my neighbour in Thee and for Thee.

14. O that I could succour all those that are in want, give meat to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, and by the rest of the works of mercy, corporal and spiritual, give to all in their necessities.

15. I rejoice concerning all the good things of my brethren, and grieve for all their ills as if they were my own. Gladly would I relieve them of their ills and increase their joys.

ACTS OF PATIENCE.

IF Thou, O Christ, must needs suffer, and so enter into Thy glory, how can I expect to enter into it by any other way than the royal road of the Cross.

2. I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are

right, and that in Thy truth Thou hast brought me low.

3. I would rather suffer all the pains of hell than go against Thy justice.

4. I will bear Thy anger, O Lord, for I have sinned against Thee. If I have received good things at the hand of the Lord, shall I not receive evil?

5. In every adversity, O Lord, will I remember Thee, and that Thou hast suffered such contradictions against Thyself for my sake.

6. O that I might be counted worthy with the Apostles to rejoice to suffer shame and all other evils for Thy Name's sake.

7. Whatsoever labours I shall have ever to undergo, I welcome them for Thy sake, O Lord. If I am tried by temptations, or disease is troublesome to me, or sadness, or pain, or any torments whatever, I will, by the help of Thy grace, endure them with a strong heart.

8. God forbid that I should despair of reaching Christian perfection. All its difficulties I hope to overcome by Thy guidance, O Lord, and with the help of my God I shall pass over the wall.

9. I will not give up my purpose either from love of life, or fear of death; even if all this world's miseries should fall upon me, and I should be overwhelmed with calamities, yet by Thy help, O my God, I would persevere.

10. O most mighty God, make my soul valiant exceedingly. I would wish to follow Thee through all affliction, in great abandonment, within and without.

11. I am, as it were, a beast before Thee, O Lord, my God. Thou knowest my burden, of what sort it is. Give me grace to bear it with patience, that by the Cross I may be lifted up to Thee.

12. I offer myself, O Lord, to suffer all things with equal mind, with cheerfulness, and without a murmur.

13. O that I could attain the patience of Job, and have the constant endurance of the holy Martyrs.

14. I wish I might be worthy to suffer martyrdom for Thee, O Lord, my strength. What a grace it would be to be burned alive, or roasted like the blessed Lawrence.

15. Chastise me, O Lord, but take not Thy mercy from me. Strike me when I am froward, that Thou mayest bring me to the promised inheritance. Increase my torments, but increase also my patience.

ACTS OF HUMILITY.

O MOST precious jewel of humility, when shall I possess Thee? When shall I have that tranquillity of mind which belongs to the meek? When shall I be dressed with Thy beauty and splendour?

2. Let me know myself, O God, and let me know Thee; for in Thee is every good, and in me not any at all.

3. O good Jesus, I would rather from my heart

be of little account, and the lowest in Thy house, than dwell in the tents of the ungodly.

4. I do not wish men to praise and honour me, O Lord, for I am wholly unworthy of all praise or esteem. I choose rather, for the sake of Thee, to be despised and trodden under foot, and reputed of no more value than a dead dog.

5. O most merciful God, even robbers and murderers would serve Thee better than I do, if Thou wert as bounteous in thy gifts and graces to them as Thou hast been to me.

6. I have sinned, O Lord, and I am not worthy to look up to the height of the heaven for the multitude of my iniquities.

7. Whence is this madness, O Lord, that I should dare to be proud, I, whom Thou mightest justly sink into hell any moment for the guilt of my sins?

8. The beasts of the field approach nigh to Thee, O Lord, according to their ability; I alone by my most shameful baseness depart from Thee.

9. For Thy sake, O Lord, I will cast myself beneath the feet of all men. Indeed, I am more worthless and more to be despised than all men. I desire to be so esteemed as I ought to be.

10. I wish for nothing else, O God, most High, than to suffer and to be despised for Thy sake. Give me a true and clear knowledge of myself.

11. I am not worthy, O Lord, of any of Thy gifts, because I am so worthless and ungrateful. I am not fit for the companionship of men, because of

the filth of my sins. With the stench of my sins the air around me is infected.

12. O, if all men knew the depth of my wretchedness, most righteous God, how they would despise me, and mock over my vile state. I accept all this shame for Thy sake, O God.

13. I am not worthy, O Lord, to tread the ground on which Thy servants walk. I am, in comparison of them, a worm, and no man, the scorn of men, and the offscouring of the people.

14. God forbid that I should walk in high matters and in wonderful things above me. Great is the depth of my frailty and of my nothingness. I am nothing, and I can do nothing without Thee.

15. Make me, O Lord, as the mire of the streets, that I may be trodden under foot by all, and treated with great scorn, for such treatment have I deserved by my sins.





CHAPTER XV.

A Bundle of Aspirations to Jesus, the Blessed Virgin, and all the Inhabitants of Heaven.

ALTHOUGH prayer, as a religious act, having in it the worship of *latria*, is to be made to God only, as the primary Author of all good, and as having in Himself the power to confer it on us :—yet it is certain by the Catholic faith that we may and ought also to supplicate the Angels and Saints who now reign with God, and we ought to implore their assistance by devout aspirations. For though Christ is the primary Source of all merit, the Mediator between God and man, who ever intercedes for us ; yet we require other mediators, whose prayers may prevail for us in our necessities. The words of Eliphaz the Themanite to the most patient Job are well-known, “ Call if there be any to answer thee, and turn to some one of the Saints.” I have thought it worth while, therefore, to add here certain aspirations to Jesus our Redeemer, from whom every good thing is

to be expected ; then to the most blessed Virgin Mary, His Mother ; then to the Angels, and to the rest of the citizens of the heavenly country, that in proportion to their tender care for us, and their influence with God, they may obtain for us, by their prayers, whatever is needful either for our salvation or perfection.

TO OUR REDEEMER JESUS.

JESUS, Wisdom of the Father, grant me to seek and to relish the things above, that I may taste how sweet Thou art.

2. Jesus, Word of the Father, O that I could hear Thy voice speaking in me.

3. Jesus, the Redeemer, be Thou my God, and my protector, and a house of refuge to save me.

4. Jesus, Firstborn of Thy brethren, make me a co-heir in the house of our Father.

5. Jesus, Son of the living God, made man for my sake, let me not think it grievous to be brought low for Thee.

6. Jesus, my Creator, create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within my bowels.

7. Jesus, my Life, let my soul live to Thee alone, for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

8. Jesus, my Lord, take me for Thy servant, and let none but Thou possess me.

9. Jesus, my Master, teach me to do Thy Will, that I may learn of Thee to be meek and humble o. heart.

10. Jesus, Light of the World, enlighten my eyes, and lead me into the way of Thy commandments.

11. Jesus, Well of Life, my soul hath thirsted for Thee, make me to draw waters in joy from Thy fountains.

12. Jesus, Good Shepherd, for Thy Name's sake, lead me and nourish me.

13. Jesus, Saviour, save me, for Thou camest to seek and to save that which was lost.

14. Jesus, Spouse of blood, espouse me to Thyself in loving kindness and in mercies.

15. Jesus, most beautiful Lover, draw me after Thee by the cords of charity.

16. Jesus, zealous Seeker of souls, whose delight it is to be with the children of men, make me to love Thee with passionate affection, and all other things, for Thy sake.

17. Jesus, Bread of Life, my soul waiteth for Thee, send me not hungry away, lest I faint by the way.

18. Jesus, merciful Judge, who didst not come to destroy, spare me, and answer for me.

19. Jesus, our Crown, and our reward exceeding great, command that I be placed amongst the number of Thine elect.

20. Jesus, my Glory, I desire to be dissolved and to be with Thee. Grant me to live in Thee, and to die in Thee.

TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

PROTECT me, O most sweet Virgin Mary, under the covering of thy mantle, and let not thy blessed name ever depart from my mouth, or my heart.

2. Go not far from me, most mighty Mother of God, for mine enemies have surrounded me on every side.

3. What can I do without thee, Holy Virgin, or what will become of me, if thou forsake me?

4. When wilt thou come to me, most sweet Virgin, when wilt thou show thyself to thy most unworthy child?

5. Thy spirit is sweeter than honey, blessed Mary, and the possession of thy love is above gold and the topaz.

6. Let my soul feel the sweetness of thy love, and ever sing thy praises, for after God thou art my only comfort.

7. O blessed Lady, compassionate my sighs, look upon me, and come to my aid.

8. Let me find grace in thy eyes, that I may ever rejoice because of thee, and after this exile behold thee in glory.

9. As a child sigheth for the bosom of its mother, so sigheth my soul for thee; despise me not, O Mother of mercy.

10. O how I long to behold thy face, fairest of Virgins. Take me quickly to thee, and fulfil my desire.

11. Who would not love thee, Queen of hearts, and Mother of holy love, who would not love thee? I wish that all creatures might do thee homage, living and dying full of love to thee.

12. Take my heart, most beloved Mother mine, and offer it with thy purest hands to thy most Holy Son.

13. I rejoice and exult, O Blessed Virgin, that, above all His works, God is pleased in thee. I would suffer all the pains of hell rather than that thou shouldst be deprived for a moment of thy glory and sweet majesty.

14. O glorious Virgin, let them hope in thee who know thy name, for thou forsakest not those who hope in thee.

15. Let the sweet glory of thy face appear to me in my last agony, kindest Mother, and let the comfort of thy presence breathe peace to my departing soul.

TO THE HOLY ANGELS.

O HOLY Angel, the guardian and ruler of my life, lay hold on the shield and buckler, and stand up to help me.

2. Keep me under the shadow of thy wings from the snares of the enemy, and from every peril and temptation.

3. Blessed spirit, be with me, to teach, guide and protect me; and when the end of my life is near, succour me in my last agony.

4. O ye seven spirits that stand before the throne of God, purify, enlighten, and perfect me. Direct all my aims and all my actions to the glory of God and the salvation of my soul.

5. O ye Angels of God, mighty in power, who are my safeguard in this life, be an excellent comfort to me in the hour of death.

6. Pour into my mind the light of God, that, all grossness being taken away, I may be all on fire with Divine love.

7. Come to my aid, ye countless armies of the heavenly host, and defend me from the onset of the wicked spirits.

8. O ye great lovers of God, light up in me that fire which the Lord Jesus sent down on earth, and which He so much wished to be kindled.

9. O fountains of wisdom feed me with heavenly doctrine, and teach me the science of the Saints.

10. O most pure Intelligences, make me a true disciple of God, that I may learn His commandments. Scatter the darkness and pour the light of God into my soul.

TO ALL THE SAINTS.

O YE happy Saints who have now crossed the sea of this mortal life, secure of your own unfading glory, be concerned at my manifold miseries.

2. Give a hand to the sick, O ye citizens of the heavenly country, and raise me up; that, being

healed of my infirmity, I may become strong in battle.

3. Deliver me out of many waters, and out of the deep mire, by pouring forth your prayers to Him who ruleth the power of the sea.

4. Obtain for me faith and perseverance to serve the Lord in fear, and to keep His commandments.

5. I cry to you, most mighty protectors of my salvation, send out of heaven a few small drops of the most precious wine of your charity, for my soul is become like a dry potsherd, and fainteth for thirst.

6. Come to my assistance, all ye Saints of God, help me sitting in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and loose the bonds of my captivity.

7. Deliver me from tumultuous affections, that I may sit solitary, and be silent, and may hear the voice of the Lord speaking in the stillness to my heart.

8. Raise me above this wretched earth, that I may be crucified to the world, and the world unto me.

9. O most illustrious people and heirs of the most high God, look upon me, a pilgrim in my exile, and send help from heaven, and consolation.

10. Come round me whilst I exult and rejoice at your bliss. Obtain for me the grace to follow your examples, that by the help of your prayers I may one day share in your crown and your joy.

These examples are enough. Custom and love will suggest many more. There are four heads, which are rich fountains, from which may flow as-

pirations directed to the noble possessors of the heavenly kingdom. The first is the titles of honour, dignity, perfection, and divers virtues which shine forth in them. The second is the thanksgiving to them for benefits received. The third is to obtain by their invocation an atonement for our sins and pardon. The fourth is the setting forth of our manifold miseries and countless wants, that by their merits and prayers we may gain deliverance from all our ills, and may receive the bestowal of all good things.





CHAPTER XVI.

*Aspirations taken from the Names of God, His
perfections and His attributes.*

THOSE who have obtained great purity of soul, and are found worthy to aspire after union with God, besides using the aspirations given above for the perfect, may also pour forth others, grounded on the contemplation of the Divine attributes. To such as these belong those words of the Prophet, "Be still, and see that I am God." *Be still* from unprofitable thoughts, he means, from earthly desires and affections, *and see* with the eye of faith and contemplation *that I am God*, almighty, immense, infinite. Rightly says the wise man, that "to know God is perfect righteousness, and to know His power is the root of immortality." This is the case if love be added to knowledge. For a bare speculation into God would profit little, unless the will also rise to Him with pious affections and upward movements. How

this is to be done I shall briefly point out in the following aspirations, so that those who are imbued with the theological knowledge of God may say with the Apostle, "Our conversation is in heaven."

