

UPLIFTINGS OF THE SOUL TO ITS GOD.

BY
NAPOLEON ROUSSEL, PASTEUR.

— R

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

WITH A PREFACE
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PREFACE.

IN a day of much Christian activity on the one hand, and many strong delusions on the other, it is especially needful that the disciples of our blessed Lord should, as frequently as possible, shut their door about them, and not only pour out their petitions to their heavenly Father, but “commune with their own heart and be still.”

To assist them in this work, by suggesting thoughts for self-examination and prayer, the following Translation of the experience of a French Pastor, made chiefly during the leisure hours of an invalid daughter, is published.

Differences of circumstance and modes of thought may occasionally strike the English reader, but the communion of saints is a living reality to those who enjoy it; and it is hoped that many may find, to their

comfort, in the use of this Manual, that, "as in water face answereth to face, so does the heart of man to man."

These Meditations have been read by my venerable father-in-law, Dr Marsh, who has truly appreciated their devotional spirit and character.

FREDK. CHALMERS, B.D.

BECKENHAM RECTORY,
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UPLIFTINGS OF THE SOUL UNTO GOD.

I.

HAVE I EVER PRAYED?

DO I indeed say to myself that Thou, Lord, hearest me whenever I pray unto Thee? Is not that which I call prayer rather a self-contemplation? If I beheld Thee with my bodily eyes, should I address unto Thee the same words which I employ whilst I contemplate Thee with my spiritual vision only? Then, are my prayers a reality? If not, I may well understand why Thou regardest them not. If I really communed with Thee by prayer, wouldst Thou not hear and answer—Thou, the Creator of the universe, the Father of Jesus Christ—my Father? I see why I am permitted to continue in sin; and I feel that, instead of pitying, I ought to blame myself. For Thou who hast made others holy, wouldst Thou not sanctify me? Ah! I have been wont to address Thee, to discourse, to meditate, but not to pray. Am I even now praying? My heart is cold. I am unmoved.

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Is not this sufficient testimony against the fervour of my words? My heart is so crooked that I cannot penetrate to its depths. I know too well that often when I would pray unto Thee, I pray not. I have need of Thy Spirit's help, for I know, O Lord, that the "groanings which cannot be uttered" are worth more than all my expressions. Oh, enable me to realise Thy presence in my heart! and may I shew forth Thy work in my sanctification! And now I cease; but I dare not yet say that I have prayed unto Thee!



II.

OH, THAT I COULD SEE THEE, LORD!

QUHY, why need there be, as it were, an impenetrable veil between mine eyes and my Lord? Why may I not look straight up from earth into heaven? How happy should I be if I could even but once see and hear Thee! Yet Thou hast not so willed. I am left to seek Thee in Thy works and in Thy Word! The "still small voice" of Thy Spirit speaks to my heart from Thee; but I hear Him not until the tumult of sinful passions is hushed. Perhaps herein is the reason that Thou withholdest Thyself from my sight. Wouldst Thou that I should thus be led to calm these tumultuous passions which

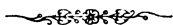
would rob me of Thy voice? Wouldst Thou not lead me on, by sanctification, to a more lively faith and to a more spiritual apprehension of Thyself? Yes! Thy Holy Word declares that Thou art neither in the whirlwind nor in the fire, but in the "still small voice." It is therein that I must seek Thee. It is there that I have found Thee! Thou comest not in splendour,—Jesus came not so,—but Thou art found of them that seek Thee. Meanwhile I would find Thee without seeking Thee; or, I would seek Thee where Thou art not to be found. I would hear Thy voice with the outward ear—but Thou speakest to the heart. I would see Thee with mine eyes; I would touch Thee with my hand; but Thou wilt manifest Thyself only to the more refined and less earthly conscience. Thy ways are not as my ways; Thy ways are wisdom. If, instead of questioning Thy dealings, I would seek to know Thee, I should not want light to dispel my darkness. O Lord, forgive and sanctify me, that I may see light! Grant me to find the truth of Jesus' word—"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." I thank, Thee, Lord, for having brought within my reach the source of this knowledge, and that Thou hast an unfailing supply for all who will follow after holiness! And now, Lord, I would fain seek Thee in the time to come, even as I go about doing good! Do Thou sustain this desire, and strengthen me to carry it out!

III.

ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL.

HOW is it that I, who believe in Thee, in Thy Son, in Thy gospel, can yet fear to speak of that gospel before an unbelieving and scornful world? Am I, then, more jealous of approbation than I am for Thy glory? Would I rather that the ungodly should fall under condemnation, than see a smile on his lips at the sound of my words? If my faith is real, surely my vanity must be still more so! The thought overpowers me. But if I have not faith, why should I flatter myself with vain hopes? Why feed myself upon that which I would disdain to throw to others? My heart is indeed an abyss. Vainly I seek to fathom it! Well did Paul know the shame which is natural to our evil hearts when he exclaimed, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." I can understand why Jesus should say, "He that denieth me before men, him will I deny before my Father." He knew the force of the temptation to deny Him before men. He has pronounced the warning to arrest the fall; and yet, notwithstanding, I have yielded. Well were it if I could be at all times honest with myself. But I am so prone to forge excuses for myself, I sometimes satisfy myself that my words would be lost upon the unbelieving. I say to myself, "Cast not your pearls

before swine." Thus, in order to maintain a good opinion of myself, even in the act of sinning, I am ready to condemn others. Oh that henceforth I may be so ashamed of my cowardice, that I may never have cause to be ashamed of it when time is over! Speak Thou to my conscience—open Thou my lips! May I be ready to confess Thee even before blasphemers, leaving Thee to vindicate Thine own glory! May I never fear to speak of Thee before those who have cause to fear for themselves.



IV.

ON THE LOSS OF TIME.



ANOTHER day flown! A day withdrawn from my life—a day less remains of time, which is so short! A day nearer to death and judgment. Perhaps another day lost for eternity! For what have I done this day to please Thee, to promote Thy kingdom, to advance in holiness? I have well meant, what have I performed? I have promised Thee much, how much have I rendered Thee? So many resolves, so many omissions! It would seem as if to desire were to accomplish; and as if it were enough to offer good intentions unto Thee. Then I rest satisfied with good intentions instead of doing even a little for

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Thee. Have not my arrangements for the best use of time invariably come to naught by the force of circumstances, or indolence? I say, "To-morrow;" but the morrow shews me the folly of delay! It surprises me, and finds me still inactive, or having accomplished the evil or the useless, and having still left undone the good! Meanwhile, that Day without an end—with no to-morrow—approaches. The sun of death may rise for me at any moment. At any hour I may find myself trembling at the foot of His tribunal. Should I, then, make plans for the morrow? When there shall be no more time, and when the eternal Sabbath has begun, shall I be able then to do what to-day I leave undone? O Lord, with whom a thousand years are as one day, give me to prize the time, which I otherwise shall lose. Not a thousand years, perhaps not a thousand days, have I to live! I would be like Jesus, remembering that if there are twelve hours in the day, the "night cometh wherein no man can work." Oh, that henceforth my every hour may be well employed! and that I may never cease from working for Thee below until I rest with Thee above!



V.

PROSPERITY.

HOW gracious Thou art unto me, Lord, and how ungrateful I am unto Thee! I have health, whilst many suffer; I have bread, whilst many hunger. Thou givest me relatives and affectionate friends, while many are desolate, widows, and orphans! Meanwhile, whereby have I merited all these Thy favours? How have I obtained Thy benefits? What have I done more than the sick, the poor, and the orphan, that I am not as they, or they as I? Moreover, I receive Thy signal mercies as matters of course, as if Thou hadst owed them to me. If but a little cloud intercepts the bright sunshine of Thy favour, I murmur as if I were deprived of what belonged to me. Well it is if my complaints are not even against Thee. If Thou restorest the serenity of my life, my murmuring subsides; but my ungrateful heart feels not as if it owed Thee any acknowledgment. Thy protection I receive as if it were a just reward. Thus I render to myself the applause due unto Thee. Art Thou unjust in loading me with benefits? Art Thou severe toward the sick, the poor, and the orphan? Ah no! for Thou blessest, and provest by suffering as well as by prosperity. And the very grief, the wretchedness, the desolation from which I shrink, may perhaps

become needful to soften my heart, to augment my prayers, to obtain for me that which is even better than aught that I now possess. If Thou withholdest substance, it is in order to give me the Spirit ; if Thou takest from me the earthly, it is to bestow on me the heavenly. Is it possible that my very prosperity is designed by Thee to try me ? Is it sent to prove how far I can carry my ingratitude, my sloth, my disobedience ? O Lord, this thought overwhelms me. Methinks it is just, and that it comes from Thee ! It may be Thy first warning. Enable me to profit hereby. Suffer not my heart to be hardened by the abundance of those gifts which ought to draw that heart to Thee !



VI.

ETERNITY.

ETERNITY ! Eternal life, this is what I need. A thousand ages on the throne of the universe would not suffice to fill my desires. I would not give in exchange my simple hope of immortality. That which has an end satisfies me not. I would not die ; and I feel that the very strength of my will is a revelation from Thee, O my Creator ! Wouldst Thou deceive me ? Impossible ! I must live ; I shall live through endless ages ! But is

not this desire deeply graven in my soul ; likewise in the soul of each fellow-creature ? Why, then, do they speak of it so rarely ; and why live they as if there were nothing after death ? Alas, like myself, they think, but they speak not of it. They long for eternity, and live as if they believed in annihilation. Judging from my words and actions, may they not likewise have questioned whether I believed in eternity ? Doubtless ; and I promote that very silence of which I complain. If I did but speak and act as in Thy sight, O Lord ! others would respond, and we should be mutually confirmed in our hopes. How often I have reproached my own silence ! When, on the contrary, I have given utterance to some religious thoughts, how often I have found another, where I supposed that naught but a frightful void existed. Yet, again have I closed my mouth ; I have called for no reply ; and even now I am surprised that signs of faith are so rare upon earth : whereas, instead of marvelling, I ought to stand self-accused. Yes ; others like myself are unhappy, and they hope for a better life. They, too, sigh for pardon. They strive against sin. In them, too, an inner life is struggling, and it witnesses to that eternity for which I yearn. Thanks be unto Thee, Lord, for these rays of light ! Give me to absorb them. Open mine eyes that the light may pervade my spirit ! May a mighty faith unseal my tongue, so that I may speak to all about eternity !

VII.

ON TEMPTATION.

HOW terrible is temptation, presenting itself at all times, in all places, under every form ; assailing me amid the holiest employments, even when on my knees before Thee. I drive it away ; it returns. Again I resist it ; it continually returns ; until, perpetually haunted by some image, at once Satanic and enticing, I fall, and am crushed in its iron grasp. Oh, in Thy pity, deliver me from temptation ! May my heart be so filled with Thy love, my life with Thy works, my thoughts with things divine, that there may be no room left for so much as a suggestion of evil ! How many times already have I resolved to shut up my soul at the first breath of pollution which should come from without. Nevertheless, temptation has almost invariably prevailed with me. The very same which has appeared so weak at a distance is irresistible when it draws near. In vain I parley with self—in vain I disapprove—in vain I would fly it ; for it clings to me still. Oh, come to my rescue, Lord ! Defend Thou me. Grant unto me that strength which upheld Jesus in the wilderness, even Thine own strength. Set Thy Word as the barrier between my soul and the tempter. Henceforth may Thy promises or Thy warnings come to my aid under each attack from the evil one. Give me to consider

into what misery Satan would draw me, and enable me at the same time to meditate on the joys of heaven ; then shall I be arrested on the slippery steps of temptation. Ah ! if it were needful, Lord, I would even suffer in the eyes of men, so that by any means I might be saved. But oh, in Thy mercy, keep me from doing the evil which I disapprove, and from yielding to Satan's wiles, when, at the same time, I stand self-condemned !

VIII.

WHERE IS HEAVEN ?

I WOULD fain carry my view into heaven, whither Thou, Lord, art gone before me. I would, at least, conceive something of the joys which Thou hast in store for me. Meanwhile, I find it difficult to picture the abode of the blessed, and to imagine the employment of eternity. Imagination pictures infinite space perpetually illumed by the sunshine of Thy presence. By faith I listen to the harmony of praise which proceeds from thousands of angels and of seraphim. But I cannot retain the realisation. It escapes me, as a bright dream fades at the dawn of day. Is not this because I am earthly-minded, prone to seek Thee where Thou art not to be found ? Must it not be that these joys which Thou reservest for me are so

entirely spiritual and holy that they can only be apprehended by the Spirit? Ah, yes! Thy Spirit tells me that it is from the new nature which He creates that I can discover the character of eternal happiness. Moreover, has not experience proved to me that it is less the wonders of creation than the work of grace in myself and others, which hath called forth in me salutary reflections? Ah, yes! the peace which nothing can destroy—the lively charity which feeds on self-sacrifice—the zeal which accepts shame as well deserved, and is thankful for the smallest mercy; behold, here are heavenly joys, herein is a foretaste of heaven. If such joys seem little worth to me, it is because I have known so little of them. If I had more faith, more love, and more humility, I should better understand that in the possession of these is felicity. Because the truth remains unchanged, my prayer must be ever the same. Give me to trust Thy goodness. Give me the love which enveloped the heart of Jesus. Give me the humility which I can imagine so well, whilst possessing so little. I am persuaded that this would be heaven; but I have need of Thy Holy Spirit to kindle this persuasion into life.



IX.

*THE HOLY SPIRIT TESTIFIES TO HIS OWN
ABSENCE OR PRESENCE IN THE HEART.*

THE life-giving influence of Thy Holy Spirit is demonstrated as well by His absence as by His presence in my heart! When I realise His presence, all is easy, all is prosperous, all is happy. Then it seems to me that I am borne in Thine arms, and as if I no longer walked in this world. Then my tongue is loosed, and my heart is at ease. My love for Thy Word is increased! Prayer is more enjoyed! Self-devotion, by nature so painful, becomes a joy and a pleasure. Then I know that it is Thy Spirit who thinks, speaks, performs for me! His gracious influence is communicated to others,—they are animated, and thus we are brought into unison. How happy are such seasons! Why do they not last for ever? For then I know that Thy Holy Spirit is within me, when I see and feel His Presence, which beareth witness to itself. Even when by my sin I have grieved that Spirit; even when Thou causest me to feel my own weakness by withdrawing His aid; even then also I am convinced of His existence! Then it is that I become cold and miserable, and incapable of thinking or doing what is good. Then, indeed, I am struck with the fact that Thy help is withheld; and that, if Thou wert altogether to forsake me, I should be nothing,

I could do nothing. Blessed be Thou, who hast so ordained it! Blessed be Thou, who dost both fill with joy, and make me feel my own emptiness! Yes! whenever I seek Thee, I find Thee; both when Thou givest and when Thou withholdest! In prosperity and in adversity, I feel the truth of Thine apostle's words, that "all things work together for good to them that love Thee." Yet it is not enough to know that Thy Spirit lives, and that I may receive it, I must furthermore have Him dwelling in me. Then I am made happy; I am sanctified, and enabled to edify others. Oh, give me, then, a large measure of His Spirit, that He may abide with me, and never leave me! And oh, grant, Lord, that I may never more leave Thee to follow sin! I know well that if Thy Spirit retires from me, it must be because I have wandered away from Thee! I know well; and I beseech therefore that Thou wilt restore my soul!



X.

ON HUMILITY.