DECADE I.

OPEN, O Lord, the eyes of my soul, that, not content with the sight of the things of earth, which the senses perceive, they may soar up to the contemplation of the things that are not seen—the things eternal—beholding Thee, the invisible God, who art in all things and above all things.

2. O God of infinite Majesty, Thy knowledge is verily wonderful, and too high for me. All my bones, members, senses, and powers say that Thou art God, and that there is none other like unto Thee. Thou art the essence of my being, and my life, and I rejoice that I am bound to love Thee more than myself.

3. O that all my members and senses, and every fibre of my being, could be turned into tongues, that they might preach throughout the whole world that Thou alone art "He who is," and that therefore all nations should laud and glorify Thee. O that all knew Thee, and loved Thee more than their life, for in Thee all live, and move, and are.

4. O Ocean of essence and existence, Thou art very Being itself, containing every being. On Thee all things depend. They flow forth from Thee, and flow back to Thee, and so far they exist in as far as

they share a something of Thy Being. I will therefore despise myself and all things which have no independent being, but I will love and cleave to Thee, for Thou only art.

5. O most perfect God, the source of all things existing, perfect by Thy graces what Thou hast given to me, that my being may be perfect by grace, as Thine is in itself perfect, for of myself I am nothing.

6. O Thou, who, being altogether simple, yet art all things, how much I am bound to love Thee and esteem Thee. Thou dependest in no way upon time, or place, or circumstances. Thou dost not consist of parts, as a body, nor hast Thou passions, like the soul. Thou hast no shape like created things. Make me to imitate Thy simplicity, by being simple and pure, only seeking and desiring Thee.

7. Thou only art incapable of sin. Thou alone hast immortality. Grant that I may die the death of the righteous, and may ever be kept from the death of sin.

8. Give me, O Lord, clearly to know Thy perfection of being, and that I have no being as of myself. Let this twofold knowledge be the pole on which the wheel of my life may turn, till I come to Thee.

9. O how incomprehensible and without measure is the sum of Thy perfections, for to Thee nothing is wanting, and all other things receive their perfection

from Thee. Make me perfect even as Thou art perfect. Fulfil in me what Thou hast commanded, and make me so perfect that nothing shall be wanting to me.

10. My God and my all, my beginning and my last end. Thou art all that I could desire, my riches, my pleasures, my honours, my dignities. Thou art a treasure that hath no end. Having Thee I have all things, but without Thee all things are as nothing to me. When shall I come to Thee, that I may have full possession of all things in Thee?

DECADE II.

ENLIGHTEN my understanding, O God, that, in all created things, I may behold Thee the Creator ; from Thee they receive whatever they have of perfection. Cleanse my affections, that in all things I may love and seek Thee, who art the good, and the end of all things.

2. O Beloved of my heart, if the beauty and perfection of creatures is so attractive, how ought not Thy beauty and perfection more still to draw my heart, since from Thee proceedeth all that is in creation. I will love Thee above all things, for Thou exceedest all other things in beauty and perfection beyond all measure. The rest I will love only in Thee and for Thee.

3. Thou only, O Lord, art without all bound or limit, and all nations before Thee are as if they

were not. I adore then Thy infinite greatness, and I desire to love Thee without end.

4. O God, immense, higher than heaven, deeper than hell, longer than the earth, and wider than the sea ; who fillest all things, and containest all things, and penetratest all things ; give light to the eye of my soul, that it may behold Thee more clearly than the eye of my body beholdeth the sun :

5. O heavenly King, who pervadest Thy kingdom, so as to be present whole and entire in every part of it, grant me to be ever entirely in Thy presence, serving Thee with my whole heart and mind, and with all my might.

6. O Lord God, who art in every place, beholding the evil and the good, give me such faith that, when I am alone, I may know surely that Thou art with me, and may do nothing unworthy of the Majesty of Thy presence.

7. O my God, who by Thy intimate presence within me, art closer to me than I am to myself, perfect the union of Thyself with me. Give me that most perfect union of grace and charity that I may be one spirit with Thee for ever.

8. O God unchangeable, with whom there is no alteration nor shadow of turning, make me to cleave unswervingly to Thee, that as Thou art ever the same and Thy years shall not fail, so I may never fail from an upright path, but may ever the same persevere in Thy love :

9. O God eternal, without beginning and with-

out end, make me to despise the things of time, which fail and pass away, that I may set my affection on the things eternal, which with Thee ever continue.

10. All the gods of the heathen are devils, Thou alone, O Lord, art God, and there is none else beside Thee. Defend Thy own cause, and bring to nought the multitude of idols, that all men may be one in Thee, praising and glorifying Thee with one mouth. Give me, O Lord, also the one thing necessary.

DECADE III.

O GOD invisible, when shall I behold Thee, not in a glass, and darkly, but face to face? O that I knew Thee as I am myself known by Thee, that I might love Thee as Thou lovest me! But as my knowledge of Thee is darksome, and of short duration, I will love Thee as much as I can, till I behold Thee as I desire.

2. O God, whose Majesty is unsearchable and unspeakable, I rejoice that even the highest spirits in heaven are, as it were, blind before Thee. Thou exceedest all the knowledge of creatures, nor can any created being name Thee or comprehend Thee as Thou art. Let me then at least put forth all my strength to love Thee, since I am not able at all to comprehend Thee.

3. O Thou living and true God, the sovereign and essential Truth, true in Thy words and faithful in Thy promises, give me, I beseech Thee, to love

the truth, and to walk in truth. Make me to trust and hope in Thee, and to abhor all double dealing and hypocrisy.

4. O Holy of Holies, the pattern and end of all holiness, I confess that in me there is nothing holy but what Thou givest me, nor can I persevere in what Thou givest, unless Thou keep me in it. Establish in me these humble thoughts of myself, that I may be worthy to ascend to the greatest heights of holiness.

5. O my God, essentially and supremely Good, I grieve that I have forsaken Thee, the Fountain of all good, and have turned to what was only painted and apparent good. Shew Thy marvels by making my will to seek and love only Thee the highest and sovereign Good.

6. O sovereign Goodness, give me as much love as I can contain, that with it I may love Thee wholly who art so worthy of all love. I ought to love Thee with an infinite love, because of Thy goodness there is no end, but as that is beyond my power, at least let me love Thee with all my best endeavours.

7. Exceedingly lovely art Thou, my Beloved, for whatever is in Thee is good. O that what is in me were lovely in Thy eyes! Take from my soul all stain and spot, that it may be all fair in Thy sight, and lovely to Thy Heart.

8. O that Thou wouldst make all men to love, my God supremely Good. Open Thou the eyes of them that hate Thee; for if they only knew Thee

by a lively faith, they could not but change hatred for love.

9. Wonderful art Thou, O Lord, in Thyself, wonderful in Thy works, wonderful in Thy Saints. Thou alone workest great marvels. Let my understanding, ever searching for things new and strange, but fix its gaze upon Thee, and reject all else as vile and worthless.

10. My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God. Though it be a fearful thing to fall into Thy hands, yet Thou art the living God, and art life, that Thou mayest have mercy.

DECADE IV.

O³ GOD of knowledge and Fountain of all wisdom, who knowest all things, and from whose eyes no secret is hid, behold I set myself in the lowest place of my nothingness, and of my total ignorance. Grant me, I beseech Thee, the knowledge of Thyself, and of Thy Will, and it is enough for me; if only by the help of Thy grace I may love Thee, when I know Thee, and may do what Thou requirest of me.

2. O Lord, who searchest the thoughts and intents of the heart, in whose sight is every creature visible, O that Thou wouldest know me by name; that seeing I am known and am subject to Thy Providence, I may cast all my care upon Thee.

3. O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways! The

uncertain and hidden things of this admirable wisdom I reverence and adore, and I commit myself wholly to its most righteous disposal of me.

4. Send forth, O Lord, Thy wisdom from the throne of Thy greatness, that it may be with me, and may labour with me, that I may know what is acceptable before Thee at all times. Let it go before all my works, let it accompany me in all my doings, and so lead me to the place where I shall clearly behold Thee.

5. O Sovereign Creator of all things, who hast disposed all things in number, weight, and measure, according to the pattern pre-existing in Thy mind, make me so perfect that as far as I am able I may fulfil the idea of true perfection as it exists in Thee, and may imitate it and express it in myself.

6. O most blessed Light, the Lamp of souls, who dwellest in the light unapproachable, and enlightenest every man coming into this world, send forth Thy light from the everlasting hills, and illuminate my heart with the splendours of Thy Saints, that I may shine before all in word and work.

7. O God, who revealest things that are hidden, and seest those things that are set in darkness, give me grace to fear and reverence the deep abyss of Thy judgments, and ever to acknowledge and fulfil Thy Will, as revealed in Thy commands and counsels. Let me not be curious, however, to search into things which do not concern me.

8. Show me, O Lord, the greatness of Thy love,

that I may marvel exceedingly at it, and as far as my poor heart will allow, may repay the sweetness of Thy condescension.

9. I give Thee thanks, most loving God, that Thou hast loved me from everlasting, and by the free favour of Thy grace hast willed that I should be, and that I should be what I am. I confess that I cannot love Thee, as Thou hast loved me. I can wish well to Thee, but I cannot bestow on Thee anything of which Thou couldst be in want. I will give to Thee nevertheless what Thou hast first given to me, serving Thee and thanking Thee for all things. What, however, I am unable to give to Thee, I will give to my neighbour for love of Thee.

10. How admirable is Thy love towards man, O my God, for whom Thou hast made so many creatures full of various perfections. O that I had as many hearts as are Thy creatures in number, I would then love and glorify Thee with them all, rendering to Thee the debt, which they themselves cannot pay, and making myself debtor for them.

DECADE V.

O ETERNAL Love, who never ceasest loving, and working by love; for, if Thou didst cease, all things would lose their being; grant me to love Thee without ceasing, and to labour for love of Thee, because, if I have not charity, I am nothing.

2. I will love Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart, and all my love will I set on Thee alone; for Thou art my Father, Thou my Brother, Thou my

Spouse, Thou my Friend, Thou my Benefactor for ever.

3. Glorious God, desirable beyond all the heart can conceive, how great a good it was when Thou first didst make me after Thine own image and likeness. But Thy boundless love hath willed that I should be exalted to a likeness even higher still—by grace and charity ; so that I should not be a servant, but Thy friend. O that this friendship had been as perfectly kept on my part as it hath been on Thine.

4. O that I had loved Thee, most excellent God, from the first moment of my existence, for Thou hast loved me from everlasting as God. Delay not, O my soul, to love thy God. Love that Love, whose love for thee never had a beginning.

5. How boundless is Thy charity, O loving God, who makest Thy sun to rise upon the good and upon the evil. Shut up, if it may be, the gates of hell, that no one may enter there, where all is hatred of Thee. Open the gate of heaven that all may ascend thither, where all love Thee.

6. O the depth of the goodness of God ! O Love unutterable ! who, to cement a perfect friendship with man, didst raise him to an equality with God. What thanks can I render to Thee for so inestimable a benefit ? Let Thy own love praise Thee, and let Thy works, coming forth from this love, give thanks to Thee.

7. I rejoice, O Lord, when I read in Thy Scrip-

tures, that Thou art Love! What more sweet! what more gladsome to my ears! Give me then Thyself. Give me this love. I would love Thee as Thou wishest to be loved. Give me what Thou commandest, that I may be able to fulfil Thy desire.

8. O God, mighty and jealous, who searchest after my love, lest I should give to another that which is due to Thee, let Thy zeal burn like fire, and never let me turn away from the love of Thee.

9. O jealous Lover, whose love burns hot with zeal, let me be eaten up with a zeal for Thy glory, so that this zeal may urge me vehemently to increase Thy praise.

10. O God, the author and lover of peace, take from my zeal all tumultuous feeling, that it may be like Thy own, peaceful, discreet, and according to knowledge. For Thou art the Prince of Peace, and Thou hast founded Thy Church in the beauty of peace. Thou disposest all things in peace and tranquillity, and Thy place is in peace.

DECADE VI.

O MERCIFUL and gracious Lord, longsuffering, and of tender mercy, whose property is always to have mercy and to spare; show upon me the marvels of Thy loving kindness, and according to the multitude of Thy mercies, blot out my iniquities.

2. Let Thy mercy go before me, O Lord, and follow me all the days of my life, that I may be free

from all misery, both of body and soul. Let Thy mercies come to me and I shall live, and I will for ever sing, that Thou, O God, art my life, and my mercy.

3. Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right, Thy right hand is full of justice. I praise Thee for this a thousand times, and I pray Thee, enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified.

4. O most righteous Judge, who wilt search Jerusalem with candles, and judgest equity, see if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Take Thy vengeance here for eternity. Deliver me now from all sin, that in Thy judgment I may escape free from punishment.

5. O most mighty God, by whom are all things, and without whom I can nothing do; behold my weakness and my labours, and strengthen me by Thy might, that I may overcome myself, and all the hindrances to virtue.

6. I know, O Lord, that Thou art a God gracious and merciful, and slow to anger, who winkest at the sins of men, waiting for their repentance, receive me then returning to Thee, and grant that I may not abuse Thy patience.

7. Truly, O Lord, Thou art gentle and meek, and bountiful in mercy to all who call upon Thee: wherefore, I beseech Thee, correct me, but with mercy and sweetness, not in Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing.

8. Great art Thou, O Lord, and worthy to be praised, exceedingly to be feared, above all gods. Let all Thy works praise Thee, O Lord, heaven and earth and all that in them is.

9. Whatsoever may come to me, O Lord, Thy praise shall be ever in my mouth. And my tongue failing, my breath shall show forth Thy praise. And when my body is dead, and reduced to dust, let every atom of its dust praise Thee till the day of the great resurrection.

10. All things have been created for Thyself, O Lord. Thou, and no other, art the last end of all things. Truly Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is unquiet till it rest in Thee. Thou art the city to which we tend, the haven to which we sail, the loadstone of the heart. Draw us out of this hard exile to Thyself. Take us out of this stormy sea.

DECADE VII.

THOU art to be feared, O Lord, and art great, exceedingly and wonderful in power. For Thou hast made all things which Thou didst will to make, in heaven and in earth. All things are possible to Thy Will. Thou couldst make many more things than I could even conceive. Strengthen my weakness by Thy almighty power, for without Thee I can do nothing, and all my works Thou workest in me.

2. O most bountiful God, I give Thee thanks for the great freedom with which Thou dost dispense

Thy gifts. Grant that I may give Thee back freely what I have freely received.

3. O Almighty God, who holdest in Thy hand the weight of the earth, and balancest it in Thy strength ; grant, that knowing my own weakness, I may ever have recourse to Thee, so that in Thee I may be secure, who alone art my strength.

4. O most loving Creator, who providest wonderfully for each of Thy creatures, and hast prepared for me from everlasting the good things which I now enjoy ; grant me so to pass through things temporal that I lose not those that are eternal.

5. O Lord, I offer to Thee my heart, receive it, for it is better and securer in Thy possession than in my own.

6. O most tender Father, whose providence never faileth in reaching its desired end, guide, I pray Thee, all my actions to the end proposed by Thee for me. My lots are in Thy hands, their disposal I surrender wholly unto Thee.

7. Thou hadst regard to me, O God, before the foundation of the world. Thou didst love me, and didst choose me in Christ, before ever I had done either good or evil ; that I might be holy and blameless. And now I give Thee thanks for this wonderful benefit, and I pray Thee that I may make my calling and election sure by good works.

8. Thy hands, O Lord, have made and fashioned me, give me understanding, that I may learn Thy commandments. And as Thou hast bestowed on

me the being that I have, be pleased to give me the perfection I have not, that Thy work may be in no part wanting.

9. O Divine Wisdom, which camest forth out of the mouth of the Most High, the First-Born before every creature ; which causeth the light to arise un-faillingly in the heavens, bestow on me a share of Thy light, that it may abide in me continually.

10. O Eternal Wisdom, whose delights are to create the sons of men, and to be with them ; since Thou hast created me, capable of conversing with Thee, and of receiving endless good, let me not be sent empty away, but deal familiarly with me, and fill me with Thyself, for Thou alone art enough for me.

DECADE VIII.

O FATHER of mercies, who hast predestinated Thy elect to be conformed to the image of Thy Son, so conform me to this image by holiness of life, that, when He shall appear, I may be made like Him in glory.

2. O God, from whom proceedeth all good, the giver and the preserver of all things, who, by a continued act, preservest the creation which Thou hast made, and givest us help for each of our actions : preserve me, for I have put my trust in Thee, that Thy help may be for my advantage, and may redound to Thy glory.

3. Guide me and govern me, let me not guide myself, nor let the world or the flesh govern me. Thou carest for me, and in wisdom providest for

me as if I, who am the most miserable of all men, were Thy only care in this world.

4. I submit myself to the disposition of Thy Providence, O Lord, both now and for everlasting. I cast all my care upon Thee, for Thou never forsakest them that love Thee. If I seek first the kingdom of God, and His justice, all other things shall be added to me.

5. I give Thee hearty thanks, most merciful God, for that out of the evils which we do Thou bringest good things, and permittest our miseries, that Thy mercy may the more shine forth. Shew Thy Providence over me, that all evils may work together for my good.

6. O sweetest Providence of God, what more couldest Thou have done? Thou hast so loved the world, that Thou hast given Thy only-begotten Son for it. Thou hast given Thy Son to redeem a slave. Apply to my soul the fruits of this plenteous redemption, that, redeemed by Thy grace, I may enjoy Thee for ever in glory.

7. Be Thou to me, most sweet Jesus, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, applying efficaciously to my soul the price of that Blood which Thou didst shed for all.

8. I give Thee thanks, gracious Father, because Thou hast called me with a holy calling to faith, and as soon as I was born, didst regenerate me by baptism. Thou hast also by strange ways of mercy drawn me to Thyself when I turned away from

Thee, and hast justified me by Thy grace. Unless Thy sweet inspiration had prevented me, when I had no good deserts, I should now be in punishment, which I have deserved for my crimes.

9. O Lord God, how wonderful is Thy Name in all the world. Thou hast been wonderful in creation, wonderful in redemption ; but much more wonderful art Thou in the Feast which Thou hast in Thy sweetness prepared for us, in which our souls are fed with the Flesh and Blood of our Redeemer. O that I might be able to say with the Apostle, when I come full from this Blessed Table, " I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me."

10. O Thou Chief Shepherd, save me from the lion's mouth, and from the wolf of hell, for Thou hast prepared before me a Heavenly Table against them that trouble me.

DECADE IX.

○ WELLSPRING of goodness, God of my soul, who am I, and what is my father's house, that Thou shouldst have vouchsafed to call me to the blessed state of Religion. For being yet in the world, halting between two sides, Thou didst thunder from heaven, and didst give forth Thy mighty voice, by which Thou broughtest me out of the desert of the world into the Paradise of my God.

2. I thank Thee, O Sovereign Master, that Thou hast chosen me for a disciple, in the school of perfection, leaving so many others, who were more

worthy of this grace than myself. Let me ever follow Thy footsteps, and fulfill all Thy teachings.

3. O eternal King, may Thy kingdom come, that everlasting kingdom, which Thou hast prepared for them that love Thee. Shew me the good things Thou hast promised, and stir up my soul that she may thus attain to them,

4. How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts. My soul longeth and fainteth with desire for Thy courts. When shall I come to dwell in them and be filled with the greatness of their beauty?

5. I know many things of Thee, O Lord, yet know not how to speak them in words. For whatsoever I say or think hath a measure, and Thou art without measure, and incomprehensible, and of Thy greatness there is no end.

6. O great God, Three in persons, and one in substance, who so communicatest Thy Godhead that its oneness is not broken, give me such an abundant share of Thy grace that I may by perfect charity be one with Thee.

7. O Holy of Holies, God of the spirits of all flesh, at whose Presence heaven and earth tremble; I bless Thee with all the power that I am able, because by the teachings of Thy Holy Church Thou hast established me in the faith.

8. I call upon Thee, Blessed Trinity, to come to me, and make in me a worthy temple for Thy glory. Thou who hast fashioned me make me per-

fect to the full form of Thy image and likeness, to which Thou hast created me.

9. O great God, from whom, by whom, and in whom are all things, keep me in Thy care, for I am the work of Thy hands, and I put all my trust in Thy mercy alone.

10. O Lord, Thou hast said, "Man shall not see me and live;"—let me die, then, that I may behold Thee. For this is life eternal to know Thee, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, one true and only God, and to love Thee for ever and ever.

DECADE X.

O FATHER of infinite majesty, Beginning without beginning, who proceedest from none, I rejoice that within Thyself Thou conceivest Thy eternal Word, and begettest One so like to Thyself, that He is one and the same with Thee.

2. O heavenly Father, from whom all paternity is named in heaven and in earth, I beseech Thee by Thy only-begotten Son, in whom Thou art well pleased, to beget many other children by adoption and grace, that Thy fatherhood may be enlarged, and shine brighter.

3. O unbegotten Father, not born, not produced, but the source of the Godhead, and the Well-spring of all being; sanctify me in truth, that, having come forth from Thee, I may abide in Thee continually, and my mind may never turn from Thee.

4. O only-begotten Son of God, who by an eternal generation proceedest from the Father, co-equal and

consubstantial with Him, make me, as far as I am able, to partake in some measure of this equality and likeness.

5. O Son of God, God of God, Light of Light, uncreated Wisdom, Brightness of the eternal Light : make me in this life a child of the light, that in the life everlasting, being illuminated with the light of glory, I may behold Thee glorious, and worthy to be praised for ever.

6. O Splendour of the Father's glory, and the Figure of His substance, who, greatly loving Thy Father, and greatly beloved by Him, dost, together with Him, by one breathing, produce the Holy Spirit ;—send forth Thy light and Thy truth, that in the splendour of Thy light I may know Thee, and love Thee, as Thou perfectly knowest and lovest the Father.

7. O Holy Spirit, sweetest Comforter, Gift of the Most High, and Anointing of the elect, give Thyself to me as an infinite Gift, that I may be a spirit as Thou art, free from every earthly thought, holy as Thou art, running with unstumbling foot the way of Thy commandments.

8. Spirit of the Father, from whom Thou receivest Thy Godhead and almighty power, Spirit of the Son, from whom Thou receivest His wisdom ; Spirit Both, from whom Thou receivest the love with which They mutually love one another : come into my soul, set my affections at one, that joined to Thee in one spirit, I may be altogether converted to the spirit of love.

9. Most Holy Spirit. Love most sweet, essential Charity, and Well-spring of all love: O eternal Goodness, from whom all good things descend to us: inflame my will with a most fervent love of Thee. Clasp me close to Thee. Bind me fast Thyself to the Father, and to the Son, that neither in my understanding or in my affections I may ever be separated from You.

10. Sacred and adorable Trinity, my God, and all my good, give me Thyself and it is enough. For to him what can be enough, whom Thou sufficest not.





CHAPTER XVII.

The Life of Christ the well-spring of all good things.

How to raise pious affections from it.

IT would take a large volume to enumerate all the good things which continually flow in unfailling streams from the life of Christ, as from a most abundant fountain. For our Saviour is made to us by God, wisdom, justice, sanctification, and redemption. In him we have the riches of salvation, the treasure of merits, the climax of perfection. As the sun gladdens with its aspect, pours forth its light and influence, never ceasing from its work, so this true Sun of the soul, Jesus Christ, by a continual influx pours His virtues and graces and His Godhead into us. The study of His life lifts us up in adversity, keeps us down in prosperity. It takes away sins, brings grace, stirs up love, helps the beginner, guides those advancing, and teaches fully the perfect. As perfumes make fragrant whatever they touch, so a Christian who is

ever conversing with Christ gets about him the perfume of His patience, charity, humility, and other virtues. These this Master of virtue instils insensibly into those who study His life. His teaching is a hot-bed of plants of justice, His life a mirror of prudence and temperance, His death a pattern of fortitude. But as it is not enough to study the Life of Christ, unless devout and pious affections accompany this study, I will point out briefly in the following Chapters how they may be practised. So that, looking at Him who is the Author of our faith, we may have Him at the same time our Saviour and the finisher of our perfection.

DECADE I.

O LORD JESUS CHRIST, grant to me, a wretched sinner, to have ever before my eyes Thy holy life and conversation, that as far as my strength goeth I may imitate Thee.

2. O boundless love, O admirable condescension. Thou, O Lord, hast given up Thy Son to redeem a slave.

3. Thou hast seen, sweetest Jesus, the affliction of Thy people, and the grievous burden of the children of Adam. Touched with the feelings of love Thou hast had for us thoughts of peace and of redemption. For the time for redemption is now come, and the Day-spring from on high hath visited us.

4. O God of high majesty, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the Son of Man that Thou

visitest him? Let the Angels give Thee praise for that great love, wherewith Thou followest after us.

5. Hail Day, desired for so many ages, when God became man for us! Hail, Archangel Gabriel, bringer of such joyful tidings! Hail glorious Virgin, in whose chaste womb God took flesh!