WHEN I pray that Thou wouldst give me humility, am I sincere? Have I a real desire to be lowered in my own estimation? Ah! no; I must confess that this is not my heart's desire. On the contrary, my every effort is directed towards exalting myself in my own eyes, though

I cannot always raise myself in the eyes of others. Moreover, when I look within, I find evil even in the good which I pretend to do. My actions are marred by my motives, however fair they may appear! Yes! When I thus view myself, I am ready to despise and to abhor myself. Then I am humbled before Thee, I sigh for Thy pardon and Thy favour, I scarcely dare to lift up mine eyes unto Thee, I would hide from all observation! Then I feel that the lowest place in heaven is too good for me. I would that it were possible for me to atone for so much guilt! But this does not last! For no sooner is my prayer ended, than I turn from tears of repentance to solicit approbation from the world! Perhaps I am even irritated by human disapprobation! Ah! pity my weakness! Hear me whilst I yet pray unto Thee! Hear and answer me despite the movings of pride which will follow! Yea, Father, bring down such pride once and for ever! I would be convinced of the unhappy results of pride, that I might in the end renounce it! I would hate pride even as now I love it! I would esteem humiliation as much as now I dread it; even until I learn to find my happiness in seeking Thy glory instead of my own!—even until I am satisfied to live in the shade—working unperceived—holy, without courting attention—in short, truly humble, and thence truly happy! For the sake of Him who was “lowly in heart”—in His name, I beseech Thee, Lord, to hear Thy sinful creature!

XI.

ON DISINCLINATION FOR PRAYER.

HOW hard, at times, I find it to rise unto Thee !
I can bear to engage in tasks which are fatiguing to mind and body ; yet I must needs be constrained to pray. Duty, danger, example, these may induce me to bend the knee, but they cannot always incline my heart to pray. Why should it be thus ? Have I no need to plead ? Ah, no ! for it is the very urgency of my wants which, at times, impels my prayers. Proceeds it from any doubt on my part ? No ; for whilst neglecting to supplicate Thee, I acknowledge and deplore my error. What is it, then, which hinders me from praying ? Alas ! I fear that it is because I have no love for spiritual things. The only difficulty in asking Thee for holiness proceeds from lack of love for holiness. I so seldom rise heavenward, because I am held captive by earthly thoughts, and have difficulty in driving them away, in order that I may come to Thee. I am like a sick man, who has not courage to accept or drink the bitter but healing draught ; or like the slothful man, who prolongs his time of inaction whilst his affairs are calling for his efforts. I am worse ; for I can engage in work, I can accept bitterness more readily than betake myself to prayer. This is a heavy burden, which I dare not touch. There

is, as it were, an infernal power which seals up my lips and closes my heart. Is not this Satan himself, the enemy of my soul, who is jealous of my privileges, and maliciously watching for my ruin? Yes, doubtless; for I feel as if it were not my own unbiassed will that I follow. When I would lift up my hands unto Thee, it is as if a spiritual nightmare were crushing me, and I cannot. In vain I strive to lift up my soul, it is weighed down. But when Thou hast broken the chains of Satan, and when the fatal charm is at an end, then I feel again the influence of Thy Spirit,—I begin to pray. Then I experience that heavenly joy which nothing here below can give. Then I find happiness in prayer, from which but lately I was shrinking. Then I long to call upon Thee continually, for ever. Then I can enter into the spirit of those who cry, “Holy, holy, Lord God of hosts.” O Lord, shed upon me that which brings down all good! Teach me to pray, and fill me with peace, love, and holiness!



XII.

UNHAPPINESS IN LIVING FAR FROM GOD.


CONFESS before Thee that I have never been happy in wandering away from Thee, O Lord! I have never departed from Thee without suffering, or without finding my transgressions to be so many thorns in my flesh. Thus have I found the cost of sinful indulgence. In vain I have sought to hide from myself the evil of my desires; for no sooner have I committed the sin than I am dismayed. Even in seeking for pleasure in objects harmless in themselves, my conscience tells me that I was created for something better, and upbraids me for lost time. Yes; I have used all my skill in seeking for happiness amid what the world calls distraction and pleasure; but in vain. Worldly fortune and favour have alike failed in that they promised. I have no sooner attained them than I have discovered that they were but phantoms, and they have left me in despair. But the hopelessness of earthly things has driven me to Thee, and all is transformed. The *little* act of obedience to Thee brings its happiness. I can be happy without applause, without wealth, without glory, without aught that is of the world. Deprived of all these, if but possessing Thee, and sustained by faith, and hope, and charity, I have felt that I possessed that of which naught

could deprive me, and which surpassed all else. Oh, strengthen my faith, sanctify my life, dispose my heart to that which is good ! In all I do and all I say may I seek to please Thee ! I have cause for many regrets during my life ; but never yet have I regretted doing that which is right, at any cost ; whereas bitterness follows sin. And herein I would recognise a striking proof of the truth of Thy word, the reality of and the certainty of my hereafter. I bless Thee, then, for both the joys and the trials by which Thou invitest me to return unto Thee. Oh, keep me evermore !



XIII.

*THE SPIRIT IS WILLING, BUT THE FLESH
IS WEAK.*

HAT a trifle suffices to drag me down from high and holy thoughts and deeds ! One moment I am at ease, happy, yea, triumphant, in an atmosphere pure and holy ; the next moment I am down on earth, and in contact with sin. One harsh word, one passing contradiction has sufficed. The shock has been too much for me. I am overcome by impatience, irritability, anger ; and I live far from Thee for days, or even weeks. My recovery has been as tardy as my fall has been rapid ; and when I have arisen, it has been but to fall again. Oh that

I could retain the strength which Thou hast at times bestowed on me—that I were ready to cut off the arm or the foot which has caused me to offend! Oh, when shall I be freed from this heavy chain of sin? I am weary and worn, and well-nigh in despair, by reason of these struggles. Oh, come, and put an end to them! But Thy Word replies, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” Thou wilt not that I should be satisfied with myself, and therefore the constant struggle is permitted. When I am victorious in one point, I fail in another; and thus my life is one long conflict. Thy will be done! I would be obedient, I would be watchful over my own heart, I would be humble and distrustful of self. Strengthen, then, my faith in Thee! May I be more prayerful, and do Thou sustain me under these terrible temptations. Thus, if I fall, may it be to rise again with strength renewed! If I yield to-day, may I triumph to-morrow! Then, instead of being tempted to despair by means of frequent falls, each fresh victory will inspire fresh courage. Grant me, Lord, to profit by prosperity as well as by adversity! But, oh, suffer not success to minister to vanity! for then should I prepare myself for fresh falls. I desire ever to feel my dependence on Thee, and on Thine imparted strength. I would never forget that in Thee I live, and that when Thou withholdest the breath of life, I die. Oh, how much I need to watch against mine own self! When, then, shall I know complete deliverance in heaven?

XIV.

ON THE DESIRE OF KNOWING MORE.

OH, why are all the joys of time—the most lawful and the most delightful—why are they incapable of filling my soul? Why does a deep, an inexplicable void, lead me to yearn after that which I nowhere find? Why can I not even name this object? Why cannot I define that which is lacking? Profound mystery of my being—enigma of my life! Why may it not be discovered? Why by the eye and by the hand may it not be evidenced as a reality? Methinks it were indeed happiness to see Thy face, to hear Thy voice, to live in Thy sight. But it must needs be that, by the insufficiency of the visible world, I should be impelled to seek after the world of spirits. It must needs be that I sigh after better things, and that I walk by faith instead of by sight. Thou, who knowest better than I that which is good for me, hast so ordained it. I submit to Thy fatherly, Thy mysterious guidance. I seek Thee, nor is it always in darkness. The more I look for Thee, the better I see Thee. When I listen to conscience, I hear Thy voice. When I meditate on Jesus, I see Thine image. In proportion as I obey Thy will, I am persuaded that the gospel comes from Thee. In proportion as I approach to Thy holiness, the light of Thy truth shines on me. Oh that I

could follow Thee as Jesus followed Thee on earth! Then I could live entirely to Thee. Then no doubts would assail me. Then I should cease to exercise Thy long-suffering with my questionings. Then, being sanctified by the Truth, I should attain unto happiness. Thou hast permitted me to realise these truths already. But, alas, this is but a momentary light in the night of my life! My gladness is as the lightning flash, succeeded by the prolonged and pealing thunder of my sinful passions. Pity me, and bring me out of this stormy scene into an atmosphere of serenity! Give me the peace and joy which proceed from Thee, and which I hope to enjoy throughout eternity!



XV.

MUCH SAID, BUT LITTLE DONE.

AM dismayed when I think of the many professions I make, and of the readiness with which right feelings spring up in me and then vanish. My words and my deeds are so far apart, that I may well question whether there is any connexion between them. If my Christian feelings are real, and my words sincere, why is my life so sinful? Is my compassion, for instance, a mere exercise of sensibility? Does it exist in forms of speech? Is it exhausted by my heart and my lips before it arrives at

affecting my conduct? Have I perverted compassion into a mere luxurious feeling; into a means of stifling conscience, and of dispensing with self-denial? Ah, this comes so near to the truth, that I dare not answer my own question! Oh that I had practised a thousandth part of all I have professed! Oh that I had put into practice a ten-thousandth part of my good intentions! Then, how holy I should have become! But now, how guilty in that I have *done* so little! I am self-condemned before I have heard Thy righteous judgment. I would in future be more sober of speech. I would, in Thy strength, perform all I purpose, and be watchful for opportunities of doing that which pleaseth Thee. I would no longer be satisfied with the vain sound of words, nor with mere feelings. I would henceforth be a follower of Jesus—descending from the mount of prayer to teach in the temple, to heal the sick in the streets, to multiply bread to the poor. May I likewise go about doing good! May each of my steps leave the impress of a benefit! What though I have little to bestow of this world's good, may I be generous in examples of patience, endurance, humility, and love! May I “never weary of doing good,”—taking up each day the day's task, remembering that the morrow will bring its own! But, oh, how great is my indolence! My courage fails at the very enumeration of my duties. I almost see myself doing nothing, after all my prayers. O Lord, forbid that thus it should be!

XVI.

ON INCONSISTENCY.

WHY am I so inconsistent? How can I, with the same mouth, pray and lie unto Thee; with the same heart, love and flee from Thee; with the same hand, aid and injure? Am I, at one and the same time, good and evil? Can the fountain be at the same time both sweet and bitter? Impossible! And yet, though I would fain be as an angel, I feel there is within me a devil. I spend my life in incessant struggles, and in painful wrestlings. I belong neither to Thee nor to the world. I am ever divided in purpose; suffering and unhappy by means of my double nature, which I cannot change. Oh, deliver me from self, Lord! Give to my life the unity it needs! Take me into Thy service! Break my slavish bonds! Lead me on step by step, until I walk aright! Leave me not to myself! Expose me not to temptation; for well I know that I am prone to fall again, even after the sincerest resolves and the most ardent prayers. Satan, my adversary, awaiteth me. Perhaps, before this my prayer is ended, he will have cast a stone in my way, in the form of a distraction, to lead my thoughts far from Thee; though I remain on bended knee. Art Thou not mightier than Satan? But it is for me to be humbled, instead of complaining; and again I beseech Thee to deliver me from sin!

XVII.

WORKING FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.

TO work for Thy glory, Thou Creator of heaven and earth,—this is a grand, a blessed, a glorious work for me ! What better could I do ? Naught ; and of this I am alike convinced when I lift up my heart unto Thee, and when I view impartially the world around. To work for the glory of man I am averse. To work for my own glory is base. To work for Thy glory is enough to fill all the desires of my soul. I can be thus engaged at any time, under any circumstances, before monarchs, or beggars. I may glorify by recounting Thy favours past, and Thy daily mercies. I can promote Thy glory by comforting the afflicted, and by such a use of time and talents as shall testify to men what Thy grace can accomplish in human souls. Always and everywhere, by word or by deed,—by manifesting the love, the meekness, and the patience which Thou givest,—I may win hearts unto Thee. Whilst I pronounce with all sincerity that such work is good and glorious, I perform it not. When I would speak—when I would practise—my right feelings are quickly dissipated. Then the deep wound of sin is reopened in my heart ; the slightest contact with the world suffices to irritate it ; a straw in my path causes me to stumble. How great a contradiction, then, is my life !

How strange, that I can at the same time love Thy glory and my own ; that I can at one moment perform Thy holy will, and the next moment follow my own sinful desires ! I feel as if I were incapable of enduring more trials. Oh, come, Lord, to my succour ! Enable me to give myself to Thee ! Cause me to emerge from this slough of egotism and vanity, and to rise, by Thy Spirit's aid, into the pure region of love and my Saviour's glory ! Grant that this my prayer may be no tissue of vain words, but a living reality !



XVIII.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST.


WH that I could fix mine eyes on the living example of Thy Son ! If I could but see Him walking before me as once He walked in the streets of Jerusalem ; if I could but hear the tones of His voice divine, and behold His face, would not His example, then, do me good ? I should find there the leading cord of my uncertain life, and guidance for all difficulties. But, alas, how far am I from imitating the model I admire ! I do not even study it as revealed in the gospel. I might live in communion with Jesus,—I choose, rather to live in the society of those who are sinners like myself. I am more dis-

posed to look for a model among my fellow-creatures, than to judge myself by comparison with my Master's life. I am more prone to compare myself with the worst, in order to find excuses, than to seek the company of the holiest, in order to imitate them. When I sin, I am wont to look at those who are still more guilty. My aim is not to profit by self-humiliation, but to justify myself in remaining as I am. I am like the Pharisee regarding the publican, and saying, "I am not even as this publican." If my proud thoughts took the form of words, I should bring reproof upon myself, and be put to shame. But more often my vanity speaks to me alone, and is silent before others. In order that it may not be hindered, it flatters me in secret. Lord, if Thou leave me to myself, I shall go on adding to the evil, while believing myself to be amending! Oh, set, then, before my eyes the holy life of Jesus,—put into my heart a sincere desire to copy it; and give me grace that I may be enabled to accomplish this desire!



XIX.

ON AFFLICTIONS.

“NE depth calleth unto another ;” one affliction unto another. Yesterday, Thou chastenedst me : to-day, Thou chastenest again ; and each chastisement seemeth heavier than that which preceded it. Am I in any way provoking Thee to visit me with trials ? Alas, I fear it ! Yea, I am convinced of it. For, when retracing my life to the point of departure, I find the thread of events which called for Thy rebukes. Yes ; it is I who have prepared for myself the grief that frets me. Ah, if I had but believed Thee when Thou didst speak to my conscience ! If I had but recognised Thy forbearance and Thy long-suffering ! But, no ! Thy help has seemed but like approbation to me, and I have been preparing a rod for myself. O my God, mine eyes are opened, and I understand now Thy lesson ! Withdraw Thine hand which presseth me ; and, above all, grant me to profit by Thy corrections ! Whilst I reflect, with trembling, that Thou couldst send me yet more severe and terrible trials, may I bless Thee, who sparest me from such ! But what if I am not at the end ! What if Thou shouldst reserve for the time to come something worse than the trial of to-day ! Have pity, Lord, or how shall I endure it ? Give me to experience such a result to all

my sufferings, that, having considered Thy name in deeds of judgment, I may see it written in characters of love! Ah, Thy rebuking *is* love still! I know that Thou chastenest because Thou lovest, and I would praise Thee. Especially I would beseech Thee to support me under trial. Thou hast promised not to lay upon us more than we are able to bear. Lord, my powers of endurance are well-nigh exhausted. If Thou withdraw not the trial, strengthen me, in order that I may be enabled to say, with Thy Son in Gethsemane, "Father, thy will be done!" For I know that if Jesus died, He is risen again.

XX.

ON BEING TRUE.