6. O how mighty is love, which made the great God stoop so low! How different is my love to that of God?

7. O sovereign Prince, who for my salvation didst come down from heaven, Thou art so much the more dear to me in proportion as I myself am so vile.

8. O Word made flesh, full of grace and truth, fill my soul with this grace that it may be pleasing in Thy eyes.

9. O Divine Word, give me some share of Thy light and grace, which Thou hast bestowed on the human nature Thou didst assume. Make my heart stoop by humility to seek the lowest place; raise it up by gratitude and love to the highest room.

10. O Saviour Christ, who, being yet shut up in Thy Mother's womb, didst hasten to hallow Thy Fore-runner by Thy grace;—give me pardon for my sins, and spiritual joy in Thy service.

DECADE II.

O MOST adorable Jesus, who for me didst stoop to be born in a stable, enlighten my mind and inflame my will, that I may worthily contemplate Thy Nativity, and imitate the virtues which so brightly shine in it.

2. Why does not my heart burn with a tender love of Thee, O most beautiful Babe, who at Thy very birth didst begin the work of my salvation.

3. O that I could have been present at Thy birth, to be allowed to embrace Thee, and wait upon Thee. Accept my good will, and grant that I may spend myself and all I have in Thy service.

4. O unheard of prodigy of love. The bed chamber of my Beloved is a stable ;—His Bridal chamber is a manger, His bed is a little straw, His pillow of hay, His kingly court a poor cave.

5. O holy poverty of the Son of God, more precious than all the riches of the world ! Thou hast recommended poverty by Thy own example, blessed Jesus. Thou, who deckest heaven with stars and earth with flowers, wast born in a stable, and wrapped in swaddling clothes. Pour into my heart a love of poverty, and give me grace patiently to bear its hardships.

6. O how I ought to weep over my sins, most tender Jesus, since Thou takest up a lamentation for them. The weeping cries of Thy infancy sigh over my sins, Thy tears blot them all away.

7. O Jesus, full of wisdom, Thou teachest by Thy silence, Thou preachest by Thy infant cries. Teach me in silence to follow Thy humility. Make me like Thyself in childlike simplicity, and innocence.

8. Happy Shepherds, to whom before all else the tidings is announced, that God is come from heaven, and is concealed in a stable.

9. Glory to God in the highest ! True indeed ! for to whom is glory due but to the King of glory ? Draw my heart up on high, that it may never descend from the noble thoughts of Thy children.

10. Give me, O sweetest Saviour, that which Thou offerest to all men, a good will and divine peace ; that, despising the changeableness and discord of the world, I may persevere steadfastly in Thy good favour.

DECADE III.

I PRAISE Thee, O Redeemer of the World, for the first shedding of Thy Blood in Thy most tender infancy, when Thy spotless flesh endured the pain of circumcision, which it never deserved to undergo.

2. O fall of Adam, how painful wast thou to my Lord. I have sinned, and Thou, Lord, payest the penalty ; I was conceived and born in sin, and Thou art punished for it.

3. Verily Thou art to me a Spouse of Blood. Not yet able to cry with Thy voice to the Father, Thou criest to Him with Thy Blood. Thy Blood is to me a pledge of espousals, more precious to me than gold or the topaz.

4. Circumcise, O Lord, all my senses and members with that spiritual stone, which is Thyself. Cut away from me whatsoever Thou findest in me carnal or superfluous, and restrain all my life with the rigour of Thy discipline.

5. O sweetest Name of Jesus, blessed above every name in heaven and in earth, be Thou to me salvation and redemption ; for there is no other Name given among men, whereby we must be saved.

6. Be Thou, O Lord, a Jesus to me, a tower of defence against the face of the enemy. Write Thy saving Name on my heart, that it may remain graven there, till it bring me to everlasting salvation.

7. I glorify Thee, O God, for the first fruits of the Gentiles, and for their wonderful enlightening ; when Thou didst draw them from the East, in the persons of the Magi, by Thy secret inspiration, to teach them the belief of Thy truth.

8. I adore Thee with the Magi, O King of kings, and for the gifts they offered Thee I present the gold of poverty, the frankincense of obedience, and the myrrh of chastity.

9. O that all nations might know Thee by a lively faith, worship Thee, and diligently serve Thee.

10. Give me, O Lord, the faith and constancy of these wise men, that I may like them perseveringly seek Thee until I find Thee.

DECADE IV.

THOU wast pleased, O Lord, to be presented in the temple, and there, like a servant, to be redeemed with five sicles : may Thy great charity be blessed. And because Thy Father hath delivered Thee to me for the price of five sicles, I give myself in turn to Thee, to be Thy servant for ever.

Grant by Thy grace that I may never forsake Thee ; nor do Thou abandon me.

2. I bless Thee, O most holy Redeemer, for the example Thou hast left us of true obedience, in subjecting Thyself like one of the people to the ceremonies of the law. Grant that I may in all things be perfectly obedient.

3. I offer Thee, O Lord, a pair of turtles, that is two kinds of compunction, the first in sorrow for my sins and negligences, and the second in sighs after the eternal bliss which I long for.

4. Give me, O good Jesus, one ray of that light with which Thou didst illuminate the holy old man, Simeon, when he took Thee as a babe into his arms, that by this light I may know Thee, and love Thee, as he did.

5. O Blessed Jesus, who wouldst that the sword of sorrow, with which Thy holy Mother was to be pierced, should be revealed to her by Simeon, pierce my heart with the sword of compunction, lest the vain consolations of the world should affect me.

6. Thou wast scarce born, O loving King, when at once the world persecuteth Thee, and Herod seeketh to slay Thee. As the wicked persecuted Thee, the head of the faith, so now do they persecute Thy members. Grant me to see this truth clearly, and to suffer persecutions with patience.

7. O sweet Jesus, I will not esteem it grievous to fly with Thee, and to leave all the things of this world. If Thou be with me, what more can I want ?

8. O my soul, accompany Thy God in His flight, and be not ashamed, for it is glorious and sweet to be despised and cast away for His sake.

9. Let Thy grace be with me, O God, that in this exile I may live subject to Thy Will, ever giving a good example to those with whom I converse.

10. Sweet Jesus, who when returning after a long exile from Egypt, didst go aside to Nazareth, and wast called a Nazarene, grant me spiritually to observe all the laws of the Nazarites, to abstain from inordinate love, and to touch nothing that might defile my soul.

DECADE V.

WE know nothing of Thy doings, O Word Incarnate, till Thou wast twelve years old. Yet we know much, for Thy silence hath a loud cry in our hearts, that we may admire and imitate it.

2. Thou satest in the midst of the doctors, O Child full of all wisdom, answering them modestly, and asking questions with prudence, so that all marvelled. O that I had been there to hear Thy discourse. Speak some words now in my heart, that I may enjoy the fruit of them for ever.

3. O with what sorrow Thy Mother sought for three days, when she had lost Thee! With what gladness did she find Thee! Give me after Thy example ever to be engaged about the affairs of God, having no thought of flesh and blood. Make me diligently to seek Thee, when Thou art absent, until I find Thee.

4. I give Thee joy, Blessed Virgin, at the recovery of Thy Beloved Son. Pray for me, that I may never lose Him or depart from Him.

5. Thou didst increase, most sweet Child, in wisdom, and age, and in grace both with God and men ; for every day Thou didst show more signs of virtue. I also desire to increase by changing a lukewarm life for a fervent one. Grant, by Thy blessing, that I may go from virtue to virtue, till I reach a very high degree.

6. O humility of my Saviour, what a reproach art Thou to my pride and vanity ! Thou didst lie hid, and was silent, till thirty years of age, although Thou wast the Eternal Wisdom. I, foolish that I am, must be forward to speak empty things. Teach me the path of true humility, and let me cleave to Thy footsteps.

7. O Lord Jesus, Well-spring of goodness, and Source of all virtues, who wouldst begin Thy ministry by being baptised of John Baptist. What need hast Thou, the spotless One, of baptism ? O that my pride could be taken away by this wonderful example of humility.

8. O King most high, who, by Thy Baptism, wouldst fulfil all righteousness, baptise me with the Holy Ghost and with fire, and cleanse from my soul all the filth of its iniquity.

9. Fill me, O Lord, with the Holy Spirit, that I may be led by Him into the desert : that I may withdraw from men, by fasting, prayer, and penance.

10. O most mighty champion, Jesus Christ, who didst battle strenuously against the devil, and didst gloriously defeat him ; give me courageously to fight against him, and send Thy holy Angels, that they may faithfully keep me, powerfully assist me, and graciously comfort me.

DECADE VI.

I THANK Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid the mysteries of our Redemption from the wise and prudent of this world, and hast revealed them to the little ones, even to fishermen, that Thou mightest bring to nought the wisdom of the prudent. Make me little in my own eyes, that I may be great in Thine.

2. O sovereign Guide, who callest all unto Thee, by the way of the Cross, and of self-denial, give me the grace to bear my cross without fainting, even until death.

3. I wish to walk on no other road than that on which Thou Thyself hast trodden, O Lord. I wish to embrace nothing but the truth, which Thou hast taught, and the life which Thou hast lived. Thou art the way, the truth, and the life.

4. I thank Thee, O eternal Father, because Thou hast given me such a Master, such a Law-Giver, such a counsellor, whose commands and admonitions are a most safe way of salvation.

5. Open Thy mouth, O Saviour of the world, and

speak to my heart, for Thy servant heareth, and is desirous to fulfil that which he heareth.

6. Enlighten me with Thy brightness, O heavenly Master, that I may discover the perfect way which Thou commendest. Light up a fire in my heart, that I may love it, and strengthen me by Thy might, that I may seek and fulfil it.

7. O most mighty Saviour, who, by the word of Thy power, didst work so many miracles. Renew Thy signs, and work on me wonderful things. Heal the diseases of my soul, and raise her up again from the death of corruption.

8. O wonderful Jesus, Light of the world, Salvation of the people, and our Glory, look upon my sick soul, because there is none other that can heal it but only Thou, O God.

9. Thou wentest about the towns and villages, sweetest Jesus, that Thou mightest convert sinners, giving pardon to the repentant. Let me come in for a share of this charity, and pity me for I acknowledge my iniquity.

10. A thousand times do I praise and bless Thee, most Holy Jesus, pattern of all virtues, for Thy poor, lowly, pure, and patient life. Give me grace to study thy conversation, and to form my own words, thoughts, and actions, after Thy model.

DECADE VII.

HOW boundless is Thy love of me, O Lord most good. Not only art Thou willing to lead a life of trouble and sorrow for my salvation, but, over and above, Thou wouldst consummate it by Thy most bitter Passion and death. O how grievous are my sins, which must be atoned for by such a satisfaction.

2. O most gracious Father, by the Passion and death of Thy Only begotten Son, I beseech Thee to forgive the sins of Thy servant. Receive the sacrifice of Thy Son, and forget the injuries of Thy wicked bondman. He hath paid for me a far greater price than all my debt.

3. O desirable Passion of Christ, O death so full of charms, heal my wounds, and raise me up again to life. Kindle Thy fire in my heart that I may melt away in love.

4. I do not seek the riches of the world, but Thy poverty, Lord Jesus; not the delights of the flesh, but Thy stripes.

5. Let me, I pray thee, sweet Jesus, forget Thy death and Passion, but grant me by means of it an entrance to Thy Godhead.

6. Engrave on my heart all Thy wounds, blessed Lord, that Thy Name, and Thy Passion may alone be read there. Hide me within Thy Wounds.

7. O Lord Jesus, who hast so loved us, as in no way to spare Thyself, come and wound my heart

quickly, that I may feel only Thy Wounds, and in them ever abide and rest.

8. May Thy sorrow ever occupy my breast, that I may be able to say with the spouse, "My Beloved is a bundle of myrrh to me. He shall abide between my breasts."

9. Sweet Jesus, who didst haste so eagerly to ascend to Jerusalem, to suffer so bitter a death for me, make me ever ready to bear whatsoever Thou art pleased to lay upon me.

10. O Saviour of the world, who wast sold by a traitorous disciple, never let me for the mean price of earthly things, sell and abandon Thee, my sovereign Good.

DECADE VIII.

O MOST humble Jesus, who didst stoop to so low a service as to wash Thy disciples' feet, wash me yet more from my iniquity, and deliver me from a proud spirit.

2. O Beloved of my heart, who on the eve of Thy Passion didst leave to us the grand pledge of Thy perpetual love, by giving to us Thy Body for food, and Thy Blood for drink, make me ready for this feast, by adorning my soul with Thy virtues.

3. O everlasting King, who feedest Thy people with Thy Blood, that we may be all a chosen people of the royal Blood, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation; make me to know my dignity, to

glory in it, and never be in manners as a degenerate stock.

4. O Blessed Jesus, in order that Thy Passion might be more bitter, Thou didst remove afar off all gladness from Thy heart, begin to fear, and to be sorrowful and very heavy. But when have I any sorrow either for Thee or my own state? Make me ever to remember Thy sadness, that I may gladly for Thy sake suffer any trial or distress that may come upon me.

5. O Thou joy of the Angels, who in Thy sorrow didst flee to prayer as a remedy for Thy distress, grant to me miserable that I may be weaned from the milk, and taken away from the breasts of human consolations, that so giving myself wholly to prayer, I may learn Thy most holy will, and put it in execution.

6. Let Thy chalice, O Lord, pass from Thee to me, for every bitterness, tasted for Thy sake, will be pleasant to me.

7. Who will give me so to feel Thy sorrows, most afflicted Jesus, that the thought of them shall draw from me a sweat of blood. Help me by Thy grace, that this wish may be truly mine.

8. O most gentle Jesus, I laud and glorify Thee for Thy unutterable meekness, which Thou didst show to Thy traitorous disciple, when he betrayed Thee by a kiss to be laid hold of and bound by the wicked. Give me also the spirit of mildness, by which I may be hard to myself but gentle to others.

9. How rapidly wert Thou forced along, sweet Jesus, by Thy enemies, when they had seized Thee, but it was Thy love which made Thee go still more swiftly. Never let me cease from a cheerful following of Thee, even though to do so I must suffer much toil and distress.

10. O most innocent Jesus, who wast dragged from judgment seat to judgment seat with great cruelty, as the victim of my crimes; guide Thou my steps into the way of peace, and bid me come to Thee; for, if I must die with Thee, I will not, by Thy grace, deny Thee.

DECADE IX.

O GOOD Jesus, the strength and support of my soul, who didst bear with admirable patience so many mockings, buffetings, and insults, teach me in the meekness of silence to overcome what is adverse to me, and to receive all with a quiet mind.

2. O gentle Jesus, who wast declared to be worse than Barabbas, a robber, and a murderer, make me to despise the judgments of men, and to bear Thy reproach ever before my eyes, esteeming it greater honour than all the false glories of the world.

3. O most meek Jesus, who wast bound naked to a pillar, and was cruelly scourged for my sins, grant to my soul that, when it is tossed by the tempest of temptation, it may find in this column a sure

haven of refuge. Bind me to it with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love.

4. O King of kings, Crown of the Saints, who, by an unheard-of torture, wast crowned with thorns, and clad in mockery with purple; make me to bear all contempt with patience, and to consent to appear inglorious before all, through love for Thy thorny crown.

5. Most gracious Lover of men, who wast condemned by an unjust judge to a most shameful death, being a mirror of innocence and sanctity; how much more ought I, a sinner, to bear the unrighteous judgments of men with patience.

6. Go forth, O good Jesus, loaded with the wood of the Cross, but pressed down much more by the weight of Thy charity. Thou sparest not pain for Thyself, but spare my sins their punishment.

7. Thy yoke, O Lord, is sweet, and Thy burden is light, grant that I may willingly take it upon me; denying myself, and bearing Thy Cross after me.

8. O most sweet Jesus, who wouldst be so cruelly stretched upon the Cross, that all Thy bones might be numbered; grant that I may ever keep all my members, senses, and powers stretched out in loving union with Thee, and may remain ever fixed to my Cross by the nails of holy fear.

9. Hear me, O Lord, when I cry to Thee. And since Thou didst say to Thy Apostles, "When I shall be lifted up from the earth I will draw all

things to Myself," draw me to Thee, and receive my soul in the clefts of the Rock, in the caverns of the ragged Rock.

10. O most glorious Son of God, I acknowledge the truth of Thy title, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. O that the whole world might read this title, and acknowledge Thee as the King and Saviour of all men.

DECADE X.

JESUS, life of the dying, who didst will that Thy side, after Thy death, should be opened by a lance, that an easy entrance might be given to those who would approach Thy Heart, admit me into Thy sacred Side, that in it I may find my rest for ever.

2. O ye five precious Wounds of Christ, full of divine sweetness, I hail you with reverence. In you I find the medicine of life, plenteousness of grace, and fulness of pardon.

3. O my crucified Jesus, I will hide me in Thy wounded Side. There I will pray ; there I will treat of my affairs, for there I shall obtain whatever I ask.

4. I thank Thee, Saviour of the world, because Thou hast perfectly finished the work of our Redemption. Finish also the work that Thou hast begun in me, that Thy righteousness in me may be found full and complete.

5. How great is the hardness of my heart. The earth quaketh, the rocks are rent, the heavens are darkened at the death of the Lord. My heart alone

is unmoved, which is the cause of all these disasters. Break, O Lord, break my hard heart by the droppings of Thy Blood.

6. Most beloved Jesus, bury my heart in the tomb with Thee. Hide me in Thy Wounds that in vain men may search for me out of Thee.

7. Seal my heart, O Lord, my senses, and my powers with the seal of love, that I may remain safely sealed as Thine for ever.

8. O Lord of hosts, the King of glory, who after death didst descend into hell, to lead the righteous forth from the prison ; I rejoice in Thy triumph, and I pray Thee to give me ever the victory over my hellish foe.

9. O triumphant Conqueror, give me to share Thy Passion, that I may also partake of Thy resurrection. Grant that I may die with Thee, so as to rise again with Thee and ascend into heaven.

10. O everlasting King, who sittest at the right hand of the Father, draw me after Thee, that there my heart may be surely fixed where Thou my treasure art. For Thou art my glory, the God of my heart, my God and my portion for ever.



CHAPTER XVIII.

All Things may be used as the Grounds for Aspirations.

Ladders from the creature to the unseen Creator.

IT was well said by our Saviour that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. For which of us, that are considered children of light, uses as much industry in procuring spiritual goods as worldlings do, in diligently getting gain by every contrivance? The spirit is sick, but the senses in vigorous health. The things of heaven, being removed above the power of the bodily eye, strike men's minds but with difficulty. We are, therefore, lynx-eyed in earthly matters, but in those of heaven we are like moles. Lest then worldlings should rise against us in the judgment, as being more alert and diligent in procuring earthly riches than we in gathering the rue and eternal, we ought to have recourse to various arts for accumulating spiritual wealth. This may be done by making every object and affair a

matter of spiritual gain, aspiring after God by means of it, who is the beginning and the end of all our actions. How this may be done I will point out, not in my own words, but in those of the holy Fathers, whom I quote for the greater authority of their teaching.

2. The divine Ephrem teaches that this gain consists chiefly in prayer. He says, "It will be good, according as our Lord counsels, always to pray and not to faint. Wherefore, whether you are working, or sleeping, or making a journey, or eating, or drinking, or lying down, take care that you never cease from prayer. Whether you be in the church, or in the field, or at home : if you are feeding sheep, or constructing buildings, or are in a banqueting room, still never desist from prayer. When you can, kneel down ; when you cannot kneel, call upon God mentally. If you put prayer before work, and, as soon as you rise from sleep, you give the first motions of your heart to God by beginning with prayer, then sin will not find any entrance into the soul." Saint Chrysostom's sentiments are of a similar kind. He says, " Let us draw nigh to God, praying at all times, for never is it unseasonable to do so. It is always seasonable to ask of Him who desires to bestow. It is never troublesome to breathe, so to ask of God is not troublesome to Him, nay, rather not to ask is the thing that is troublesome to Him. As we always require to breathe, so we also ever stand in need of the help

of God." The same Saint, when expounding the text of the Apostle, "That we must do all to the glory of God," sets forth various modes of giving glory to God, both in doing things and in leaving things undone, thus making of creatures a ladder, by which to ascend to God. Having discoursed at large on the matter, he thus concludes : " If we will, we may make our whole life a spiritual merchandise, and get gain by every circumstance. Whether we pray or fast, accuse or forgive some one, whether we praise or blame, whether we come in or go out, buy or sell, converse or hold our peace, or do anything else whatsoever, we may refer it all to God." These things he says, when he is teaching how we may from everything ascend by upward aspirations to God. The great Saint Basil delivers the same doctrine : " When sitting at table pray, when eating bread give thanks to Him who bestows it ; when you drink wine, remember Him who gave it to gladden you and comfort your infirmities ; when you put on your clothing, bless Him who provided it ; when you look up to heaven, and admire its beauty, prostrate yourself in worship before God, who created all these things in His wisdom." I omit the rest, for, to use the words of another Basil, Bishop of Se-leucia : " Since God has made creatures after the manner of the steps of a graduated scale, He did so, that by this ladder we might ascend up to Himself."

3. Whatever there is in creatures ought to bring

its quota of praise to the Creator, as the Seraphic Bonaventure observes: "When you see persons," he says, "placed in some temporal dignity or office over others, consider that this is done to show forth the majesty of God, and adore the divine power in their persons. When you behold others bent upon knowledge, searching curiously into the hidden things both of the Creator and the creature, scrutinising every fibre of creation, then consider that this is done to image forth the wisdom of God, and adore the divine omniscience in them. When you see others actively engaged in business, adore in them the Providence of God, who by such activity provides for those who are more quiet. When you see men sitting on the judgment seat, think with fear of the last day of doom. If you see men punished, think of the vengeance of God. If you behold men exercising rigour, think of the severity of God; if you see causes discussed and debated, behold in this an image of the divine scrutiny. When you see Superiors slack in punishing the guilty, behold in this an image of the mercy and long-suffering of God. When the works of charity which men do are brought before your eye, let such things be to you a picture of the goodness of God, graciously pouring forth His plentiful bounty. If you are warm, think of the warmth of God's love to men, which made Him send His Son to take flesh for their sakes, and die on the cross for all.

If you are cool, think of God as a refreshment from the heat of this world's miseries. Thus everything you meet with may and ought to be turned to the praise and magnifying of the Creator. By the method of this holy teacher, all the marrow of the things perceived by the senses, is, as it were, scooped out with a sharp knife. It is easy for every rational being to behold the invisible things of God, which are understood by the things that are made, according to the Apostle. But if to the things open to the ken of the senses we add those of the moral order, then another vast grove of things is entered, from which multitudes of aspirations may be raised to God. The curious reader may find examples of this mode of understanding things in the writings of the ancient Fathers: Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory the Great, the Abbot Rupert, Saint Bernard, Eucherius, and others. Of recent writers there are Xanctes Pagnini in his "Mystical Senses of the Scripture;" John of Saint Geminian in his "Examples and Similitudes;" Jerome Lauretus in his "Grove of Allegory;" Peter Berchor, and almost all Commentators on the Scriptures.

4. The most learned Jew Philo affirms that God created all things in graduated scales. The way is thus opened, as I have said, from what we handle and see to God, the Creator, whom we see not. There is no one, if only he will attend with his mental ear, but may hear the voice of nature preach-

ing loudly of the Creator. Saint Prosper says, "Heaven, earth, the sea, and all things in them tell forth the glory of God with voices suitable to their nature and rank in creation." By a perpetual sermon they speak of the majesty of Him that made them. The book of nature is a large one, and not only did the incomparable Abbot Antony study in it, as Saint Athanasius says of him, but the wise of this world have done the same. Trismegistus said that the world was the book of the Godhead, the mirror in which to behold things divine, and in which God's own face was to be seen reflected. Orpheus, in his hymns, calls the world an admirable concert to the praise of God. The holy Psalmist said the same in the words, "The heavens declare the glory of God." "Creatures are signs," says Augustine and Pope Gregory, "by which God manifests Himself to us." The same Gregory calls them the veins of the divine whisper. Synesius calls them harmonies set in order by nature to the praise of the Deity. The Angelic Doctor entitles them fountains of divine love. No one can doubt, who has studied the matter, how easy it is from the sight of the creature, to rise by pious aspirations to the Creator. I shall now lay down a practical method for the principal actions of the day. First, however, let me relate that a certain holy man had a custom of referring all he heard or saw to the Passion of Christ. This was the case if he heard a noise or tumult, or the blows of hammers; or if he

saw ladders, wood, spears, nails, or any like thing he took occasion from all to bring to his mind the Passion of Christ. The foregoing Chapter of aspirations of the Life of Christ might be adapted to an exercise of this kind.





CHAPTER XIX.

*A Diurnal or Grove of Aspirations for all Occasions
and all Actions of the Day.*

FROM a rich harvest I will select one sheaf. For to go through all those things which afford matter for aspirations would require a large volume. "Give occasion," says the proverb, "to a wise man, and wisdom will be added." First I will set forth the chief actions and exercises of the day; then several other occasions of frequent occurrence: so that in every action pious aspirations may be ready to hand, in the bundle I have gathered.

ON WAKING IN THE NIGHT.

GOD be merciful to me a sinner. Lead me, O God, out of the darkness of the shadow of death, and make my darkness to be light.