MAKE me, O my God, to be simple, sincere, and true in all things! May my words and deeds be faithful impressions of my thoughts! May I neither exaggerate nor weaken the expression of them! How much sweeter life would be if we would give ourselves out to be what we are! How quickly then would confidence be established, hearts won, and spiritual joys multiplied! But, alas, each one maintains reserve! Every one has two ways of making known the same fact; and in witnessing the distrust of others, one becomes mistrustful. Evil overcomes us, and

we are astonished at having done what we detest. Lord, deliver me from this fatal contagion! Grant me the courage to be always true, the humility which is needful in order to remain perfectly simple, and the charity to be sincere even towards those whom I may thereby offend! But is it indeed the example of others which leads me to gloss over, to misconstrue, or to conceal the truth? Is it not often my own propensity? Have I naught to hide in word or deed? Am I not proud if I obtain approbation? Is there no calculation even in my sacrifices? If there is, how can I accuse my brethren of want of simplicity or veracity? Moreover, if I were to plunge deeper into the utmost recesses of my heart, perhaps I should find, in this very responsibility which I impute to others, a fresh sign of my own want of simplicity and uprightness. Like our first father, I am ready to say, "It is not I, but this woman whom Thou gavest me." Whilst, Lord, I can truly say I love sincerity, yet I herein condemn myself. For it is I who do evil, I who hide from men, I who, in a thousand ways more or less subtle, know so well how to falsify truth. Ah, Lord, if I were not too much accustomed to it, I should be more alive to this sad discovery! I should more ardently beseech Thee to eradicate the evil, and assuredly Thou wouldst heal me. Purify, then, my heart—so shall my lips be always true!



XXI.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.



GIVE Thee thanks, my God, for the communion of feeling and of thought which Thou hast established between all Thy children. Yea; it is inestimably sweet, inasmuch as it strengthens my faith and insures me friends in all ages and in all countries. I bless Thee for having put in my heart an echo which resounds to the words of Jesus, of Paul, of Peter, of John, and of all the brethren who have left behind a revelation of their thoughts. In reading their words, it seems to me that I live in them, and that they revive in me; that I know them, and that they have known me; and that already we shake hands. May I, then, find time to ponder the words of those whom Thou hast recalled unto Thyself! and grant me opportunities of hearing those who can still with living voice discourse of Thy goodness! Give me to seek in all things that which may edify—to endure what may surprise me, and to redress with gentleness what may seem to me erroneous; and grant that no bitterness may ever mar this sweet communion! But, alas, we often choose to contradict, rather than to applaud—to discuss rather than to feel! We love to carry the hatchet of dispute where we ought to pour the oil of unction, provided we can but prove

ourselves in the right. Yes ; this being, capable of enjoying the communion of saints, is the same that takes pleasure in disputing with the saints. This being, who seeks after truth and edification, is the same who, by vanity, perverts truth, and prevents edification. This contradictory being, it is I—I who ask of Thee to remove from my heart this proud susceptibility, in order that I may peacefully enjoy communion with all Christians. Alas, Lord, my worship to-day, as so often before-time, has begun with thanksgiving, and finished with a confession ! Nevertheless, I praise Thee for this ; since, in teaching me to know myself, Thou art doing me good. Discover to me, one by one, the plagues of my heart, and then come and shed therein the balm of Thy pardon, until completely healed and sanctified ! I shall have only to praise Thee in one eternal hallelujah !



XXII.

P E A C E.


SIGH for peace—spiritual peace—peace which is found by leaning on Thee, far from all the miseries, material and moral, of this lower world. I am weary of all the agitation within and around me. The things which once seemed great, now seem small to me. The whole world

excites my pity, and I pity myself. I sigh for deliverance from these passions, and this inward strife, more than for deliverance from pain and weariness. Lord, whilst awaiting peace in heaven, give me peace on earth! Peace with mankind by living in charity—peace in my conscience by shunning evil—peace and joy in my soul—peace in my soul through reading Thy Word, meditating on Thy mercies, and praying under the influence of Thy Spirit! Henceforth, may the little tempests of human passions pass over my head without harming me, until they are, at length, under my feet! May I accept without difficulty or murmuring the events of Thine appointing! May I learn to regard without astonishment the wickedness and injustice of men! Teach me to love those who have no love for me, and to pray for those that hate me. I would work still, so long as Thou leavest me on earth; but may I work calmly and peacefully! Oh, the happiness that would result from entering and continuing in this way of peace amid the tumults of the world! What happiness if I could always feel as I now do in silence and retirement! It would be heaven upon earth. Lord, grant me Thy peace—that peace which nought can disturb—which the world cannot give—which results from Thy pardon, and the assurance of Thy love.



XXIII.

THE JOYS OF DUTY FULFILLED.

HAT sweet delight is experienced from the sense of duty performed ! It seems as if Thou hadst placed the reward side by side with the cup of water which we give ; and that Thou thus encouragest us to follow Thee more closely. The good that I do, instead of wearying me, inspires me with the desire to begin again ; and if I do not persevere, it is because I allow temptation to return, and to assail me. But I confess that, whilst I have often repented of neglecting Thy will, I have never regretted its performance. Blessed be Thou, in that Thou hast made joy and sacrifice inseparable, and given by this very union a new testimony to the truth, another attraction to holiness, and an encouragement to advance continually ! Oh, that I could always remain in this sphere of thought and action—that I could always think of Thee, to obey Thee—of my fellow-men, to do them good—of my soul, to follow after holiness ! What happiness unfailling would be found in thus following, even from afar, the high example which Jesus has given ! Happiness in planning heavenly deeds—happiness in their execution—happiness in having accomplished them—happiness always in such occupations ! Yes ; now such a course seems to say to me that I might even

venture to warrant its success, if I had not so often failed after the best resolutions. Yes, I have *so* failed, that now, after this season of devotion, I am in dread of dashing, at the first step, my foot against a stone and falling. How often have I proved that, if "the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak!" Then, Lord, I would ask Thee to give me humility, distrust of self, and watchfulness each moment! Give me to feel myself in this world as in the midst of a thick forest, where, behind each tree and bush, an enemy of my soul is hidden—yea, where, behind each man, each circumstance, a temptation, a stumbling-block, or a sin is to be found! Grant me, then, to be always watchful against temptation, and always armed against evil!

XXIV.

THE REPROOFS OF CHRISTIANS.

HOW comes it, Lord, that I can accept the reproofs of Thy Word—that I can sharply accuse myself, whilst I cannot bear the slightest censure from my brethren without being wounded? How comes it that, in proportion as they are just, their observations seem harsh? How strange it is, too, that the severest reproofs wound me but little if ill-founded! nay, they are sometimes even

agreeable. Thus it is, by looking into my inmost soul and conscience, that I discover the answer to my own questions. If I make confession unto Thee, if I reproach myself, it is because sin oppresses me, and because I expect to diminish it by deploring it in Thy presence. It seems to me that, by this semblance of humility, I shall eradicate my faults. It is less the hatred of evil than the fear of its punishment that I thus deplore it. Moreover, I am more prone to make confession of the past than to seek sanctification for the future at Thy hands. This it is which makes the censures of my fellow-men painful to me. It is because they do not efface the errors of the past, and that I fear they will only be on the watch for future failures. It is not sin, but censure, that I hate. Such inconsistencies are but too apparent—all are to be explained by my own evil nature. Ah, perhaps at this very hour I am well satisfied at having made the discovery, instead of desiring to profit by it! I scarcely dare to open my lips again. I am afraid of lying even whilst I pray unto Thee. Lord, pardon! Lord, hear me! Do Thou all for me; for I can do nought but abase myself, under the sense of my own unworthiness!



XXV.

WHERE ART THOU, LORD ?

WHERE art Thou, Lord ? Truly Thy works declare Thee ; but this is not enough. I would see Thee and hear Thee Thyself.

Alas, my wish is no sooner formed than I feel the vanity of it, and I sink again under the weight of my invincible ignorance ! This weight crushes me. I can neither support nor escape it. I know that I never shall see Thee in this world, and yet the desire to see Thee is irresistible. Be Thou merciful unto me ! I have just heard Thine answer. This desire to behold Thee (never to be satisfied here below) excites the desire to see Thee in heaven. The more I thirst now, the better I can understand that Thou wilt satisfy this thirst in eternity. Then, Lord, I will patiently await that new life ; and whilst awaiting it, I will strive to become more meet for it, and less unworthy of Thee. Yea, Lord, I will now praise Thee for having obliged me to walk a while by faith, and for thus enabling me to obey without seeing Thee. Blessed be Thou for thus ennobling my thoughts ! If Thou wert now to appear, perhaps, alas, the irresistible proof of Thine appearance would but harden my heart ! Then I should yield to my eyes instead of my heart ; to my interests rather than to my feelings. Thy presence might cause me to

obey through fear. Thine absence permits me to obey with love. Yea, Lord, "it is well." I understand now, whilst yet I yearn for the sight of Thee, and cry, Where dwellest Thou? Oh, pardon me! Grant me more faith, more patience, more love! Then my life being well fulfilled, will admit of no more vain aspirations!



XXVI.

*TO THINK OF GOD, IS THIS TO LOVE
HIM?*



MY God, is this slowness of the spirit to rise toward Thee the lot of mankind in general, or is it only mine? I find in me an utter inability for prayer. When I address Thee I think, I meditate, perhaps I feel; but it is certain that I do not love Thee, or my heart is so rarely moved that I have cause to say with Thy prophet, it is dry as a desert in the heat of summer. Emotion overcomes me amid an excited crowd, or under trial, but not in solitude nor in prosperity. I can be alarmed at danger, but I scarcely know what it is to be melted by gratitude. I discuss; I do not pray. Would it not then be better to keep silence? Ah, no! for if I am insensible to Thy love, at least I feel conscious of my insensibility. I

confess it, and I ask of Thee to remove it. No ! for the shame of my coldness will never lead me to express that which I do not feel. I would rather be silent about my love to Thee than utter it insincerely. I ought indeed to love Thee. I fain would love Thee, but I cannot say that I love Thee more than all beside, O God ! If I act for Thee, it proceeds more from the need of doing than from devotion to Thee ! If I obey Thee, it is more for conscience' sake than from inclination. Furthermore, it is well when my obedience to Thee springs not from mere habit or regard to men. Are all men, then, like myself ? It seems to me almost impossible. I am prone to think that there are five righteous men in Gomorrah to insure to me Thy protection. Ah, now I understand the need of the just and holy Saviour Thou hast given me ! It is through Christ alone that Thine arm of power descends not on my head. It is in Him that Thy just indignation is appeased. It is He who blots out my sins, my coldness, my ingratitude. Without Thee, Lord Jesus, I feel that I should have been lost an hundred times over. Intercede Thou for me ! Procure for Thy poor ransomed child a little even of that love which fills Thy heart, that so I may, indeed, love Thee, who hast so loved me ! Is it now my soul or my imagination which has spoken ? Thou knowest, Lord ! I dare not decide it ; but whichever it be, I cast myself on Thy mercy, who hast already pardoned me so much.

XXVII.

*THE WORLD GLORIFIES THE CREATURE,
NOT THE CREATOR.*

IS it not wonderful that the whole world resounds with reports of man's wisdom, man's virtues, man's discoveries — yea, the very crimes of Thy creatures are dwelt upon — whilst Thy Glory remains unseen by man's discerning eyes? How is it that there are so many eulogiums upon those who remove a few shovelful of earth, and such profound silence concerning Thee who created the universe? Why this admiration for the astronomer who discovers a star, and such cold indifference towards God, who created innumerable stars out of nothing? Why is it that I can make myself so well heard in extolling a genius of Thy creating, while I so soon weary of speaking of Thee, who art the Author and Giver of genius? What strange antipathy to the Great Benefactor is this! Each morning we behold without surprise Thy sun arise, each evening thousands of stars appear; and this without one thought of Thee, who hast launched them into space. Oh, what folly, if it is not ingratitude! What stupidity, if it is not sin! Yes; sin has clouded our understanding. We see Thee not because we have no desire to see Thee. Oh, give me to see Thee face to face; to seek Thee in all Thy

works ; to see everywhere the signs of Thy power and Thy goodness ! And when I trace them, may I direct the thoughts of others unto Thee, leading them to look unto Thee through the innumerable spheres which dazzle the universe ! And when they are overpowered with the sense of Thy grandeur, give me then to shew them Thy mercy revealed in the gospel ! Oh, if I were more deeply grateful for Thy mercies, I should understand how to recall Thy name and Thy glory to those who are unmindful of them ! But, alas, I fall into the very errors with which I reproach them ! I often stand still to admire the performances of human beings, instead of mounting by them to the Source whence all men proceed. O Lord, pardon, and grant me henceforth to ascend from the creature to the Creator ; from matter to spirit ; from Christian deeds even to Thee who hast inspired them !



XXVIII.

PROSPERITY HARDENS.




CAN neither look nor think on those around me without finding among them the poor, the suffering, the ignorant ; those who are devoid of all the advantages with which I am surrounded. I am in health ; many are ill. I have

food ; many are in need of it. I know Thee ; many are ignorant of Thee. Whilst so prosperous, amid the misery of others, it seems so natural to me that I marvel not. But the idea that the case might be reversed makes me tremble. I might be in an hospital ; I might be without a shelter ; I might be the beggar. What have I done to be better off than so many worthier than myself ? Nothing. And, moreover, my prosperity has only availed to harden my heart. The reflection alarms me. What if the cup of Thy long-suffering were to be withheld, and what if Thy just indignation were poured like a stream of fire on Thy unworthy servant ? Oh, suffer me no longer to forget the appeals of Thy bounties ! May I be ready in succouring my fellow-creatures ; ready to lay out in the service of the suffering the health, the wealth, or the influence which Thou hast given me to use for Thy glory and the comfort of others ! Give me to remember that all these things are not mine ; that I am but the steward of them ; and that to withhold them would be to rob my Lord ! Yea, give me even sweeter thoughts ! May I continually remember my Saviour's words—" Inasmuch as ye have done these things unto one of these, ye have done them unto Me." Finally, my Saviour, grant me to make a generous use of such treasures which the rust corrupteth, and which will some day be withdrawn from me, in order that I may appear in Thy presence stripped of all that is not Spirit, love, and holiness !

XXIX.

THE SPIRIT'S VOID.

OTHING here below can fill up the void in my spirit. Rich in health and in friends, and furnished with all the necessities of life, I sigh still for better treasures. Family affections suffice not. Loved and caressed, as happy thus as it is possible to be, I am not satisfied. I have a thirst after the Infinite, after knowledge, after life, and even after health, without ever having the power of satisfying one of these desires. Ah, when shall I be able to quit my earthly prison-house and rise unfettered to heaven? When shall I know Thee as I am known of Thee, and love Thee as Thou lovest me? When shall I be among the angels, celebrating Thy glory and beholding Thy face in light? When shall I partake of that fulness of joy which is at Thy right hand for evermore? But, Lord, whilst waiting until Thou callest me from earth to heaven, grant me a heaven upon earth! Give me more love, more patient endurance with my fellow-men, whom I love so little; and who, if I loved them more, might contribute more to my happiness! Give me more devotion, more gentleness; and may my example be such, that they, better trained, may cause me more of Christian joy! Give me more faith, to aid me in contemplating Thy courts above; more holiness, that I may

more like Thy holy angels ! and then I shall feel myself nearer to them and to Thee, and more peaceful ; ay, more joyous in the midst of this sad and troublous world. I confess before Thee that it has not been Thy doing, but mine, in setting such narrow limits to my affections, my spiritual knowledge, my sanctification, and thus to my happiness. Thy Word, so rich in instruction, is open to me, and I read it not. Thy Holy Spirit is offered to me, but I welcome Him not. I may ask for anything and have it, yet I ask for nought excepting with my lips. Give me then, Lord, to avail myself of the streams which spring up in my path and flow at my feet before crying, "I thirst for the Infinite, for eternity !"



XXX.

ON PATIENCE.

LORD, grant me to have patience ! I would have patience in the face of events which are contrary to my inclinations, patience towards those who contradict or thwart me, patience even with those who are unjust to me. But it is not, perhaps, on great occasions that I am found wanting ; it is, alas, in the little daily details of life—towards those around me who love me, who serve me—with myself impatient because I improve not more

rapidly. How great is the folly of being provoked at the events which pass over my head, irritated with the inert matter under my feet, with anything that remains impassive to my irritated voice or hand! Furthermore, what lack of confidence towards Thee, Lord, who orderest all things! If I sought Thy will instead of mine own, should I be thus offended with what Thou permittest or hinderest? If I were truly humble, should I wonder that my fellow-mortals are wicked and sinful? Ah, no! And it is much less against injustice than against contrarieties that I rebel; whilst my wisdom consists in cloaking my impatience under Christian pretences. I am provoked in Thy name. I violate duty in the name of duty; and I expect to justify myself by proving in anger that others are in the wrong. How many miseries are comprehended in myself! I cannot lay my hand on one spot of my heart without finding there a sore. There are times when I would fain be bound hand and foot, that I might be no longer at liberty to sin. But, alas, even then my rebellious heart would silently violate all Thy commandments! Give me, then, O my Saviour, a new heart! Do with me as Thou wilt; but, oh, take from me the love of sin!



XXXI.

I WEARY OF ALL BUT THEE, LORD.

EVERYTHING wearies me, Lord, excepting Thee. All joy exhausts itself, and wearies me, excepting that which is derived from duty fulfilled. The only time which I do not regret is that time spent in obeying Thee, even in such obedience as is painful to the flesh. Yes ; I am persuaded that I am still alive to the world and to its customs ; yet I cannot abandon myself to one of its pleasures without experiencing instant regret. Holy zeal is that alone of which I never repent. Blessed be Thou, Lord, for having given me this testimony, this spiritual evidence—holiness is truth ! To obey Thee and to love Thee, this is happiness ! Ah, I have no longer any need of lengthened reflection to shew me the objects of my faith ! Experience has spoken, and I am convinced. My life, my feelings, my joys, my sorrows, all come to the support of this truth,—in Thee only is happiness. My sinful inclinations may, indeed, obscure this light again ; but, their mists dispelled, I shall see it more clearly than ever ; and on each occasion of calm reflection I shall repeat, To love Thee and to obey Thee, Lord, that is bliss ! But I know, O my God, by sad experience, that, this truth acknowledged, even amid coldness and indifference—this truth, all luminous though it

be, is yet powerless to reanimate my heart. I too often contemplate it with indifference. I disdain it, and act as if I were persuaded to the contrary. Then, I seek for happiness everywhere excepting where it is. I know beforehand that I shall not find it; and, meanwhile, I cannot abandon the vain experiment. I must needs fall, evil must needs be accomplished, remorse must needs ensue, in order that I return to the right way. Lord, it is not so much to Thee as to myself that I would complain of this. But, above all, I beseech Thee abandon me not to these perpetual vicissitudes of falling and rising again! Draw Thou me out of the abyss, and fix me immovably in the way of love and obedience to Thee!

XXXII.

ON DEATH.



HEAR them speak of illness, and of death, and I say to myself that I too must die; perhaps soon — perhaps at a time when I least expect to die. And I own that at present I scarcely think of it at all. This thought saddens me; and when it strikes me forcibly, I am overwhelmed. Why, then, am I afraid to die? Has not Thy grace blotted out all my sins? Is not heaven secured to me? Yet I confess before Thee that I still

am afraid of death. I can bear to think of the prospect of death as long as I believe it to be distant ; but as soon as I picture it at the hour, I shun it. I invent the pretexts of family and affairs. It seems to me that, if all were arranged here below, I should extricate myself with less difficulty. But have I truly no other motive than to order my affairs before I die? Is there no unbelief—no love of this mortal life, so worldly, so sinful? *Should* I depart much more willingly if my fortune were multiplied an hundredfold, my family prosperous, my affairs settled? Alas, I greatly fear not! It would be then especially that I should regret this life ; for it would have become even sweeter to me. Then I should ask Thee for the yet fifteen years added to Hezekiah's life ; and I should be at no loss in producing reasons to the end that I might obtain them of Thee. Yes ; I feel that the fear of death proceeds from unbelief. I dread suffering ; still more do I dread dissolution. I fear not Thine anger ; for I know that Thou hast pardoned me. Marvellous it is that, assured of my salvation, I should tremble at the thought of death. I believe in Thy heaven, and I have misgivings about the future. What a contradiction ! I cannot explain it to myself. But Thou, Lord, canst remove it by strengthening my faith. Give me, then, to believe, to trust myself without reserve to Thee, who hast given me all things—life, power, and being ! I know that Thou canst, for Thou hast already done it ; and, for the time, I have possessed such full

confidence in Thee, such real separation from the world, that it has seemed to me as if I would willingly depart to be with Christ. Lord, restore Thou to me that happy spiritual state, and give me to await in holy peace and joy my passage out of Time into a blessed Eternity!



XXXIII.

ON HAVING TWO WILLS.



AM, weary of myself! Weary of willing whilst unable to perform—weary of continual efforts and of failing in my best resolves. I am at times so saddened at my inability that I would fain surrender my liberty and be in Thine Almighty Power as a creature impelled instinctively to what is good, and constrained to do it. I would be single-minded—I feel that I have two minds. Annihilate this evil will, that I be no longer drawn in all directions at the same time, that I be not exhausted by these long conflicts, ere yet I have achieved anything that is good! But, alas, I feel that I am asking what is impossible! My experience of the past teaches me, that it will be the same in the time to come until this mortal body shall be raised a glorious body. But how painful is this waiting-time! Forsake me not, O Lord! Be Thou near to me! Lessen my temptations! Multi-

ply Thou my triumphs! Give me not short hours, but long days of peace spent in love and devotedness to Thee! Uphold my hands in duty, as the arms of Moses were sustained during prayer! By Thy Holy Spirit's agency may my evil thoughts be quickly subdued: and by Him, despite my slothfulness, may I be influenced by holy zeal! And if, Lord, I have been permitted to labour with success, suffer me not to mar the deed by self-praise, but keep me low in sweet and holy humility!



XXXIV.

THE CHRISTIAN'S GLORIOUS WORK.

WHAT a glorious work, O Lord, is that which Thou hast given me to do on earth! To be one with Thee in love and holiness! To work with Thee, not in the creation of worlds, but in a greater creation, the creating of happiness! Thou callest me to win souls, to build up saints, to make known life eternal, to offer heavenly happiness. What a glorious work for a pitiful creature, and how easy to accomplish! How easy to spread Thy gospel, to exhibit love, to live in peace and confidence! Oh, how comes it that my whole life is not filled with such a glorious work! How can I be taken up with other

thoughts, other aims? What folly is it to leave an atmosphere so pure, so heavenly, so full of blessedness! Ah! my folly must be explained by my weakness—I would, and I *cannot*. But thus I will pray again and again unto Thee until my power equals my desire. Oh, give to me the vigilance, the zeal, the love which sustained Thine apostles. If I cannot, like them, be employed in the conversion of a kingdom, or a town, I can at least seek to edify those around me. I can proclaim the gospel to as many as I now daily accost without a reference to it! Ah! if I but availed myself of the opportunities which Thou affordest me. If I spoke as often of Thee as of myself, or of many who are mere strangers to me, I should now have more cause for praise, and less for self-reproach. But it would seem that I expect fruit of which I have not scattered the seed, and that I would gather where I have not sown! Proud and slothful mind! O Lord, forgive and strengthen Thou me, that once for all I may devote myself to Thee, and to the advancement of Thy kingdom, both in my own heart and among my brethren!



XXXV.

ON VAIN PRAYERS.

ALAS! when about to approach Thee in prayer fear seizes me! I have so often asked Thee to change my heart, and so often remained unchanged, that, when I now entreat for renewed strength, I fear that I shall benefit no more than in times past. I fear to bring to nought Thy grace, and to incur Thine anger by the very prayer which is designed to attain Thy blessing. If I had but once in a hundred times turned to good account the aid which Thou hast imparted, or once in a hundred times followed Thy will! But no! It would almost seem that I took pleasure in confirming and aggravating by my prayers the fresh sins that I am about to commit. Thou art willing to grant my petitions—I am unwilling. After having prayed, I set myself in opposition. Better were it never to have prayed. Lord, I dare not repeat—I know not what I could say unto Thee that I have not said over and over again. Yet, since Thou art willing, and my heart prompts, I will pray to Thee, even at the risk of repeating for the thousandth time the same supplication, and expressing to Thee the need which Thou knowest better than I. Oh, that Thy Spirit may take possession of me whilst I pray—that He may remain with me when I am silent again—that He may accom-

pany me everywhere—that He may reign in my heart—that He may be my ruler, ever guiding, and never forsaking me! That He may be with me when temptation draws nigh! That He may discover to me the wiles of the evil one! That He may sustain me in the conflict, fill me with gentleness and peace, and constrain me by faith and love! May I be so surrounded by the atmosphere of holiness that henceforth it may pervade each step and action of my life!



XXXVI.

TO KNOW IS NOT TO DO.



H! if I accomplished the hundredth part of what I know to be right! But I am ever learning, and never doing. I am continually turning over the pages of Thy Word—I pray, I meditate, I read, I heap up knowledge, without thinking what use I should make of it. Which portion of Thy law is unknown to me? None. Which portions have I transgressed? All! Which promise of Thy Word have I not read over and over again? None! Which has borne witness to my ingratitude? All! To complete my shame, I glory in knowing, in discerning, and in sounding, as it were, the depths of Thy will. When I have well apprehended and well elucidated it,

I note it, and I speak of it without putting it into practice—as if to study it were to observe it! Whereas the knowing without the doing is, indeed, a just cause of condemnation. I have read in Thy Word that Thou wilt smite the son, who, having known Thy will, has not obeyed it. I have regarded this as a just threat. I have said so to others, whilst I have overlooked myself. I have deplored the hardness of heart of the unbelieving—I have not wept over myself as a believer against whom Tyre and Sidon might one day rise up in judgment. Ah, what will become of me if, after discovering the stone of offence which Satan places by the side of knowledge, I again close my eyes that I may stumble over it without alarm? Snatch me, O my Saviour, from the danger which threatens me! Again I entreat Thy pardon. Yet I know that Thou hast pardoned. Grant me to practise what I know! Shew me the vanity, the worthlessness, yea, the condemnation attaching to knowledge which is unfruitful. Henceforth I would not promise less, but I would obey Thee more. Thou hast taught me to know Christ—oh, make me to live as a Christian!



XXXVII.

ON LOST TIME.

WHAT have I done to-day, yesterday, or during the past week, which can have been of the slightest benefit to my own life or that of others? Which of all my doings has tended to further Thy kingdom? For which of my doings could I rejoice throughout eternity? For none, alas! My labours are so empty that the image of them is effaced by the waking like a dream of the night in the morning; and on the morrow nought can be recalled. If I were to note down my hourly words and deeds, I should find at the end of a month only a list of futilities fit to be destroyed. Before the time has elapsed which the poor body, worldly affairs, and a thousand nothings demand, the evening is here. I have always some arrears to settle with the world before beginning Thy work, which I often defer, and which, through months and years, I am still putting off to the morrow. What have I done hitherto? Nought. What shall I accomplish to-morrow? If I dared to reply, the too probable truth might overwhelm me,—and meanwhile eternity approaches. Oh, that it may be no longer thus! Do Thou banish from my life these parasitical occupations which devour my time! Teach me to simplify my wants, and to retain only those which are necessary,—to

renounce superfluities ! May my mind's eye be ever fixed upon the hand whose rotations mark my passing hours, that no void may be left in the days which are so short ! If I cannot perform great things, may I accomplish little things in the spirit of faith, speaking with calmness, waiting with patience, and setting an example in the minor details of life ! I know well that I can do nothing by much agitation ; that much may be effected without agitation. Grant me then, O Lord, to have a holy and patient zeal !

XXXVIII.

LORD, INCREASE MY FAITH.

IT is my faith which is deficient. I have a general but not a particular faith. I believe collectively, but not in detail. I believe that Thou controllest the universe. I doubt whether Thou watchest over my life ; and, since all men can say the same, it follows, as the result of our human wisdom, that all goes on by chance. This sole reflection shews me the folly of doubting Thy good providence over me ; and still I live in fear lest I should remain in such unbelief. Ah, if I had more faith, how much I should do that I leave undone ! How many difficulties I should surmount which now overcome me ! If I had

more faith I should work joyfully, as in Thy sight, and not mournfully, as in man's sight only. My life would then be no longer a series of projects conceived and abandoned, of works begun but unfinished—a chaos of all things, in which nothing is complete. If I had more faith there would be triumphs to recount when I attempted to obey Thy will—triumphs where I now find only failures, troubles, and sins! Paul could say, from experience, “I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me.” Alas, I might say, “I have been able to do nothing because Thou hast not strengthened me, and Thou hast not strengthened me because I have not believed in Thee!” I drag my chain, like the demoniac legion among the sepulchres, instead of flying in mid-heaven like the angel bearing the gospel. Have pity on me, O God! Infuse order into my life, and, as a consequence, into my labours! Give me strength and perseverance which shall surmount the very obstacles against which I so often strike, to my own injury! But I feel that these, my prayers, may all be comprised in one—give me faith, and rid me of my inveterate unbelief! May I never undertake anything without first asking myself whether it is according to Thy will! May I but need to be convinced of what is right in order to pursue it without intermission and without fear, knowing that Thou wilt prosper whatsoever is of Thee! If Thou bring not the desired success, Thou wilt bring that which is better than my hopes!

XXXIX.

*THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF
GOD.*

LORD, when I raise mine eyes towards those myriads of stars overhead, and when I say to myself, that each of those twinkling spots is a sun in the centre of a universe, I am overcome with the grandeur of Thy work ! The immensity of Thy power is equalled only by that of my ignorance. Which of so many wonders have I understood ? None ! Men of science count Thy worlds, and measure spaces ; but what do they discover about the final end of Thy creation ? Like myself, nothing ! And how much of it will they understand in a million of years ? Alas, still nought ! I know that there is an inherent weakness in my human understanding ; nevertheless I feel, also, that I am not made to remain always ignorant. Why, of all created beings, has man alone any idea of Thee, his Creator ? Why has he alone any idea of a design in the universe ? Why, like the lofty eagle, or the lowly worm, am I not satisfied with eating and drinking, and mere pleasure ? Why the restless need of interrogating that nature which never responds to me ? This is, doubtless, given me as an inducement to soar higher. It is to teach me to seek Thee, not through my own knowledge, but in Thy revelation. Yes, Lord ! I comprehend it

now. If I yearn for knowledge, it is because I am made to know Thee. If I am too feeble to find Thee, it is because Thou wouldest reveal Thyself. If the universe is yet insufficient to discover Thee to man, it is that Thou wouldest manifest Thyself in Jesus Christ. My unsatisfied desires—the insufficiency of all the world's grandeur to enlighten me—all this shews me what is Thy design. Thou designest to make Thyself known to me in Thy Word, and it is there that I will seek Thee. Yes, there! for it is there only that I have ever found Thee, understood Thee, loved Thee! Yes! Thy Word is a light, Thy Word is powerful. Thy Word sanctifies; and a few pages of Thy gospel have done more for me than all the men of science, and all the universe. Thy Book, which is spiritual, appeals to my heart and conscience. When I hear it, I come in contact with the Truth. Blessed be Thou, O Lord, for having thus convinced me that the end of my existence is to love and to serve Thee; and that the visible heavens declare Thy glory to those who are already enlightened by Thy revelation!



XL.

ON BROTHERLY LOVE.