2. Call me, O Lord, into Thy marvellous light. Enlighten my darkness, O Light of the children of light, Thou Day, which shalt never go down.

3. Defend me, O Lord, from being wrapt up in the darksome cloud of sin : deliver me from all defilement of the flesh and of the spirit.

4. May the night become lightsome in delights ; for in the night have I remembered Thee, O Lord.

5. By night in my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth. Teach me, O Lord, to seek Thee, and show Thyself to me when I seek.

6. My soul hath desired Thee in the night. In my spirit and with my heart will I seek Thee early in the morning, O Splendour of the Father's glory.

7. It is night, and deep quiet is on all things, and still silence. Let us love our God, O my soul, for love desires secrecy.

8. May Thy stars burn and shine for Thee, O my God, and do Thou light as many torches of love in my heart as there shine stars in the heavens.

9. O that my mind were faithful to the watch of love whilst my body is in sleep, that so I might say with the Spouse, "I sleep, but my heart waketh." Grant me, O my Lord, together with the sleep that is needful, a continual watchfulness of love.

10. I thank Thee, O my God, because, while night was in the midst of its course, Thy Almighty Word came down from His royal throne, to enlighten those that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death.

AT RISING IN THE MORNING.

BLESSED be the whole and undivided Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Let us confess to Him, for He hath dealt mercifully with us.

2. In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ crucified I rise. May He, who redeemed me, keep me, protect me, and defend me from all evil this day always, and especially at the hour of my death.

3. I believe in Thee, O my Lord, I hope in Thee, and I love Thee with all my heart: for of Thee, and in Thee, and for Thee are all things, my God and my all.

4. O God, my God, at the breaking of the day I wake to Thee, my soul hath thirsted for Thee, my flesh also how many times.

5. O Holy Father in union with Thy most Beloved Son, I this day commend to Thee my spirit.

6. I offer Thee my heart, O Lord, and I pray Thee that my every word, work, thought, and will may be directed to-day according to Thy good pleasure.

7. Sweet Heart of my Saviour Jesus Christ, watching over me with careful keeping all the night, I salute Thee with praise and glory for ever. Do Thou to the Father pay for me my debt of praises and thanksgiving.

8. I commend to the keeping of Thy wisdom, O Lord, my sense of sight, both bodily and mental.

Give me light to know Thy Will, and restrain my eyes from the beholding of anything vain or evil.

9. I commend to Thy mercy this day my sense of hearing. Keep me from giving ear to any evil speech, and grant me to understand the good words I hear uttered.

10. I commend to Thy loving care my mouth and my voice. Give me a taste for spiritual things, and keep my tongue from slipping.

11. I commend my hands to Thy gracious keeping. Join my work to Thine. Sanctify and perfect all that I do, and keep me back from every evil work.

12. I commend my heart to Thy divine love. Unite my heart with Thine, fire it with Thy love, that it may take no pleasure henceforward in earthly things.

ON THE PUTTING ON OF CLOTHING.

STRIP me, O Lord, of the old man with his deeds, and clothe me with the new man, which, after God, is created in the justice and holiness of truth.

2. Clothe my soul, O Lord, with the vesture of wrought gold, with the wedding garment of charity, so as to cover the multitude of my sins, and to deck her with a countless weight of jewels.

3. Give, I beseech Thee, O Lord, to my soul, the clothing and ornaments becoming her, that my uncomeliness may not appear in Thy sight and that of the Angels.

4. Gird my loins, sweetest Jesus, with the belt of modesty and chastity, that I may run freely the way of Thy commandments.

5. Do with me, O Lord, as the great ones of this world are wont to do for their poor clients. Bestow on me those garments of patience and lowliness which are no longer wanted by Thee, now that Thou reignest in glory; but of which I, Thy poor servant, stand in great need.

6. O my God, I clothe my body with these earthly garments because it is Thy Will. I put them on not for ornament or pride, but as a necessary covering, and as a habit befitting my station in life.

7. Whilst I give to the body its raiment, do Thou, O God, clothe my soul with the garment of innocence, that her vesture may be pleasing in Thy sight.

AT THE WASHING OF HANDS.

GIVE strength, O Lord, to my hands to purge away every stain, that, with body and soul undefiled, I may be able to do Thee service.

2. Wash me yet more from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from any sin.

3. O Lord Jesus, who has washed us from our sins in Thy own Blood, cleanse away all the filth of my soul, and I shall be whiter than snow.

AT THE RISING OF THE SUN.

RISE, rise, O Sun of Justice, and enlighten my soul with Thy splendours.

2. Send forth Thy light and Thy truth. They have led me and brought me to Thy holy mountain, and to Thy tabernacles.

3. O Light, that makest all things lightsome, swallow me up in Thy loving depths, that I may see Thee in Thyself and myself in Thee, and may behold all things under Thee. For without Thee all things are to me darksome, and as the obscurity of the night.

4. O my God, the Sun of my soul, how pleasant and lovely is Thy beauty! I am delighted with Thy heavenly light. May I love it more and more.

BEFORE THE DIVINE OFFICE.

THOU shalt call me, and I will answer Thee. Stretch forth Thy right hand to the work of Thy hands.

2. O Lord, I desire to perform this Office with the same spirit of praise as Thou, when on earth, didst give service to Thy Father.

3. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, praise His holy Name.

4. Shall a vile frog, coming forth from the mire of iniquity, dare to croak before the Lord of Majesty. What am I but dust and ashes, that I should take upon me to speak to my Lord?

5. I will go into Thy house, and will worship towards Thy holy Temple, and praise Thy Name. Even before the Angels will I sing to Thee.

6. Let all Thy works praise Thee, O Lord, and Thy Saints give thanks to Thee. Sing unto the Lord, all ye His Saints, and give praise to Him, for a remembrance of His holiness.

7. I desire exceedingly to praise Thee, O Lord, my God, and to do honour to Thy Name, for Thou hast said that the sacrifice of praise shall honour Thee.

8. Receive, O Lord, my praise, the sacrifice of my lips, and since I am a man of unclean lips, send Thy Angel with a coal of fire to cleanse my mouth, that so I may worthily show forth Thy praise.

9. Give light, O Lord, to my heart, that I may understand the words I utter with my mouth. Lift up my mind and thoughts, that they may be filled with Thee alone. Purify my affections and inflame my will, that I may love and desire Thee alone.

10. I desire to praise Thee, O my Jesus, make up for me that which I am unable to do.

AFTER OFFICE.

THANKS be to Thee, O Lord God, that Thou hast vouchsafed to hear my unworthy prayers, and to receive from my hand, the sacrifice of praise.

2. Whence is this to me that I should find grace

in Thy sight? Thou hast comforted me, O my Lord, and hast given me boldness to pray to Thee.

3. Forgive me, O Lord, according to the greatness of Thy mercy, whatever sin I may have wilfully or unknowingly committed in this Thy service, and be pleased to receive the supplication of Thy servant into the presence of Thy Majesty.

4. Remember how frail I am, O God, and forgive my wandering. Have mercy on me, and all for whom I have prayed.

5. Receive, gracious Jesus, into Thy most loving Heart the service of my homage. Join my prayers with Thy own and with those of Thy Saints: Purify, complete, and perfect them. Offer them Thyself to the Father, to Thy own glory, and that of all the Saints, and let them be profitable to my salvation and the salvation of all men.

BEFORE MASS OR HOLY COMMUNION.

O LORD JESUS, in remembrance of Thy death and Passion, I offer Thee the spotless victim of Thy own sacred Body and Blood. I offer it to Thee in this Mass and in all Masses celebrated throughout the entire world.

2. Receive me, O Lord, with the offering of this spotless victim to Thy own honour, praise, and glory in union with the offering Thou didst make of Thyself on the altar of the Cross.

3. Thou hast made a remembrance of Thy marvellous works, O God of my soul. Thou hast given meat to them that fear Thee, containing in itself all delights. May this Food change me out of myself into Thee. May it break my stony heart and kindle in it the fire of Thy love.

4. Come, Lord, and tarry not ; fill my hungry soul with good things, and inebriate the thirsty soul with the chalice of Thy sweetness.

5. Thy Bread is better than all the delights of the world. I abhor them and vomit them out. Thy inebriating chalice, how goodly it is.

6. O sweetest Bread, heal the palate of my heart, that I may experience something of the delicious savour of Thy love. Heal me of every disease, that I may love no other beauty but Thine.

7. O ever shining Light, O ever burning Love, fill me with light and love, that I may not to my condemnation stand before Thine awful altar.

8. Cast me not away from Thy presence, as I draw nigh with these most sacred gifts, and turn not Thy face from me because of my great unworthiness.

9. As the hart longeth for the fountains of water, so longeth my soul after Thee, O Lord Jesus, my Saviour.

10. O sweetest manna, having within Thee the savour of all delights, and suited to each one's taste, refresh me this day, and be delightful to the dry palate of my soul.

11. Come, I beseech Thee, Eternal Wisdom, so mightily into my soul this day, that all my enemies shall fly before Thee. Burn up all my corruptions, and forgive me all my sins.

12. Thou didst come to send fire on the earth. Blessed Jesus, kindle it now in me, and fan it by Thy grace, that it may ever grow more and more.

*AT THE LIFTING-UP OF THE HOST AND
CHALICE.*

BEHOLD, O God, our protector, and look upon the face of Thy Christ.

2. I love and worship Thee with my whole heart's affection. Wash me in Thy Blood, and grant me to suffer something for the love of Thee.

3. Thou art the king of glory, O Christ, Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.

4. Most loving Jesus, by Thy Blood-shedding make me to die to the world and to live to Thee, losing myself altogether.

AFTER MASS OR COMMUNION.

THANKS be to Thee, Lord Jesus, who hast vouchsafed to admit me, a most vile sinner, to the life-giving banquet of Thy table. Pardon my unworthiness, and make me one after Thine own Heart.

2. Wound my heart, O Lord, with Thy sacred Wounds; inebriate my soul with Thy Blood, that whithersoever I turn me, I may behold Thee

crucified, and that whatsoever I look on may seem tinged with Thy Blood.

3. Sanctify my soul, O Lord, and give it Thy blessing. Enter into the chamber of my heart, and abide in it for ever.

4. Look upon me, O my heavenly Father, for Thy only begotten Son crieth to Thee this day from the midst of my heart.

5. Let Thy love, blessed Jesus, pierce every fibre of my soul, and cast out from me all other love but Thine.

6. Change me altogether out of myself into Thee. Let my whole substance be so lost in Thee, that I may never find myself out of Thee again.

7. I go from Thee for a little while, O my Lord, but not without Thee. Thou art my only comfort, Thou art all my good. Grant me ever to live in Thee, to cleave continually to Thee.

BEFORE AND WHILE TAKING FOOD.

MAY I seek ever, O Lord, not the meat that perisheth, but that which endureth to life everlasting.

2. Behold, Lord, I come to table. Make me to eat with discreet and fitting moderation, not too little, lest my body fail for want, not too much lest it grow heavy, or become rebellious.

3. How many poor persons perish with hunger, whilst to me nothing is wanting, Thanks be to my

God, who hath fed me from my youth up until now.

4. How sweet art Thou, O Lord, to the soul that seeketh Thee. Would that nothing had any savour or sweetness to me but Thou alone! Thou art my meat, and a most sweet drink to me. Thou art all my delight.

5. O that the worst part of this food may fall to my share. I do not deserve even that. I am not worthy of the food of rational creatures, or of the children's bread, for I am become like the brute beasts by reason of the multitude of my offences against Thee.

6. Make me, O Lord, ever to hunger and thirst after justice. My soul thirsteth after Thee, O God, for with Thee is the well of life.

7. How sweet are Thy words unto my throat, yea sweeter than honey to my mouth.

8. When I was hungry they gave me gall to eat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

9. Grant me, O Lord, the food of heaven for my refreshment as Thou providest me with the food of earth.

AFTER THE REPAST.

GLORY be to Thee, my God, who hast refreshed my body with necessary meat and drink; make me to abound in every good word and work.

2. Every morsel I have eaten, and every drop I have drunk I offer to Thy eternal praise. O my

God, receive it in union with that praise, which Thy Son, when taking food on earth, rendered to Thee His Father in heaven.

3. My God, I have not been temperate enough this day. Be merciful to me. Grant me in future to overcome my appetite. Let me never be a slave to gluttonous desires.

BEFORE ANY WORK.

LORD JESUS, I undertake this work for Thy glory and my own salvation, I take it in hand to please Thee.

2. Give me wisdom that sitteth by Thy throne, that she may be with me, and work with me, that I may know what is acceptable before Thee at all times.

3. Give me, O Lord, a discerning spirit, that I may distinguish true from false, and may know how to refuse the evil and choose the good.