I KNOW that I do not love my neighbour as I ought to love him. Brotherly love is to me as a fair ideal, a pleasant doctrine ; but I do not make it a living reality. I love some relations, and some friends,—“do not even the publicans the same?” I desire the good of mankind. But this desire is so vague that it vanishes as soon as it becomes me to be up and doing. I admire the devotion of those among Thy chosen, who are always swift to run to the aid of the unfortunate. I sing the praises of those Christians who spend their strength and their means in order to enlighten poor sinful men ; but this is all : I know not how to imitate them. Alas ! I ought to say, I will not imitate them. How many times I am less than lukewarm towards my fellow-creatures ! How many times I am betrayed into irritability ; perhaps even into temporary hatred, because they have not felt, spoken, or acted, as I could have wished. How ready I am to recall the wrongs that they have done me, how slow to forget them, and how little suffices to rouse my displeasure, or even my antipathy. Alas ! so little that I dare not acknowledge my antipathies before the world ; so persuaded am I, that it would deem them unjust. Behold me then, Lord, such as I am, such as Thou knowest me. Meanwhile,

“God is love,” and Thou art my God. Jesus, Thou art my Saviour,—yet I know that in the last day it is to those who have succoured, visited, consoled the least of Thy brethren, even to those who have loved Thy disciples, that Thou wilt say, “Come unto Me,”—whilst to those who have not so done, Thou wilt say, “Depart from Me!” O Lord, forgive me! Shed abroad Thy love in my heart, that I may taste the joys which spring from self-sacrifice, and the delight which accompanies devotion to Thee. Melt my icy heart! Alas! I feel that a weight of coldness weighs on my conscience, unless Thy Fatherly love penetrate deeper into my heart. I feel that my petition is rather a confession than a request, and in all humility I ask of Thee again, Lord, teach me to love my neighbour!



XLI.

PROSPERITY DESTROYS US.



WHAT a strange being I am! Prosperity draws me further away from Thee; adversity draws me nearer. My wishes fulfilled, it seems as if I were less dependent upon Thee, and then I presume to follow my own will. It would seem that joy enlarged my heart only to make more room for my sinful desires, and forthwith my thoughts carry me on towards the *performance* of that which is evil. Is this my experi-

ence only? Or have I made these discoveries by digging deeper in my own heart? I know not; but I confess before Thee the truth. Nothing can arrest me in this downward career except Thy Holy Spirit; not even reflection can. Moreover, when conscious of my sin, I do not feel more gratitude to Thee. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Who shall at length rid me of sin? Who shall take from me the taste for sin and make me hate it? I know that Christ shall do it! But, alas! though cured for a while, I fall again so quickly that, I ought to say, I drag, rather than walk in Thy commandments. I perform them joylessly, and only to calm my conscience; and I own that Thy love has scarcely wrought more than Thy threats in the renewal of my heart. I know nothing of Thy love; I am not grateful to Thee. To enjoy Thy gifts, this is my first object—but never to devote myself to Thee! I understand this love and this gratitude, but I do not experience them; or, if indeed I do, it is so feebly that I ask myself if I am indeed converted to Thee? I ask myself whether the gospel is more than a history, more than a theory to me? Then, from a fear of making a sad discovery, I cease to examine myself lest I should arrive at self-condemnation. And now, Lord, what have I done? I have probed the wound, but have I wept over it? Perhaps I am even proud of having seen so deeply. Oh, my God, behold me as I am! Grant me grace and pardon for my misery! Thou alone canst change me!

XLII.

ON BROTHERLY CORRECTION.

HOW wide is the difference between my corrections and those of Jesus! How His love is seen in every blow He strikes! How my anger betrays itself in my admonitions. If I listen to Him reproving His disciples, I might imagine that He Himself had not been wounded; but when I rebuke my brethren it might be supposed that I was the injured one. He, the Lord God, pleads not His own cause, but the sinner's. I, a creature in the name of God, yet defend my own cause! Jesus was meek when I recriminate, Jesus wept when I complain; and, in short, I sadden and irritate him whom Jesus would have consoled and brought back again. Am I, then, condemned to do evil even in my attempts to do good? My very charity is mingled with pride. Amid my Christian activity I seek to satisfy myself; and in the services which I render Thee I find an under-current of self-interest or vanity. Oh, give me to have for my fellow-sinner the compassion Thou hast had for me! Teach me to pity instead of blaming. May I be ingenious in healing without wounding him; in binding up his wound without letting him feel my hand! May I learn to imitate Jesus—who, on the disciple who had thrice denied Him, inflicted only the thrice-repeated question, "Lovest thou

Me?" Take from me all malicious pleasure in censuring those whom I judge to be worse than myself, but whom Thou judgest to be better, perhaps. Give me such humbling views of the past, and, alas! of the present, that I may be compassionate towards those with whom Thou hast borne, though they have offended Thee.



XLIII.

A MERE NOTHING DISTURBS MY PEACE.

HOW little can disturb my peace! At the very moment when I imagine it to be deep and settled, a breath of wind passes, and it is ruffled. I look at what I was an instant before, and I am amazed. I acknowledge my error, but I cannot extricate myself. It seems that I have fallen over a steep precipice, and that my efforts to escape avail but to plunge me further still! Then I do nought but reproach myself, and feel that I would have both my will and my hands bound, and be laid in the very dust for this period of caprice. Oh, the misery, the frailty, the inconstancy, the vanity that is in me! Must I then drag on thus even to my life's end? Shall I never be able to fly, or run, or even to walk? Oh, that I might at least abide calm and sheltered from the ebullitions of passion. Oh that I might humbly, and even in some little measure

accomplish Thy will! that I could be but equal to my daily duties! But, no! it has ever been the same with me; and even such lowly service has been hitherto impossible. The spirit willing, the flesh weak; intending good, and doing evil. Thus my prayer is always the same,—bemoaning myself, weeping, repenting; scarcely ever praise, the expression of joy, or real and sustained progress. Oh, I am weary of praying, weary of watching to no purpose! Am I, then, alone in all this? or are all Christians like myself? It seems impossible that such misery should be the lot of all. Doubtless there are among them those who are happier and holier than I, those whom Thou hast thus been entreated of. Yea, Lord, for my own encouragement and support, I must and I will believe that it is so. Hear me, then, in Thine own time, as Thou hast heard them! Try not my faith too long! Let Thy strength be manifested in my weakness, and suffer me not again to fall away so quickly or so far from holiness!



XLIV.

ON WANT OF CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

HOW little confidence I have in Thee, my God! Whereas Thou hast supplied me with more than the necessities of life up to this day, I have misgivings lest Thou shouldst fail to supply my future wants. Thou hast a hundred times rescued me from imminent danger ; and I tremble at those which exist only in imagination. Thou hast rejoiced my heart by means of faith, and I am doubtful of heavenly joy. Thou hast given me the witness of Thy Spirit, and I ask Thee for yet further proofs. Laden with Thy benefits, I complain—I groan under their weight as under a weight of adversity and privation. Ah, perhaps painful privations and deep adversity would avail me more! and I dread to think that perhaps Thou art about to send them because I have rendered them necessary. Then I should at least be humbled, I should pray, and by means of prayer and humiliation I should arrive at more confidence in Thee. Then I should be sensible of the blessings which Thou hast withdrawn from me. Then I should acknowledge my ingratitude and Thy goodness. I should bemoan the past, and I should learn to be satisfied with Thy gifts. But, oh, suffer me not to render trial necessary! Give me a deeper sense of Thy present blessings! Give me to feel that Thy denials even are blessings. Alas,

my desires are often so foolish that if Thou didst grant them all, what evils might I bring upon myself without the least misgiving! If Thou hadst placed my earthly portion at my own disposal, it would have been like putting a sword into the hands of a child. Art Thou not wiser than I, O Lord? Knowest Thou not better than I can know what is good for me, and what would be fatal to me? And if Thou knowest, how can I think that in Thy mercy Thou wouldst send me what is evil, and refuse me what is good? This is my foolishness; I ask Thee to pardon me! I ask Thee for increased confidence in Thyself, who feedest the birds of the air,—who clothest the herbs of the field,—who dost govern the universe!



XLV.


*LIFE MUST ALWAYS BECOME HAPPIER
OR MORE SAD.*

HOW life sobers in its decline! How many illusions have vanished! How many sad truths are discovered! How much suffering, how much death, how much ingratitude, injustice, and wickedness around me! The natural heart congeals as the horizon of life recedes. How wretched must they be who cannot look beyond the grave! How melancholy (like the shadow) must

lengthen towards the evening of their days! How their fear must increase as death approaches! I understand how the leprosy of egotism extends itself continually over the heart of the aged unbeliever. I understand the attempts of this unhappy one to retard the march of time, and his despair at the prospect of annihilation. His years descend towards an abyss unfathomable. What praise do I owe Thee, O my God, for having rescued me from so dreadful a state, through faith in Him who is the Resurrection and the Life! No; my life no longer darkens, once that faith has enlightened it. Faith is to me as the sun ascending the horizon. I advance, not towards death, but towards life; not towards despair, but towards heavenly joys. The more I mortify the old man, the more I strengthen the new; and I advance triumphantly towards the crown of glory which awaits me. Blessed be Thou for this glorious assurance founded in Jesus Christ. But, alas, in a moment this faith weakens, and its light is obscured by clouds! Then I become sad and fearful, until Thy Holy Spirit restores me. Oh, never leave me for an instant, Lord! Be Thou always at my side! May I be continually engaged in Thy work! May I be ever looking towards heaven, and may my attention be occupied with heavenly things! May I live here as I shall live in eternity, loving my brethren, exalting my Saviour, and doing good! I would zealously live for Thee, until the time arrives for endless rest in Thy presence!

XLVI.

*"THERE WOULD BE HEAVEN ON EARTH
IF THERE WERE NO SIN."*

 LORD, our misery here below proceeds from ourselves, and not from Thee! This earth is vaster, and her fruit more abundant, than two present generations would require. Yea, in our strength of affection and in our understanding there exists a store of happiness, which we cast to the winds. In conscience followed, in the exercise of virtue, are involved joys, lovely and pure, which we disdain. Ah, if we but knew how to extract all that is contained in the life below, it would be at once a foretaste of heaven! If we knew how to love, how to trust one another; if we knew what it was to be perfectly sincere, how many evils would disappear, and how many joys would arise out of this new position of friends and brethren! Oh that my whole life might be what it has been during its too short intervals of self-sacrifice, of faith, of charity! Oh that I could always open my heart fearlessly, and read the hearts of others clearly! If we would but unite in singleness of purpose to accomplish Thy work, how much happiness there might be where desolation and sadness are now! But we will not. We deplore our misery, and we do all in our power to keep it. We extol confidence, and we are

distrustful. We boast of charity, and we love not ; or if indeed we love, it is those who can benefit us, so that our affection is thorough selfishness. Self-interest is not love. When will it be thus no longer ? When shall I love as Jesus loved,—largely, freely, unweariedly ? Alas, I fear that it will be only in heaven ; for the faith to hope even fails me here below ! Do Thou, then, for me more than I can expect ; and help Thou mine unbelief !



XLVII.

DECLENSION UPON DECLENSION.

I DARE not pray to Thee. I lack courage to ask Thee day by day for such things as I fail to profit by. The sins of to-day are the sins of yesterday, those of yesterday were the same as the day before ; and it is always thus. So that I might learn from the past what the sins of my future are likely to be. Oh, what hopeless weakness ! How shall I escape it ? I pray to Thee, it is true ; but I do not watch. I rest upon my prayer as upon a good work. I reckon upon Thy grace as upon an irresistible impulse to good ; whilst I do not reckon upon my sloth and inactivity. When, overburdened with their weight, I would arise and walk in Thy presence, it is with so much pain and so much sadness, that I fall back again

after proceeding a few steps. What must I do? Watch! Yes, I must watch—so says Thy Spirit; and this is just what I do not. If I found myself upon a narrow path, on either side of which were an abyss, should I refuse to look straight before me? Doubtless I should not fail therein. Why, then, can I not in the path of life, which is bordered by so great and manifold temptations? I should, I could; but I do it not. I am deeply guilty; yet I would take courage to ask of Thee forgiveness for the past, and strength for the future! But if hereafter my vigilance is increased, I would remember that this is an answer to prayer. Let me not err on the other side; so that, having prayed, I cease to pray! But, according to Thy word, and the example of Jesus, may I know what it is to watch and pray!



XLVIII.

THE ENJOYMENT OF PRAYER.



YES, Lord, there is delight in prayer when, Thy Spirit pervading mine, Himself inspires my prayer. Then my soul is full of feeling, and words flow abundantly from my lips. Like Peter on the mount, I would fain say to Thee, on bended knee, Master, "It is good to be here;" let me make here a tabernacle. How such moments witness, by their con-

trast to the rest of my life, to the influence of Thy Holy Spirit! How at such times I feel the truth of the apostle's words, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit!" Then Thou speakest to me and I hear Thee, as now I speak to Thee, Lord, and Thou hearest me. Oh, prolong this holy converse! Abide Thou in me, and give me to abide in Thee, that I may be united to Thee in holiness and bliss! But, alas, these moments are short and rare, and I am unable to recall them! Sometimes I contemplate them in my past, and carry back to them my regrets; but I cannot seize them again; and, alas, I do not desire them earnestly enough to ask Thee to restore them! I am in that state of partial sleep from which the slothful so weakly endeavour to emerge. But I will still put my trust in Thee, Lord. That joy in prayer which Thou hast given me in times past, Thou wilt restore it! Thou wilt multiply it until it shall be one life-long, uninterrupted enjoyment! Then, according to the apostle, I shall pray without ceasing, pray without difficulty, and with joy. When will this time come? Oh, grant me *now* the aid of Thy Holy Spirit!—now, before my prayer is ended, that when I go on my way I may have the assurance that Thou hast heard me!



XLIX.

ON VARIABLENESS OF SPIRIT.

HOW trifling and uncertain is my spirit ! One moment it mounts to heaven, the next it falls again to the earth. I begin a prayer with thoughts of Thee ; I continue it with thoughts of men ; I end it with thoughts of worldly things. In the course of a single day, I am sad and joyous,—believing, and unbelieving ; a saint, or a sinner, according as the breath of Thy Spirit, or of passion, passes over my head ; and, unhappily, for one good influence of Thine I yield to a thousand from Satan. To every good thought I may count a hundred evil thoughts. To each moment spent in thy presence I may contrast days and weeks of worldliness. If my spirit is easily diverted from the contemplation of Thee, it becomes constant in order to consider, to touch, and to accomplish that which is evil. It recovers its animation in order to live in sin. It runs from one fault to another, always in bondage to sin, from which, like a poor prisoner, it cannot go farther than the length of its chain. Alas, how easy it is to depict a state of mind which is habitual to me, but how difficult it is to escape from it ! I know how to deplore my spiritual need, but I know not how to ask Thee to supply it. As soon as I would return to Thee, my folly holds me again ; and instead of a prayer, it is a com-

plaint that I utter. I feel the weight of sin without desiring to be freed from it. I would cleave to sin with an easy conscience. I am a slave ; but I am a willing slave. Accept, then, these expressions of regret as the expression of my desires ! Give me that for which I know not how to ask Thee,—a spirit sincere in Thy sight—a heart fixed on that which is good—a life of consistent holiness !



L.

*“OH THAT I HAD THE WINGS OF A
DOVE!”*

HOW strange is my presumption in Thy presence ! I am ever disposed to ask an account of Thy doings ; ever dissatisfied with what Thou hast given me, ever desiring that which thou withholdest. If Thou appointedst my portion in the south, I should fain go to the north ; or if I were placed in the north, I should ask Thee to remove me to the south. Yea, Lord, such is my heart !—ever dissatisfied with Thy dealings. Even in faith’s domain, I know not what it is to be content with what Thou hast assigned to me. I would have been Abraham, to see the angel ; or I would have traversed the desert with Moses, to have tasted of the manna ; or I would have lived with Jesus

whilst on the earth, to have been a witness of His miracles. Yes, I think little of having been born, when the angel has already proclaimed the everlasting gospel over the earth ; when Jesus has already come to give light to the world ; when the manna of charity has been universally felt ; and when I can contemplate the promises, not only as did the patriarchs and apostles, but even their accomplishment—"which things themselves the prophets desired to look into." Oh, forgive Thou my foolishness ! Open Thou my mind, that I may at length understand that Thou hast done for me what was best ! May I enjoy the talents which Thou hast placed at my disposal, instead of envying those which Thou hast given to others, less favoured perhaps ! Together with the manna, give me to recall the fiery serpents in the desert ; and if I see not Jesus traversing Judea, give me the consolation of feeling His Spirit in my heart ! Oh that I may learn in future to contemplate Thy providence, without endeavouring to fathom it, or seeking to quarrel with or to amend it !



LI.

ON PERPLEXITY.

WHEN some imminent danger is impending, or when some important decision is to be made, then it is especially precious to be able to approach Thee in prayer, and to say to Thee, "Father, what shall I do? Tell me by Thy Spirit, make clear to me, that which is my duty." Thus, whenever I take a step, I shall feel that Thou hast ordered it; and come what will, I shall know that it is Thy will. Whatever difficulty then presents itself, Thy sustaining arm will bear me through. To know that it is Thy will which my hand performs; to know that my feet are set in a path chosen by Thee, this it is which will inspire me with calmness, with strength, and with victory. If I can but say, "It is the will of God," I shall not fear the opposition of man. Henceforth will not the triumph be worth the fall? To fall before a sinful creature, will it not be to rise again, provided I fall in Thy service, O my Saviour! Shew me, then, Thy way, and I will walk in Thy paths! Leave me not alone! Let me not err by mistaking my fancies for Thy commands; nor profess to follow Thy leadings whilst pursuing the lust of mine eyes or the path of my propensities. I know that my heart is deceitful, but Thou knowest it better than I do. Preserve me, then, from its deceits! And now, whither

should I go to-day,—to the right, or to the left? Should I be active or passive? Should I speak, or ought I to keep silence? Oh, let thy Spirit enlighten me! May He dictate my words and direct my paths! May He teach my fingers to fight in the battle of life; and as He was with Thine apostles, oh, may He be with me, teaching me on all occasions what I shall think and what I shall do!



LII.

ON RETURNING TOWARDS GOD.



WOULD fain return unto Thee, Lord! for I have hid myself far from Thee these many days! So passes my life! Days and weeks are drowned in the world and its snares, out of which a few minutes are given to Thee. This poor life of mine is like the ocean wave, which is perpetually rising and falling. It covers the shore but for an instant; scarcely does it touch the port before it begins to recede. I know not how to hide before Thee, to hide in Thee, to act for Thee! Even when I have felt that in such a union there would be happiness—even after I have discovered that I am happier by Thy side than elsewhere, I forsake Thee again continually. God of goodness, let it be thus no longer! Keep me near to Thyself!

Take Thou my hand in Thine ! Hold me, and may I abide in the light of Thy holy and blessed countenance ! Whenever I attempt to depart from Thee, oh, draw me back by Thy constraining might ! Shield me from temptation. To its attractions oppose Thy promises ! Give me to know the peace and joy which Thy Spirit imparts, that the tumult and enticements of sin may lose their attractions ! I desire never again to forsake Thee, Lord ; and yet I dread that, on rising from my knees, my happiness will be dispelled. Past experience has so convinced me of my weakness, that I dare not flatter myself for aught concerning one moment of the future. From distrust of self may I proceed to trust in Thee ! and to my faith add Thou Thy strength ! In order to keep near to Thee, it would seem that I ought to spend my life on my knees : but even there I am assailed by distractions of thought. But Thou canst be with me amid the world. Be Thou, then, ever with me ! So that, whether watching in solitude, labouring in a crowd, or addressing my fellow-men, I may be still in communion with Thee !



LIII.

"YE HAVE NOT, BECAUSE YE ASK NOT."

JAMES IV. 2.

MY GOD, I would fain pray unto Thee ; but I feel that my first request must be that Thou wouldst teach me, for oftentimes I can scarcely find words whereby to address Thee. Alas, if I were about to ask for some earthly boon from a fellow-creature, I should easily find words ; but before Thee, the Creator of heaven and earth, I am silent ! Is it from fear of displeasing Thee ? No ; for Thou exhortest me to pray. Comes it from extreme reverence ? No ; for reverence would lead me to prostrate myself before Thee. Proceeds it from fear of expressing myself amiss, and of being misunderstood ? No ; for Thou who hast made the tongue understandest well the speech, however imperfect ; and how could it be that Thou who hast formed the heart shouldst not penetrate into the thoughts ? These, then, are not the causes which tend to close my lips. The truth is, that I do not really desire the spiritual. If I neither hunger nor thirst after righteousness, faith, nor holiness, how can I ask Thee to bestow them on me ? Ah, if Thou hadst promised to bestow material treasures in answer to my prayers, and if I had but once obtained them, I should no longer hesitate to pray unto Thee ! Then I should be

importunate in my requests. Then I should find words in abundance. My own heart explains to me how the Israelites could be joyous before a calf of gold, whilst they were sad before the God of holiness. It would seem that heaven was too high for me, and that I preferred earth. Eternity is too far off, and this life is dearer to me. Above all, the faith and the grace Thou offerest me possess so little attraction for me that, if I dared, I should, perhaps, ask Thee for liberty to indulge my sinful inclinations instead. Oh, have compassion on me! Grant me to love Thy holy will, and then I shall have enjoyment in prayer! Yea, rather may Thy Spirit pray in me, and for me; so that, whilst Jesus intercedes for me in heaven, I may be heard of Thee!



LIV.

"BE AFFLICTED."

JAMES IV. 9.



ORD, Thy word tells me that Jesus came to save me from the hell which I deserved, and to gain me admittance into heaven, wherein I had no right to enter! Nevertheless, this great, this good news finds me still cold and indifferent! It verily seems that I am not willing to accept Thy benefits. Pardon for a sinful life and the gift of heaven!

Does this seem as naught in mine eyes? No; they seem like great blessings; but, alas, I do not sufficiently feel my need of them. Thou offerest me the pardon of my sins, whereas I am but little burdened by them. Thou wouldst that heaven should be mine, whilst I feel as if it already belonged to me. Thou wouldst heal me of an evil which causes me no suffering; or, if indeed I do feel any burden of sin on my conscience, it is but a light burden to me, as if mine were an evil scarcely worth the trouble of a cure. If Jesus offered me bodily health, as when on earth He was wont, I should run to Him; but He offers spiritual health, and I move not a step. I should more readily have looked to the brazen serpent for the healing of the bite, than to Jesus for the pardon of sin. No; I have no deep sense of my spiritual misery, and this is why I set so little value on Him who came to relieve it. Ah, if I could but view my life as Thou viewest it, who art of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity,—if for a day, an hour, even for one moment, I could clothe myself with Thy holiness, and judge myself as Thou judgest me, I should be overwhelmed. I should at one and the same time fear, and weep, and pray. May Thy Holy Spirit teach me to know myself! May His bright rays fall on my conscience, bringing to light my hideous sins! May I learn to see my sins as Thou seest them, to the end that I may implore Thy pardon, and that Jesus may not have come down to this poor world in vain for me!

LV.

ON HUMILITY.

HUMILITY is sweet to the hearts of Thy children, Lord ! It is sweet to humble one's self under Thy mighty hand ; sweet to esteem others better than ourselves ; sweet to be divested of self-importance, and to live free from pride, envy, and ambition, happy always where Thou hast placed us. Yes ; and I would fain remain peacefully there until Thou withdraw Thyself from me. For there I shall surely have less responsibility than in my self-chosen post. There I may serve Thee as faithfully and more securely than if I were on a throne. Remove far from me, then, all satanic temptations to pride ! May I be increasingly imbued with the conviction that human glory excites instead of satisfying the thirst for it ; that my heart is too vast to be filled with vanity ; and that the only glory which can fill it is that which Thou bestowest when Thou lettest fall Thine approbation on Thy servants ! Moreover, what am I, compared to others, that I should require them to stoop in order to exalt me ? If they only knew my life as Thou knowest it, should I not have to bow down my head before them ? Oh, spare me from this shame, but keep me humble ! Make me little in mine own esteem, that I may be wise according to Thy gospel, more patient under trial, more fervent in prayer,

and happier always. Above all, give me such a deep sense of my own weakness that, having been answered by Thee, I may not become proud of my humility !



LVI.

"O YE OF LITTLE FAITH."

MATTHEW VI. 30.



HOW great is my blindness ; yea, rather, my ingratitude ! How many years hast Thou preserved me, not only supplying my need, but granting me more than I have needed. Nevertheless, though loaded with Thy benefits, I entertain doubts about the future, and I question whether Thou wilt ever forget me or leave me to perish for want. But it is not of Thee that I have misgivings, it is of events—as if Thou didst not order them. It is not Thee that I mistrust, but myself, as if Thou hadst abandoned me to my own strength. I fear, as if the world were governed by men, as if the seed which they cast into the ground needed not Thy frost in order that it may perish, and Thy sunshine that it may spring up. Either my faith is weak and niggardly, or how great is my presumption ! If on a vessel, tempest-tossed, I should resort to prayer, and I should put my trust in Thee ; but because I am not exposed to imminent danger, because the sky is clear

and the air is still, I depend less on Thee and more on self. By this means I disquiet myself about tempests that have not yet arisen, except in imagination. I create phantoms for myself in order that I may fear them; and I set Thee at naught, O God, to the end that I may not trust in Thee! I am the inventor of my own sufferings. And now I come to beseech Thee to deliver me from vain disquietude. Set before mine eyes Thy mercies past! Give me to remember that Thou feedest the birds of the air, and that Thou clothest the lily of the field! Give me to understand that in Thy sight I am worth more than many sparrows, though not one of them falleth to the ground without Thy will!



LVII.

SIN AN INTOLERABLE BURDEN.

HOW painful it is to carry a load of sin! What sadness it spreads over the life! What bitterness over the heart! How it weighs on the conscience! I feel that there will be neither peace nor happiness for me until I have resolutely shaken off its intolerable yoke. This is not living; it is vegetating, it is standing still. In vain I lift up my head! In vain I rise from my knees,—for until I have completely emerged from the pollutions of sin, I shall be continually falling

back. So long as my feet remain in it, I shall defile my hands and my head. Ah, then, it is perfect holiness I need in order to be really happy! and after that holiness I aspire. Meanwhile, I cannot attain unto it. Each time that I put my hand to the undertaking, I am saddened at the sight of my repeated want of success. A good resolution is no sooner made than I am struck with my own inability to perform it. It seems as if the only result of my attempts were the proving of my own insufficiency. Yes, Lord, it is Thy design that my vain attempts should work humility in me,—that humility may lead to prayer, and that prayer should bring down help from Thee. Grant me, then, Thy help, which alone is effectual to the end that I may emerge from the ocean of sin! Finally, may I be happy in Thee, and may it be my supreme ambition to attain perfect holiness! How can I venture to cease from my prayer, when the experience of the past confronts me? I fear that as soon as it is concluded my wandering spirit will be straying through the world; and my hands and feet falling too readily into sin. In order to be kept from sin, I must be instant in prayer. Be merciful unto me, Lord, that it may be no longer so! Yet again I implore Thy help! Oh, constrain me to accept it, and from this day to begin a life in accordance with Thy will!



LVIII.

ANGEL AND DEVIL.

MY soul is like the mirror, which reflects each object as it presents itself,—thoughts good and evil; desires harmless and sinful. I am alternately a saint and a sinner, an angel and a demon. A passing word suffices to draw me nearer, or to send me further from Thee! Fickle as the wave, my soul is calm or troubled, I scarcely know wherefore. At times I am tempted to regard myself as the victim of two opposing spirits, each disputing for the possession of my heart. If this were not the case, how could I, an individual, be thus inconsistent? And what is more sad than marvellous is, that from an evil thought I proceed so easily to an evil deed. It grows, then dazzles, incites, and hurries me into sin; whereas the holiest thought seldom stirs me up to holy zeal. Far from it; for I am content with projecting good deeds, and with making excellent resolutions. But no sooner does the time arrive for proceeding to action than I hold back, pondering on self, well pleased with my religious meditation, and regarding it as if it were put into practice. Perhaps I go so far as to dispense with well-doing, *because* I have well thought. Wretched man that I am! my life is one long groan, until Thou, Lord, come to comfort me. Oh, lift Thou up this load of sloth and

inactivity! Make me a new creature, that when I devise I may also practise, and when I talk of loving Thee I may devote myself to Thee! Oh, suffer me no longer to feed on dreams of imagination, on the harmony of my thoughts, on the music of my words; but grant that my life may become what I know so well how to be in thought.

LIX.

ON TIME MIS-SPENT.

I KNOW not how to use the time that Thou givest me, Lord! I employ minutes, whilst I forfeit hours. For whole days I remain inactive or ill employed; and then when I should have done the work, I begin and carry it on in haste; so that I disobey Thee both when I lose and when I use the time—both when I do ill and when I do well. The night must needs overtake me to shew me that I have wasted my day. Then, I am wont to put off to the morrow; but the morrow is either like to-day or it is worse. How much longer shall I go on deceiving my conscience with vain resolves? When shall I cease to say to present duty, in an hour, this evening, or to-morrow? When shall I say now? Meantime life passes; it flows on, it ebbs away. Death follows; then

judgment ; and that judgment comes to me. After that, eternity. I have, as it were, but a moment for work—an eternity for repose. Yet I throw away that moment through my folly, my ingratitude, my indolence. Lord, stop me on this downward path ! Order Thou the employment of each hour ! Henceforth may I choose the occupation that pleaseth Thee ; that instead of procrastinating, I may be prompt to perform ; and that hereafter I may employ the time which it now takes in thinking of the delay ! May I divest my life of every vain word, of every questionable deed, and of every reflection without aim and without an end ! Give me to feel that inasmuch as “sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,” how much less may one carry into the morrow the evil of to-day ! Alas, it is but too true that I not only do take thought for the morrow, and that not to accomplish its task, but to forestall its care ! In *thus* putting off to the morrow, I am always disquieted, and never practical. Oh, give me to redeem the time before I hear the angel proclaim—“Time shall be no longer,” and find eternity begun !



LX.

I BELIEVE, HELP THOU MINE UNBELIEF.

IF I had true faith, what joy and peace would be infused into my heart ! But I fear that my faith itself is not more than a hope, and that hope a theory. Yes ; for at the same time that I believe in eternal life, I fear death ; whilst I pray to Thee for help, I depend upon myself ; whilst I believe in the inspiration of Scripture, I read the word of man a hundred times more. When Thou triest me, I am as much afflicted as if Thou wert not my Father. When Thou accordedst success, I enjoy it without blessing Thee ! Ah, Thou knowest the continual inconsistency of my life ! I believe, yet I do not believe ; for in my heart I have faith, but in my practice is none. I am believing whilst I pray, and I go through the world an unbeliever. How well I understand him who cried to Jesus, " Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief !" for I have need to say the same. I am reassured by the recollection that the acknowledgment of unbelief was accepted by Jesus as very faith. Jesus had promised miracles to the weakest faith, and He granted the request which faith had prompted. Blessed be God for this example ! It might have been recorded for me alone, so comforting it is. May it ever come to my aid ! More and more may I learn to say, " I believe !" Ever *less* may I have to say, " Help Thou mine unbelief !"

LXI.

ELECTED.