4. Give me grace ever to propose a good end in all I do, and to foresee all accidents that may fall out.

5. Assist, direct, and fashion me according to Thy good pleasure. I undertake this for Thee because without Thee I can do nothing and am nothing.

AFTER ANY WORK.

O LORD Jesus, I commend to Thee the work that I have done. Amend it and perfect it. I offer it to Thee in union with Thy own works.

2. If, O Lord, I have by Thy grace ever done what was pleasing in Thy sight, I rejoice in it. I confirm it and would do it again.

3. Whatever I have neglected to offer to Thee of all I ever did I now desire to make up for it. All things would I give to Thee with the love of the Saints and Angels in heaven.

ON GOING OUT OF A ROOM OR HOUSE.

SHEW me Thy ways, O Lord, and teach me Thy paths. Perfect my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.

2. O how many lame persons and sick there are, who cannot walk. I thank Thee, O God, for the use of a sound body, and for the health Thou hast given me.

3. I will follow Thee, O Lord, whithersoever Thou goest, for Thou hast the words of eternal life.

ON RETURNING.

OPEN to me the gates of righteousness. I will enter into them and will praise the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord, the righteous shall enter into it.

2. This is my rest for ever and ever, here will I dwell, for I have chosen it.

3. I had rather be the least in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the ungodly.

AT THE SOUND OF THE CLOCK.

BLESSED be the hour at which our Lord Jesus Christ was pleased to take flesh, and the hour when He willed to die for our salvation.

2. Look upon me, O Lord, and be merciful to me, but especially at the hour when I shall die. Make me to be then such as Thou wouldest have me be in eternity.

3. O my God, exceedingly worthy of all my love, how little have I loved Thee up till now. I said, "Now I have begun." Give me what Thou commandest and command me what Thou wilt.

4. I am sorry for all the hours, O Lord, which I have spent unprofitably. O that I could recall the past time, that I might employ it in all that would please Thee.

5. Another hour is gone, O my God, and I feel in me no increase of love. By a sevenfold heat let me make up for the time that is past.

6. How great is Thy mercy, O Lord, in that Thou hast suffered me up to this hour. Thanks be to Thee. I grieve that I am so ungrateful.

7. I offer Thee, O eternal Father, all the thoughts, words, and actions of the coming hour. May I pass it profitably, and for Thy greater glory,

IN TIMES OF SORROW OR TROUBLE.

MY Beloved is a bundle of myrrh to me. He shall abide between my breasts all night. Increase, O Lord, my pains and afflictions, if only Thou increase my patience. Cut and burn me in this life, if Thou wilt spare me in the life to come.

2. Remember, O Lord, that I am but weak, and say to the Angel that smiteth, "Let thine hand cease." Nevertheless not my will but Thine be done.

3. O my bleeding Jesus, Thou art my refuge in the troubles which surround me. Deliver me from them that come about me, O my strong helper.

4. If Thou wilt, give me pains, O Lord, without any comfort. I willingly take them for Thy sake. I will all or nothing as Thou pleasest.

5. It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me. For Thy sake have I suffered reproof, shame hath covered my face.

6. I give Thee thanks that Thou hast fulfilled Thy Will in me, which from everlasting Thou didst will. What I suffer I present to Thee for Thy glory, in union with the Passion of my Saviour.

7. I am Thine, O Lord. Thou knowest what is expedient for me. I offer myself to receive whatever Thou pleasest.

8. I thank Thee, O Lord, that Thou chastisest us justly, even when we will it not, that, by the sufferings of the outward man, Thou mayest purify the hidden man of the heart.

9. O my Love, I desire to suffer this pain to accomplish the purpose for which Thou sendest it. I commit myself wholly to Thee, receiving all evils with thankfulness.

10. For Thy sake, O Lord, I am willing to endure all things. May Thy Name be blessed for ever, who hast willed that this trouble should come upon me. As it hath pleased Thee, so let it be done.

IN TIME OF PROSPERITY AND SUCCESS.

NOT unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give the praise. The honours of the world are deceitful; the comforts of this life are deceitful. I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear.

2. I am greatly consoled by what hath come to pass, blessed Lord. Nevertheless I do not wish it unless as from Thee and in Thee. I am willing to go without this comfort whenever Thou art pleased to deprive me of it.

3. I do not wish, O Lord, to have my comforts and happiness in this life. Rather afflict me now, that I may obtain mercy afterwards.

4. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, because Thou hast assisted and comforted me. I, unworthy, do not deserve any consolation or success.

5. Shine in my heart, O sovereign Truth, that I

may be vile in my own eyes, and may esteem myself unworthy of all comfort.

IN TEMPTATION.

SAVIOUR of the world, save me. Save me, Thou who hast redeemed me by Thy Cross and precious Blood. Help me, I beseech Thee, O Lord, my God.

2. Pierce my flesh with Thy fear, for I am afraid of Thy judgments.

3. Thou, O Lord, who triest me with temptation, help me that I consent not to it.

4. Stir up Thy power, O Lord, and come, and with great might succour me.

5. Give me, O my Jesus, patience and peace, lest I lose the crown that is prepared for me. Thou hast said, "In your patience ye shall possess your souls."

6. Incline my heart to Thy testimonies, O Lord, and be Thou a strong tower of defence against the face of the enemy.

7. Thou knowest how gladly I would give Thee a pure heart, O Lord. But since my vessel is unclean and full of temptations, I bring it to Thee, just as it is. Cleanse it, blessed Jesus, with Thy most holy Blood, that becoming a vessel of sanctification, it may be accepted into Thy favour.

*WHEN TEMPTED TO TAKE PLEASURE IN
CREATED THINGS THROUGH THEIR
BEAUTY OR PERFECTION.*

BEHOLD, O Lord God, these enticing things are but streamlets flowing from Thee, the true and eternal Spring of all good things. They are but drops from the boundless ocean of Thy own unspeakable goodness.

2. Turn away my eyes, lest they behold vanity, lest death come into my soul by the windows.

3. The enticements of the eyes I resist, O Lord, lest my feet should be hindered from walking in Thy ways. To Thee do I lift up mine, who dwellest above unseen, that Thou mayest pluck my feet out of the net.

4. Many and marvellous things hast Thou wrought, O Lord, my God, but Thou art beautiful in perfection above them all. When will the day come that I shall find pleasure in Thee alone?

5. Thou liest hidden here in crafty guile, O accursed Serpent, with poisoned fangs. Blessed be the goodness of my God, who hath shown to me the hidden foe, lying in ambush for my soul.

ON PASSING BEFORE OR ENTERING A CHURCH.

IS it to be thought, then, that God dwelleth upon the earth? Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, how much less this house!

2. Thou, O Lord, who hast said, "Lo I am with you all days, even unto the end of the world," hear the supplication of Thy servants, when they pray to Thee in this temple.

3. In the multitude of Thy mercies, O Lord, will I go into Thy house ; I will worship towards Thy holy temple, and confess to Thy Name.

4. O all ye Saints of God, whose relics and pictures are here, I give you my homage, and hail you with reverence. Intercede for me to my God.

5. Hail souls of the faithful, whose bodies rest here in the dust, may He who died for you give you rest eternal.

BEFORE A CRUCIFIX.

O LORD JESUS CHRIST, by that bitterness, which Thou didst endure for me on the Cross, especially when Thy soul went forth from the body, have mercy on my soul when it passeth away.

2. Take me into Thy arms, O Lord. Thou hast them wide open for me on the Cross. Protect me from the wicked one, and give me a share of Thy Cross.

3. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee, because by Thy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

IN DRYNESS.

O HEAVENLY Father, my heart is dry and cold. I offer Thee, therefore, the fervid desires and burning love of Thy Son, of the Blessed Virgin, and of all the Saints.

BEFORE SPEAKING.

JESUS, Son of God, who was silent before Pilate and Herod, keep my tongue, till I think how and what to speak. Put a guard, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door before my lips.

BEFORE STUDY.

O LORD JESUS, the everlasting Wisdom of the Father, purge my soul with the fire of Thy love. Enlighten my understanding and strengthen my memory, so that I may profit in learning. Give me also in all I learn to relish and love only Thee, for whatsoever is out of Thee hath no savour for me.

*WHEN HEARING CONFESSIONS. BEFORE
EACH CONFESSION.*

HEAL, O Lord, this soul, by my ministry, which only by Thy help can keep from sin. Behold the price of Thy Blood, Thy spouse wounded by the enemy. Teach me skilfully to bring to Thee the halt and the blind, for Thy own glory. O holy Angel Guardian help me.

AT THE SIGHT OF A PLEASANT GARDEN.

ADORN my soul, O my Beloved, with the flowers of Thy virtues, the lowly violet, the rose of charity, and the chaste lily.

AT THE SIGHT OF A BEAUTIFUL HOUSE.

HOW lovely are Thy tabernacles, Thou Lord of hosts, my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. One day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, they shall praise Thee for ever and ever.

ON BEHOLDING ANYTHING BEAUTIFUL.

THOU art comely, O my Love, Thou art comely. Thou art the Fountain of all beauty. Adorn my soul with the splendours of Thy grace, for my face is become blacker than a coal, by reason of the multitude of my iniquities. Let me not abuse Thy gifts against Thee,

ON BEHOLDING SOMETHING WITHOUT BEAUTY.

THEY are become abominable like that which they loved. Take away from me, O Lord, the uncomeliness of sin.

IN RAINY WEATHER.

WATER with showers the dryness of my soul, O Lord, that it may render the fruits of good works in due season.

WHEN THERE IS MIST.

SCATTER from my soul the mists of earthly affections, and illuminate it with the beams of Thy light. Shine on me, O Son of Justice, and let my eyes be enlightened with the splendours of the Saints.

ON BEHOLDING VANITIES.

WHAT have I in heaven but Thee, and what upon earth do I desire beside Thee. Turn away mine eyes, lest they behold vanity, and quicken Thou me in Thy way.

ON HEARING VANITIES.

THE wicked have spoken vain stories, but not as Thy law.

ON OCCASIONS OF SIN.

THEY that go far from Thee shall perish, O Lord. Thou hast destroyed all them that commit fornication against Thee. It is good for me to cleave to God, and to put my trust in the Lord God.

AT THE NAME OF JESUS.

O THAT I had power to make every creature in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, to bow down and worship before Thee, thou most sweet and faithful Lover.

AT THE SIGHT OF TREES.

PRAISE the Lord ye beautiful trees and all cedars. O good Jesus, how imperfect is my service of Thee, yet I am by the running streams of Thy grace. Help me to bring forth fruit in patience,

AT THE SIGHT OF BIRDS.

BLESS the Lord, all ye fowls of heaven. Who will give me the wings as of a dove, and I will fly away and be at rest. Raise me, O Lord, from earth, that with wings of love I may fly to Thee.

AT THE SIGHT OF CATTLE.

O ALL ye beasts and cattle, praise the Name of the Lord. Grant me, O Lord, to know the dignity of my nature, that I be not like to horse and mule, which have no understanding.

AT THE SIGHT OF FIRE.

THOU hast sent fire, O Lord, upon the earth, and Thou wouldest have me buy gold fire-tried. Kindle this fire in me, that I may melt away with love.

AT THE SIGHT OF WATER.

MY soul is to Thee like the earth without water, thirsting for Thee the Fountain of life. Water my dryness, and give me tears in measure to drink.

AT THE SIGHT OF THE SKY.

O GREAT house of God, how little did I once value Thee. I am sorry, O Lord. Make me now to be steadfast in Thy service. O ye heavens, praise ye the Lord. When will ye open to me, that I may find Him whom my soul loveth.

ON OTHER OCCASIONS.

FROM every possible occurrence the disciple of Christian perfection may take occasion to make devout aspirations. For to give a few more instances besides those named in the above prayers: Supposing you meet an unbeliever, pray for him, and make an act of faith. If there meet you one that is lame, blind, or has any disease, pity him and give thanks to God, because you are healthy and sound of limb. If you pass a hospital, pray the Lord to give those there patience and consolation. When you read, hear, or see anything to the praise of God, rejoice at it far more than for your own praise. When you see any one sinning, or blaspheming, be sad in spirit, and pray to God for him. If you have an anxious desire to please men, remember that men-pleasers are not the servants of Christ, and wish rather to please God only. When you remember any sin, make an act of contrition. If you hear music or a concert, pray God with Saint Cecilia that your heart may be spotless; make melody to God in your heart, and sigh for the songs

of the Angels. If you see the pomp of the world and the pride of men, abhor it, and say, "Vanity of vanities : all is vanity." When you see a judge, prince, or prelate, have a fear of the Divine judgments, and pray for them ; protest also your desire to obey. On entering a town or city, pay homage to the Guardian Saints and Angels of it, whose shrines or relics are there. Pray also for the inhabitants. If you meet with a statue of any Saint or Angel, ask for their help, by doing reverence to them. If you see a picture of an Evangelist or Doctor writing, pray thus, "Write my name down in the book of the afflicted, for I desire to be afflicted for God's sake ;" or say, "Enrol me amongst the holy Martyrs ;" or, "Write my name in the Hearts of Jesus and of Mary, that They may never forget the wants of my poor soul." If the rainbow is to be seen, bless Him that made it, and pray for peace. If you see the fields being cultivated, consider with what diligence you ought to cultivate your soul ; and ask for the fruits of the earth. If you see persons doing good actions, rejoice, and desire to have a share in the work, praying for your own and their perseverance. Custom and inspiration will suggest aspirations in plenty.