JESUS, my Saviour and my God, I feel that Thy love is not to me a reality! It is a doctrine for my understanding—it is not a fact for my heart. I speak of and admire it, but more with my imagination than from my soul. That Thou hast loved me, died for me, and art now Eternal for me, I know; and notwithstanding all this I am unmoved, I love Thee not, nor follow Thee. If I am interested in Thy Word and Thy Church, it is more as a subject of worldly interest, at most as a duty; and it proceeds not from love. When I examine myself with perfect sincerity, I might well be inclined to despair; and *then* I feel it is good to know that Thou hast chosen me from eternity. Ah, many times already should I have fallen into despair had not Thy hand upheld me! I am deeply humbled. Oh, make Thy face to shine upon me! Give me a new, a loving heart, that I may better comprehend the love wherewith Thou hast loved me! Still, alas, I feel my prayer too heartless, and that my words exceed my feelings! I address Thee, I do not pray; I speak to Thee, but I do not love Thee. If my words are to keep pace with my affections, I must be silent. Holy Spirit, pray for me! Jesus, intercede for Thy redeemed! Heavenly Father, forgive the ingrati-

tude of Thy child, and teach me to love Thee! Are not all Thy favours shewn to me? If, through the weakness of my faith, I behold not Jesus on the cross, may not mine eyes perceive Thy Sunshine over my head? Glistens not Thy goodness over the earth and in the heavens, in my past and in my present? What have I that I have not received from Thee? Ah, if my life were less burdened with sin, I should more easily rise to Thee! I am insensible to Thy love only because I love sin! Oh, give me pardon, light, and strength! If Thou save me not, I am lost. But no; Thou art holding me by my hand; Thou wilt lift me up; Thou wilt restore to me "the joy of Thy salvation," and I "shall walk in the light of Thy countenance to the end of my days; for Thou hast chosen me from eternity!"



LXII.

*ON THE HARMONY OF THE LORD'S
WORKS.*



ALL is harmony in Thy works, Lord! As the earth is made to receive the rain, and the sun to ripen the harvest, in like manner my heart is made to receive the dew of Thy blessing and Thy Holy Spirit to further my sanctification. My misery harmonises with the death of Christ;

Thy strength with my weakness, my griefs with my aspirations after heaven. Even in the minutest details of Thy Word I find countless proofs that that Word is indeed truth. I praise Thee for all the light Thou hast shed upon my spirit. Open still wider the eyes of my faith, and give me a fuller enjoyment of the divine illumination of Thy Spirit ! But how comes it that these harmonies, so numerous and so beautiful, and which strike me so forcibly, remain unobserved by many more intelligent than I ? Alas, it is with them as it once was with me ! Yes ; to me likewise Thy Word was sometime darkness, Thy mercies stirred up only repugnance, Thy miracles provoked my incredulity. Whereas now this same Word is all light to my mind, Thy mercies full of sweetness to my soul, and Thy miracles strike me with admiration. Ah, it is not I who have produced this change—the greatest of Thy wonders, the most magnificent of Thy favours, the most shining of Thy splendours ! It is simply the work of Thy Holy Spirit. I marvel now at having once doubted, even as once I marvelled that any could believe. My former folly appears to me now incredible. I find it difficult to comprehend how I could ever find so dark what now appears so light to me. It is as if the words and the thoughts had been changed. Give me, then, to have much patience with those who are now what I have been, and who may, perhaps, by Thy grace, become what I shall never be ! Give me patience to instruct

them, love to bear with them ; and may I be fervent in prayer, that their unbelief may be conquered ! And, oh, give me to be grateful to Thyself, who hast already bestowed so much on me !



LXIII.

ON LOVING OUR ENEMIES.



THOUGHT to forgive injuries ; for this is a duty which I acknowledge. Herein we have the example of Jesus. Herein consists the peace of the world. This is the one sentiment worthy of Thee. Herein is happiness. And yet injustice and hatred so irritate me, that I find it difficult to contain my indignation. My first impulse is to render evil for evil ; and I need the calming influence of Thy Spirit that I may be more silent and passive. If my anger is transformed into compassion, it is only owing to Thy Spirit's voice and striving ! But, alas, beyond this I seldom yield to Him ! I confess that I do not yet love them that hate me, I do not wish well to them that wish me evil ; and if at times I pray for them, it is less from love to them than in obedience to Thee. Oh, come, come to my aid ! Sanctify completely this poor heart ! Recall to my mind Jesus praying on the cross for those that pierced Him ! His patience with those

who blasphemed ! Thy goodness in causing Thy sun to shine and in sending rain on the evil and the good ! Recall to my mind Thy mercy to me, in that Thou didst come to seek and to save me when I was plunged in iniquity ! Ah, what if Thou hadst called me to account—if Thou hadst limited the number of my crimes and of Thy pardons ! If Thou hadst forsaken me as soon as I had transgressed a hundred times more against Thee than men have against me, I should have been condemned and lost a hundred times over. But where sin hath abounded Thy grace hath much more abounded. Thou hast pardoned me times without number. Thou hast loved me without cause, or rather 'Thou hast loved me because Thou art Love. Grant that I may become Thy child, as well by resemblance as by adoption ! Teach me to love with all my heart those who hate me with all their might ! May I be ingenious in devising good for them ; and may I never cease until the hot coals of my charity shall have constrained them to feel their injustice—not towards me, a poor creature, but towards Thee, my Saviour—God !



LXIV.

*HUMBLE BEFORE GOD, PROUD BEFORE
MAN.*

WHY do I find it so hard to humble myself before men, when I can so easily abase myself before Thee, Lord? How is it that in my prayers and meditations I can acknowledge sincerely that I am a miserable sinner; and yet that I should feel irritated to the quick if others said so, or even let me see that they thought it of me? How can I each morning and evening abase myself in Thy presence, and exalt myself throughout the day before others? Is my humiliation mere hypocrisy, or mere formality? If not, am I sincere in my boasting before men? Herein is the real explanation: I do not myself believe in the merit which I assume before others. I know them to be weak and ignorant, and I disguise myself in the hope of deceiving them. Perhaps, alas, I should lie even unto Thee, my God, if I could hope to deceive Thee! Who can sound the depths of my heart? Shall I ask Thee to do what I have not courage to do for myself,—even to humble me before my fellow-creatures? Ah, no; I cannot ask Thee with sincerity. I am not willing that the world should know. Men would not be so merciful and forgiving. I ask Thee not for humiliation before man, but for humility inwrought and before Thee! I would fain walk before others as, which indeed I am, the least among them!

LXV.

WHO CAN KNOW THE HEART OF MAN?

HOW difficult it is to know myself, and to judge rightly my own intentions! I imagine myself to be in Thy presence, when perhaps I realise only my own. I think of praying, and I hesitate to give the utterance! I would work for Thee, but amid the work I detect some motive of self-interest! I am self-satisfied in saying what is right—self-satisfied in forming laudable projects; and even when I go no further than these, I am still self-satisfied, as if words and plans sufficed. When I would examine myself, I plunge into an unfathomable abyss, and am lost. I either deceive myself, or I misunderstand. Or, if by searching I sometimes discover the evil which lurks within, I am ingenious in excusing it, in blaming others, in attributing it to circumstances, but seldom indeed to myself. When driven to bemoan my sins, I still find opportunity for self-praise; and I call it humility. Thereat I am satisfied, and thus escape further self-reproach on account of sin. And so I lose the impetus to prayer which repentance would supply. Behold me, then, as I am! If I have been brought to know myself, it is by Thy Spirit alone. Oh, then, that I may be more and more enlightened by that same Spirit! Let me be no longer self-deceived, and may I oftener come to Thee for pardon,

strength, holiness, and joy. Under Thy Spirit's influence, may I learn to know more of Jesus, my great Example ! May I feed more upon His words ! That I may the better know and resist my own infirmities, may my efforts be henceforth directed to the study of His perfections !



LXVI.

MOSES' VAIL.



THE light of the gospel, like the light of the sun, falls on us in all directions. It needs only that the eyes of the soul be opened, in order that we be convinced of its Divine origin. When I look at it fully, I am dazzled. All below reflects it. When I consider the Jews, still persecuted, still preserved, still scattered, and still recognised, I am struck with the fulfilment of prophecy. Their very obduracy becomes a guarantee for the integrity of those scriptures which they have transmitted to us. I cannot carry my observation over a world covered with Christian churches and institutions without admiring the fulfilment of the apostle's words, "A veil is upon their hearts." What obstinacy, what blindness was it in man, who venerated the prophets, to deny Him of whom they had prophesied, and to look for a Messiah who had already come ! How full of instruc-

tion is their example! yet it ought to make me fear. It is true that I have not rejected my Saviour. But how often have I resisted Thy grace, refused to submit to Thy word, and hardened my heart against Thine invitations! How often I act contrary to the light of Thy Spirit! How often I am guilty of the same sins! If I had more humility, I should apply to myself the very reproaches which I cast on Israel, whilst for these poor disinherited people I should feel only tender compassion. I should go among them, and speak to them of Thee and of Thy gospel; and instead of scorn I should shew them affection. Alas, I am sunk in sin! If Thou blessest me, I overlook Thy blessing. But if others do the same, I am ready to condemn them, and exalt myself by the comparison. Oh, take from me this evil heart! May I use against my own heart the weapons which I am apt to direct against others! Remove the thick veil which hides from me my faults, that I may be ashamed, that I may pray, and that at length I may be healed! I would that my life of holiness should shine more than my professions, that so sinners might be drawn to Thee, and that even Jews might be converted through the example of practical Christianity!



LXVII.

THE PEACE OF GOD.



GIVE me Thy peace, O Lord!—that peace “which passeth understanding,” which “the world cannot give,” but which Thy Spirit shed abroad in the heart does impart. How blessed it is to be so at peace with Thee that we may behold Thee no longer as a Judge, but as a Father! How blessed to know one’s-self not only forgiven, but still more loved, and made an heir of heaven and of eternal life! How blessed to be approaching the multitude of angels, and the blessed of all centuries!—to know that we shall behold Abraham, Moses, Paul the chief apostle, John the friend of Jesus, and, above all, the Saviour himself! It is not death. It is to life that I am tending. My flesh will perish, but my soul shall know no decline. The spirit ages not. Thanks be unto Thee, the spirit which Thou hast sanctified increases as life draws nearer to Thee, is less affected by temptation, more separated from sin, and happier! Lord, accomplish Thy work in me! Root out from my heart the sin and the temptation which would hinder Thy peace in my heart! The torment of my life is sin. If I could be delivered from that, I should be happy. Why, then, wilt Thou not remove this thorn from my flesh? How often have I desired this in vain! Thy peace has

escaped from me, I know not how, when I thought I had it in firm possession. When I would have regained it in answer to prayer, I have been unable to pray! Have I been unwilling? Oh, whence comes this inconsistency of will, this shifting of purpose? Why cannot I retain in my heart the impress of Thy grace? Why cannot I give myself for ever unto Thee? Why can I not flee unto Thee, as to an everlasting refuge? Now it would seem easy, but past experience suggests fears for the future. Presently, to-morrow,—but what do I say? Perhaps in another hour I shall be in desire, in design indeed, in the vortex of a sinful world. But I regret this thought. I would that temptation and sin might end at once! I would fain enter now into a paradise of peace, and joy, and holiness!



LXVIII.

ON SLOTH.

H, if my obedience to Thy will were constant, my faith would be constant too! It is sin which hinders faith. In a heart full of covetousness, where is the room for the contemplation of heaven and Thy salvation? How should I enjoy Thy peace whilst listening to the world's uproars? Impossible! I am myself the stumbling-stone against

which my faith strikes. Oh, give me to be sincere, and I shall be believing. Give me to love Thee, and I shall realise Thy presence ! Give me to do Thy will, and I shall know of the doctrine whether it be of Thee ! When I dive into the depths of my heart I discover that one of my besetting sins is great indolence. I would do that which is right without an effort. I would fain do well with as much ease as I can do what is evil, and I ask Thee for the gift of faith that the task may become easy to me. I would fain obey Thee without trouble, believe without prayer, and pray without words and without repentance. I expect Thee to strive with me, to guide me, to perform for me ; and this not from humility, but sloth. I am ashamed at these my confessions even before Thee, who art so pitiful, and who knowest me so well. Teach me what Thou wouldst have me to do ! Constrain me to become Thy willing servant ! I may not say if I could, but if I would devote myself to Thee, what peace, what joy, what blessed confidence would follow ! But ah, these insincere and feeble desires fail me before I carry them into effect ! I need Thy mercy, Thy pardon, and Thy grace ! Oh, take from me this love of sin, which torments, and which if continued would destroy me ; and do with me as Thou wilt !



LXIX.

SIN AND HAPPINESS ARE IRRECONCILABLE.

YES, I feel that sin and happiness cannot exist in the same heart. If I fall into sin, I suffer. So long as I remain in error I am miserable, weak, dissatisfied with everything, because I am not satisfied with self; and I render myself incapable of sharing the true joys which Thou hast in store for me. No; I have a deep conviction that there can be no happiness for me whilst I continue in sin. I would deliver myself from this thralldom; I would return unto Thee; I would do that which is right. But, alas, I have already so often desired thus with equal sincerity that I cannot again trust to my firmest resolves! I have even besought Thee with tears, and, in reply, Thou hast sent me Thy peace and joy. But I have fallen again as low as ever. That which I thought impossible has come to pass; and I have found myself driven as easily to shame and despair as I was before I desired Thy quickening grace, and prayed it of Thee. And *how* shall I be more successful now? Lord, Thou knowest! Teach me, yea, work Thou for me! Shew me the point at which Satan always finds admittance for his assaults! Will it not be found to be a temptation, small in its beginnings, but increasing in mag-

nitude, assuming a form, developing itself, and then crushing me in its hidden arms. Yes, I believe I should see Satan making himself small, humble, innocent, disguising himself as "an angel of light." It would be Satan saying, "Come nearer ; thou wilt not fall." The first step towards temptation is infallibly followed by the second, and leads us in the end to the depths of the abyss. It is so difficult to stop one's-self on a rapid slope, and so easy to let one's-self slip. Ah, herein is my weak point ! I know not how to withstand the beginning of temptation. Oh, teach me to mistrust self, to avoid the appearance of evil, to flee at the first sign of danger ! Lord, in Jesus, I pray Thee suffer me not to yield to temptation ! Thus alone shall I be delivered from evil, in which there is neither peace nor happiness.



LXX.

ON THE BENEFITS OF SANCTIFICATION.




THANKS be to Thee, O Lord, for the peace which Thou hast given me ! Thanks be unto Thee for having removed causes of trouble from me ! Thanks be unto Thee for having taught me to feel that true joy is alone to be found in the obedience which Thy love constrains ! Yes ; I have long believed it is good to abide in Thee, but now I have

received a fresh proof of it. Oh, multiply to me these precious moments, so that they may be prolonged through my whole life! Then to the joy of the day the joy of the evening will succeed. Thus, being increasingly happy,—happy in remembrance, in prospect, and in the future,—may I run with more zeal in the way of Thy commandment, which is holy and good! Lord, I would bear in mind that peace comes from Thee alone, and I could neither obtain it nor keep it of myself! Yes, each moment I need to pray and to mistrust self; for I have too often fallen through self-confidence. So the secret of my future success will be to be watchful against self, to shun the slightest temptation, and to lift up my heart in prayer at every approach of danger. Ah, I have walked too long on the verge of sin! But Thou hast convinced me that out of Thee I must be miserable. Oh that henceforth holiness may possess a stronger attraction over me! Oh that henceforth my progress may be easy and rapid, instead of painful and slow, as at present! I know the bitterness of regret. Cause Thou me to know the delights of gratitude. I have groaned long enough. Give me that which I have desired of Thee, that I may have fresh cause to render Thee thanks! Oh, suffer me not again to fall away! But in future, even to the end of my days, I would celebrate in joy and peace Thine inexhaustible love!