*AT THE LIGHTING OF CANDLES IN THE
EVENING.*

MAY Thy truth, O Lord, ever enlighten us, and keep our souls from corruption.

2. O Lord, before whom nothing is dark, but the

night is clear as the day, send Thy light into our hearts, that we may never go astray from the right path.

3. I beseech Thee, the true Light, and Author of light, to scatter the darkness of my corruptions, and to make me shine with the light of good works.

4. Come heavenly Love, and with Thy beaming torch dispel the darkness of my ignorance.

5. O Love, the bloom and brightness of every virtue, shed forth the glory of Thy rays in the house of my heart, that in Thy light I may see light.

BEFORE RETIRING TO REST.

GRANT me, Blessed Jesus, to repose upon Thy breast. Let me draw each breath, as it were, from Thy most sweet Heart. Breathe Thou with Thy Spirit into my soul, and, absorb it into Thyself, so as to be inseparably united to Thee.

2. Abide with me, O Lord, this night, close by my side, that when my body is asleep, my mind may be wakeful, thinking of Thy Presence.

3. O God, who hast made both my soul and body, regard me with a merciful eye, lest I be wrapt up in the darkness of sin.

4. Moderate that sleep, O Lord, which I take, by Thy Will, for the relief of the body. Give me a wakeful mind, and let not the heaviness of sleep press down my thoughts.

5. May every breath I draw this night be as an act of praise, in Thy honour, O Lord.

6. Into Thy hands I commend my spirit ; Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth.

7. Come, Divine Love of God, let my dreams be of Thee. Let my heart go to sleep in Thee. In Thee alone let me find rest, now and for ever. Amen.





CHAPTER XX.

Of the Love of God. What Love is. Its Origin, Prerogatives, and Properties. By what Persons its Nature is described. God can be Loved more easily than He can be Known.

I HAVE now completed, as far as my poor abilities have allowed me, the work I promised. It seems suitable to say a few closing words on the Love of God. For the mystical way, whose paths are a short route to God, as I have already taught, begins from love, and ends in love. Love is a delight in something good, or a propension of the appetite to what is good. It is the primary motion of the will. All the other affections have love for their root and primary source. They all spring from it,—it springs from none. So says the Philosopher Phædrus. The Abbot William calls it a vehement, well-ordered, will. It is a certain propension of the soul, which, by its own weight, carries it to its end. “My love is my weight. It

is love which carries me there, wheresoever it be that I am carried." It is the connecting chain, which binds all things together, by an unspeakable friendship, a union indissoluble. Saint Denys, the Areopagite, quotes this expression from the hymns of Hierotheus. It is an everlasting circle without beginning or end, proceeding from good and ending in good. It is exercised for the sake of good. It never declines from this path of good, whether it go forth, or return, or abide. Whatever is contained in the Sacred Scriptures or in the books of the Saints, is either love itself, or something to do with love.

2. If you seek the source of love, I shall not send you to the Symposium of Plato, or the learned fables of the Poets. We have a better grounded teaching from Him who said, "*God is love. He that abideth in love, abideth in God and God in him.*" Love was in the pure and sovereign God from everlasting, like a fire ever burning, enkindling all things, and changing them into itself. God Himself, from beholding His own infinite beauty and excellence, has for Himself an infinite love, and with the same infinite love He loves also His only-begotten Son. The Son also loves the Father with a love worthy of Him, that is, with an infinite love. This mutual love of the Father and the Son is the Holy Ghost, eternal, immense, co-equal with the Father and the Son, proceeding from God, yet remaining in God. From God all love flows, as the rays of light from

the sun. By reason of His endless goodness He extends Himself, and stoops to his creatures, according to the desert and capacity of each. He brings them all back to Himself. For as we came forth from God, and came into this world, receiving from Him our existence, so ought we to leave the world again, and return to God. No word is there capable of unfolding the dignity of love, nor even of giving a faint idea of it. For uncreated love is God, ineffable, incomprehensible, of whose greatness there is no end. Created love is the highest gift of God, the most noble gift. This love is inexplicable, has no bound or measure, for as Saint Bernard sweetly says, "The measure of loving God is to love Him without measure."

3. But if we would endeavour to learn something of Love's nature from its effects, and the greatness of its power, we shall find that we have entered the torrent described by Ezekiel, which cannot be passed over. Gerson, on the Canticles, describes with divine transports fifty proprieties of Love. At this point he stopped short, being himself so wounded with the arrows of Love that he died. He went to Paradise, there to learn how imperfectly after all he had written when on earth of Love. And how shall I, but an inexperienced scholar in Love, dare to give the story of its prerogatives. "How," says Richard of Saint Victor, "shall that man speak of Love who loves not, who feels not Love's vehemence? Other things may be gathered out of books,

but Love must be learned within the soul, or not at all." I will, however, relate, with stammering lips, what Love works with eminent lovers. Love is a participation of God. It takes up its rest in His beauty and goodness as its moving cause. Love makes God stoop to His creatures, being of a nature to spread itself, and in its turn it draws them up to the good and the beautiful. His Love is simple, yet multiple, equal yet unequal. For any act of God must be perfectly simple, though it extend itself to an indefinite number of things. Love makes those who possess it like to God. It unites them to Him inseparably, and by an admirable transformation into God, makes them partakers of the Divine Nature. Love seeks for what is like itself, or what is unlike makes to be like. He who loves abides in God, and God in him. Plato has said of earthly Love, that it is a flame, which in the person who loves would die, but which finds its fuel in that of another. Saint Denys ascribes the same property to divine Love in the soul. "Lovers," he says, "are not their own, for Love makes them go out of their lives into another." Love it is which gives all counsels. It is the teacher of all sciences, the worker, matter, beginning and end of all virtues. Love burns yet refreshes, exalts and brings low, wounds and heals, kills and makes alive, prescribes laws, itself without law. It ordains to things their measure, but has no measure itself. It is the end of all things, itself endless. It snatches at all things, yet robs no one.

It is lord of all things, and subject to all.—Is ever at rest, yet never idle. It fails not in adversity, for it is never overcome. It does not retaliate, for it feels no wrong. Death does not terrify it, for it is stronger than death. Love seeks not out the reason of its existence, nor for profit or recompense. It is content with itself. He who truly loves, loves because he loves. He loves in order to love, and ever recurring to Love's source, he takes thence the fuel of ever-renewed Love. Saint Augustine says of virtues that they are nothing else but manners of loving. What are faith, hope, religion, fortitude, without Love. Virtues, without this fire animating them, are but a dead carcass. If I have prophecy, and all faith, and give my body to be burned, yet have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

4. What then is more pleasant, more secure, more noble than Love? How great is its dignity and its lofty height! How magnificent its titles of excellence! Let those who have had experience of Love tell us its nature:—nothing like it, nothing to which it can yield; full of fire, ever in motion, ever in action, zealous, busy, never-ceasing, all-powerful. Let lovers tell us the causes of Love, its order, its effects, its activities, its degrees, its laws; its beginning, its progress, and its end. Conscious how unskilled and weak I am, I fear to tread near such majesty. I have no hopes of success. I leave this task to such eminent men as Saint Bernard, in his *Treatise of the Love of God*, and

Richard of Saint Victor in his *Degrees of Love*. Harphius also should be read in the end of his *Mystical Theology*. Of more recent authors let me name Didocus Stella, James Salian, Antony Gaudier, Lawrence of Paris, a Capuchin, Louis of Granada, Christopher Fonseque, John Calaguritan the Carmelite, and others, who have left learned writings about the Love of God, and the art of love. I will add also Saint Francis of Sales, who is above all praise. His twelve books on this matter mingle excellently the profitable and the sweet. Nor are there wanting holy women, who have treated of the philosophy of Love in a manner far beyond ordinary capacities. Such are the Saints Theresa, Gertrude, Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, the three Catherines of Siena, Genoa, and Bononin. From these a fuller knowledge concerning Love may be obtained.

5. He will learn to love God who frequently makes aspirations. With pious aspirations the fire of love is kindled, fed, and becomes like a blazing furnace. I said above that the scholastic way of meditations is long and difficult; this mystical way is short and pleasant, for it is much easier to love God than to know Him. Richard of Saint Victor, says, that "The pious knocking at the door finds an easier ingress to God than cunning research. He knocks, who loves and prays, and to him who knocks it shall be opened." The Angelic Doctor agrees with this, when he confesses that in this

life we love God more than we know Him, for more is required for perfect knowledge than for perfect love. For perfect love it is enough that the thing be loved in so far as it is apprehended ; but for perfect knowledge, we must have an exact acquaintance with the thing, in all its parts, properties, and virtues. This remark is proved to be true by the fact that with a very imperfect and confused knowledge of a science men love it, and their love of it urges them by study to obtain a more perfect knowledge of it. The Abbot of Vercelle and Saint Bonaventure, who quotes him, subscribe to the same doctrine. Saint Augustine, it is true, says, " We cannot love what we do not know." Nor can we, indeed, love things entirely unknown to us. " But love," as Saint Gregory says, " is knowledge," and in this way ought that saying of the Mystics to be understood. *The will enters where the understanding stands without* : namely, that the measure of love exceeds that of knowledge. A very slight and obscure knowledge of God is enough to kindle in the will a burning furnace of Love. And it is for this reason that it is said that Love is said to be able to penetrate to where the understanding cannot enter.

I do not raise the dispute as to whether God can by His absolute power make the will to love before the intellect has understood at all the thing loved. Some hold that He can. I rather say that man can no more love an unknown thing than he

can paint a picture upon nothing. The nature of the will is such that it requires the torch of knowledge to show it what is desirable. However, enough has been now said to show the folly of seeking knowledge rather than love. Whilst we are in this mortal body, we can love God far more than we can express or conceive. Thus loving we labour less and advance more. We also give a more pleasing homage to God. Yet, alas, some would rather be always seeking and never finding by knowledge, what if they only loved, they might have possession of. Knowledge is good, but love is much better. Knowledge profits, but love is still more profitable. Knowledge without love puffs up and profits nothing. Whereas love without knowledge avails for salvation. Man may have knowledge without love. But he who loves, though destitute of literary acquirements, has yet a learning far deeper than human wisdom can teach, for he has within him the Master "that teacheth man knowledge."

Excellently does the Friar Minor Roger, a contemplative man, quoted by Alvarus Pelagius, say: "What will be your lot, think you, if in the very sanctuary of your soul God be intimately present? To what brightness of glory will you not be led, out of the gloom of darkness in which you are seated. Oh, if you only penetrated by the gaze of contemplation into the hidden and secret things of the depths of the Godhead: if your eyes were gladdened

with those bright illuminations, those beaming splendours, those rays of simple, purest light, those lightning flashes of vivid brightness ; if you only tasted those delights of peace, those delicious and most delicious sweets ; and had possession of the things that pass all knowledge and conception, but which the Spirit teaches by experience ! O man, if you had felt these things, even as much as I have, the present darkness of your life would be utterly burdensome to you. O, my God ! when will it be ? Shall I then behold Thee ? When, when, O when ? O this delay, this terrible tarrying ! Ah, my God ! what am I to Thee, or Thou to me ? But what art Thou not to me ? These are silent speeches. They do not go forth from the silence elsewhere, and on this very account God can be found by their means. But would you experience these things, know then that no one can enter into God but he must first have gone forth from himself. He must enter before he loses himself there. He must lose himself before he can pass on. He must pass on before he can lay hold of God. He must lay hold of Him before he can be changed into Him. He must be transformed into Him before he can contemplate Him. Nor can a man advance into that Love, unless he penetrate far, far within, or find the stillness of that blessed silence, unless he know well that happy Love."

These are Roger's words, and blessed is the man that can so feelingly speak, that thus loves and is

affected. Verily of divine Love that is true which was formerly said of Wisdom, "All good things came to me together with her;" for Love is the well-spring and source of all good. Who, then, shall separate me from Love? Shall tribulation, or distress, or hunger, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword, or persecution? I will say boldly with the Apostle that I am certain, with a sure hope in the Lord, that no creature can separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord; to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, in heaven and in earth, now and world without end. Amen.

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