LXXI.

THE DIFFICULTY OF PRAYING.

H, how difficult it is to rise again after Satan has laid me in the mire of sin ! It seems as if an enormous load weighed at my heart. My will itself seems broken, and I have no strength left even to pray. I feel that an abyss separates me from Thee. Yes ; I am even now in this horrible position, and I dare not go on praying. I make confession, but without praying ; so convinced am I that my words will be but a vain sound. Above all things, I need that Thou shouldst raise me to Thee. Oh, break my icy heart ! Dissolve the Satanic charm which holds me back from Thee ! Prevail Thou for me, since I cannot walk alone ! Give me Thy Spirit ! Bring me again under the guidance of Thine eye, and suffer me no more to wander away ! But, alas, I have so often returned to Thee but to leave Thee again ; and it is as easy for me to forsake Thee as it is painful to return to Thee again ! An instant suffices to plunge me into evil ; but it needs days to quit it, and to attain a prayerful frame again. Profound is my misery ! Have compassion on me ! Hast Thou indeed designed that I should feel all the consequences of Thy withdrawal ? Hast Thou designed to make me measure more correctly the distance which separates heaven from earth ? Wouldst Thou that I

should learn by experience the distinction between being sustained by Thy Spirit and being left alone? Never have I more thoroughly recognised my nothingness than when deprived of Thy succour. Yea, I am almost constrained to be silent ere yet I have prayed unto Thee. Ah, Lord, I cannot rise, for I have no longer the wings of Thy Spirit, nor even one of those groanings which cannot be uttered! O Jesus, intercede for me, even when I cannot say Amen before the Father's throne; for well I feel that I have not prayed.



LXXII.

R E S T.

I YEARN for rest. Fain would I be removed from men and from turmoil. The height of my ambition is for a silent retreat. With the psalmist I am ready to say, "Oh that I had the wings of a dove, for then would I flee away!" *But*, is the wish of my heart in conformity to Thy will? No! A voice from Thee seems to reply that man is not meant to rest here below, where so many works, necessities, miseries call him to the help of his brethren. Even Thine angels are Thy messengers, conveying Thy commands to the end of the universe! *Thou* slumberest not; and without wearying Thou watchest over count-

less worlds. So, also, the living soul created in Thine image was not created to remain inactive. Yet I yearn for repose. Yet my cry is, "Oh that I had the wings of a dove, for then would I flee away!" Then in my spirit I find Thine answer, "My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you; let not your heart be troubled." Thus I am reminded that if I acted calmly, if I had that peace which naught can disturb, I should labour on without fatigue and without a struggle; peaceful amid activity, I should no longer sigh for repose. But how seldom is this the case! I scarce can act without agitating myself; I scarce can think without anxiety. I cannot walk without hurrying, and then, soon harassed, I sigh for repose, and say, "Oh that I had the wings of a dove!" Ah, if I acted indeed for Thee, I should act in Thy Spirit! But, alas, poor self mingles with my best endeavours. Then Thy Spirit withdraws itself, and, being worn out, I fall. I thank Thee, Lord, for shewing me the real secret of my desires after repose! Oh, give me grace to profit by the discovery! Give me to do all things as in Thy sight, in calmness, in peace, and in love!



LXXIII.

"GOD, BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER!"



ARE all human beings like myself? Have all this dark, double, deceitful nature? Is there in the universe another who, like myself, cannot examine his own heart without horror or pity? Nay, it is impossible. Yea, rather than open out the inmost recesses of my heart before men I would die. There is none as wicked as I, none who could excuse me if he knew me well. I cannot tell all, and my confessions will end in the silence which is sufficient for Thee, Lord, from whom I can hide nothing! Thou only canst understand me. Thou alone art He who wilt never cast me away. From man I should call forth horror, but in Thee I excite compassion. Quicken me, Lord! Deliver me from the deep mire! Let not my existence consume away in one long groaning! Let me not advance like a criminal towards Thy throne of glory! May I begin here below that life of purity and holiness which will be one source of joy hereafter! May I at last be enabled to carry out the life of devotion which in theory I understand so well! Oh, fix in my heart each religious feeling that has hitherto only crossed it! Oh that it may no more be at intervals and in contemplation, but unceasingly and in practice, that I think, speak, and act as an heir of heaven! May my prayers be followed

by watchfulness over self! If I for a while forget, awaken for me the recollection of what I am now saying! And, oh, may Thy Holy Spirit give me grace to make my actions harmonise with my prayers!



LXXIV.

THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION.

I AM assured of everlasting salvation. Oh, the peace this thought imparts! Yes, I shall enter heaven. I shall take my place amid the angels. I shall behold *Thee*; I shall contemplate *Thy* glory, and enjoy *Thy* love—yea, and the love of millions of heavenly beings. Imagination becomes bewildered in viewing the magnificence of such a future. Moreover, when I think that that life will endure as long as Thou endurest, even through endless ages—yea, that my life will be Thy life—oh, then I am well-nigh overcome with joy, and I *must* tell it to Thee! How happy is the thought that Thy mercies can never be withdrawn from me, because they are sealed to me as it were! Neither man nor devil can rob me of them. If my salvation depended upon an angel, I might fear that such a protector even would fail me. If it depended on my own state of mind, I should indeed have cause to misgive. But Thou keepest, Thou all-wise and good!

I can no more ruin myself than Thou canst lose Thy goodness and Thy power. My salvation is sure—yea, more certain than the continuance of the universe. The world will come to an end, but I shall not. Angels *may* fall away, but I can never perish. Oh, how shall I express my happiness, how testify my gratitude, how respond to Thy love! Oh, it is to Thee I must have recourse! From Thyself I must receive the obedience and holiness which are acceptable unto Thee. Oh, give me, then, that which Thou wouldst that I should render unto Thee! Give me to love Thee more, to serve Thee more perfectly; and until that day of death, wherein true life will begin, grant me to grow in holiness!



LXXV.

ON DEJECTION.

ALAS, my heart is a blank! Nothing gives me pleasure. Naught awakens my desires. I cannot understand myself. Loaded with Thy benefits, I feel no gratitude. Surrounded by duties, I have not courage to accomplish any. I have not even energy enough to deplore my guilt. I feel that this is not Thy will concerning me. Thou requirest something more of me, and Thou canst supply the needful grace. But how shall the first desire after that be kindled? How shall I discover the cause

of this languor? Alas, it seems as if my ingratitude was increased by Thy benefits! If I were less prospered perhaps I should pray more, perhaps I should act more. Then the very fear about my earthly future might lead me to Thee. Oh, the depravity of my nature, which I would conquer, but which has always conquered me! How deplorable the instability of my mind, which the breath of the smallest event can disturb!—the sport of all which is not myself, the slave of every will excepting my own! Oh, raise this fallen being! Give me, I pray Thee, Thy strength! Give me to see more clearly my end! How many creatures of Thy hand are advancing to their end in ignorance of Thee! To man alone is given to know Thee here below. Oh that I might never more turn aside! But, indeed, I am so often the same after thus praying unto Thee that I could almost recall my words, which result in nothing. What a mystery is my being! It is a labyrinth out of which I cannot escape. *Must* it be, then, that I perish in it before discovering the outlet? No; this cannot be. Meanwhile, let me reproach myself for all I complain of! I do not pray, I do not study Thy Word, I do not sanctify myself as I ought. I have not even a sustained desire to be holy. To Thee, Lord, be glory; but to me belongs confusion of face. I humble myself before Thee. Do Thou exalt me! I am ever ready, like Peter, to sink into the waves of incredulity. Jesus, save me, or I perish!

LXXVI.

ON FORBEARANCE.

I WOULD exercise forbearance towards all my fellow-creatures! That they are all guilty before Thee, is true. That they have offended against me, is also true. But this should not surprise me. Are they not like myself? I must not expect to meet with angels upon earth. And what am I? Am I that angel of patience, of sweetness, and of love? Am I towards others all that I would they should be towards me? Ah, am I always just towards those whom I would have perfect towards myself? When others have my faults they excite my horror, and I hate myself, *not* in myself, but in them. I am never more clear-sighted than in judging those who resemble me, and then I am pitiless. I fathom the depths of their souls. I divine them, I discover them, and then I pity myself for so doing. Whereas, this very insight ought to trouble me by leading me back to a sight of myself. Yea, Lord, do Thou make of my guilty brethren so many mirrors to reflect mine own image! If Thou teach me to look into myself for what is guilty in them, I shall become more indulgent. Even when I cannot detect in myself the same faults, shall I not easily discover others which they do not possess? Am I less guilty because my faults are different from those of

others? Or are they unpardonable, because their failings are unlike mine? Ah, no! But I am prone to boast of the sins I have not, and I even grow into being proud at the evil which I have not committed. The sins of others serve me as a pedestal, and I proudly rear my own statue upon their wickedness! I require so much indulgence at the hands of others, and yet I know not how to endure aught from them! How can I implore Thy pardon when I am not forgiving? Ah, Lord, I have need to entreat of Thee a spirit of indulgence towards my fellows! Give me to display such love and patience towards them, as Thou displayest towards me! Alas! if Thou hadst but exercised justice towards my faults, where should I be at this moment? If my brethren had never borne with me, what would have become of me? Teach Thou me to be ashamed of my hardness and injustice! Grant me grace to make amends in the future for those wrongs which I may have committed in the past by my requirements at the hands of others!



LXXVII.

ON THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

I THANK Thee, Lord, for those friends which Thy gospel has given me! Thanks be unto Thee for the joys so sweet and pure which their society affords! No sooner do I meet with some brother or sister unknown before—scarcely have I conversed with them before I feel springing up a bond of union never to end. One hour of outpouring suffices us to read each other's hearts! It seems as if a wall of partition had given way between us, and as if another wall separated us from the world. We trust each other. We are as well acquainted as if there had been long years of intimacy between us. We enjoy the communion of saints! Again I would thank Thee, Lord, for this treasure of affection which Thou hast placed in my possession. It is an emanation of Thine own Spirit—a foretaste of heaven—an aurora in June of the Day of Eternity. But to this gift do Thou add grace. Let affection be sanctified by increased activity. Let us not waste time in contemplation on the mountain with Moses and Elias, saying, with Peter, "It is good for us to be here: let us make tabernacles!" But having derived strength from above, may we forthwith dispense it in the world. Let us not be content with being brethren to each other; but may we be in life and in feeling the

brethren of Jesus! That following His example, we may be ready to descend from Tabor to walk towards Golgotha, knowing that after three days follows the resurrection. Lord, give us to spend ourselves with Christian affection; and, if need be, to give ourselves up for them who would fain await us, as did the enemies of Jesus, with nails and hammer in hand!



LXXVIII.

ON CONFESSING JESUS BEFORE MEN.



GOD! I am happy when engaged in private prayer to Thee! Amidst my brethren I pray with rapture! Why then am I ashamed of Thee in the world? Wherefore should I fear to open my mouth in prayer in an assembly of unbelievers? O Thou Creator of heaven and earth, can it be that I have any doubt of Thy existence? Or have I any doubt of the efficacy of prayer? No! I know that Thou livest: I know that Thou art a prayer-hearing God; and yet before those who deny Thee, I dare not confess that I love Thee and pray to Thee! If not in word, how often by my silence have I denied Thee? How often have I acted like Peter? Ah! I feel my guilty cowardice! I deplore the many opportunities of confessing Thee before men which I have lost! I cannot endure the

thought that Thou mightest call me to judgment for so much failure! I come to Thee by Jesus, and in His name I ask of Thee forgiveness! I have been an unprofitable servant, more intent on winning the senseless approbation of the world than Thy favour; fearing more the scorn of sinners than the anger of the Holy of holies! Oh, give me both pardon and courage, that my mouth may declare Thy name boldly; that that name may be written on my forehead, and the image of Jesus be reflected in my life! If my life were thus in harmony with Thy law, I should not fear so much to pronounce Thy name! Instead of blushing, I should then make scoffers blush! May my heart be purified, my life sanctified, and out of the abundance of such an heart may my mouth be swift to declare Thy name among those who know not Thee! These are my sincere desires, but the strength to accomplish them is lacking! Thou alone canst impart that strength! In His name I ask, who has said, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father in heaven."



LXXIX.

NO ADVANCE IN SANCTIFICATION.



COULD well-nigh despair of sanctification ! So often has it seemed to progress, and yet have I afterwards found that it had proceeded no further than before. How often some wile of Satan has cast me into an abyss which I had thought closed to me ! Must I then begin anew each day ? Will victory never become more easy ? Oh, how painful are these struggles, how shameful these falls, how multiplied these sins ! I ask myself if I have taken one step towards holiness, and I dare not think it ! Sometimes I fear lest I should deceive myself by taking my desires for accomplished facts ! Then I ask myself, have I indeed received the Holy Spirit ? Is Christ indeed the Son of God ? Does God listen to my prayers ? Is it not madness to suppose that my sinful nature can be changed into a sanctified nature ? Alas ! if I looked at the smallness of my growth in grace I might be tempted thus to despair and disbelieve ! But a stronger reason interrupts me ! It tells me that good and evil are opposing principles, and that if I hate the one and love the other, much more must Thou love the good and hate the evil ! I must ever reproach myself ! Good exists, but I choose it not ! Progress is possible ! Others advance, but I do not ! It seems that I alone, of all men, am so miserable, so

profoundly sinful! But here again is one of Satan's snares. I would acquit myself of a measure of responsibility by persuading myself that my nature is exceptional. But Thy Spirit teaches me that Thou wouldst have me look to myself, and not to others. It tells me that Thou hast not created me to be the sport of imagination! It cannot be that that which is more excellent than aught beside, that *holiness* should be a mere vanity! Is it then real, excellent, divine, possible, and yet absent from my life? Thy Word says, "Watch and pray" always, that God may *do* for thee what He has done for others. Oh, deepen these impressions, transform them into life! Give me to advance in holiness each day, and suffer me not to slide one step backwards!



LXXX.

PROPHECY.

CARCE can I carry my view over a point of space, or my thoughts over an hour of time, without finding one of Thy predictions accomplished! Here I see Thy gospel spreading according to Thy Word. There I behold the Jews dispersed and persecuted, yet still preserved, according to Thy Word! Jerusalem has been destroyed from foundation to topstone, as Thou didst predict long ago!

At this time, when the Holy Scriptures are more widely-diffused over the world, faith languishes, the world is worse, unbelievers are more hardened! When I see so many predictions accomplished, my faith ought to be strong and steadfast; and I ought to expect the fulfilment of prophecies which concern the future. But such prophecies are not living realities in my mind, as they should be! yea, the most undeniable and positive among Thy predictions exercise but a feeble influence over me. The final Judgment, the Resurrection of the dead, the triumphal entry of Believers into heaven, all these I desire, believe, affirm! But I believe as through a cloud of incredulity. Hope, rather than conviction, is brought to bear upon them. Yea, my very desire becomes a snare, and I may well fear lest it should be the only foundation of my hopes. My spirit is tortured! I meditate, I seek in my own wisdom, and again and again I fall back bruised and powerless! Oh, quicken my dejected soul! Open mine eyes to receive Thy light! Shew me that Satan would work out my ruin by means of my unbelief! But I now recognise these aspirations, of which I am so distrustful, as Thine own work. Thou hast vouchsafed them to me. Thou hast caused me to sigh after better things! Yes, I will believe in that which alone sanctifies me, which alone makes me happy, which alone raises me above the brute, which alone enables me to soar to Thee! "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief!"

LXXXI.

THE BURDEN OF SIN.

HOW heavily sin weighs upon the conscience! It makes me ill at ease with Thee and before men! What pains are required to hide it! What trouble is taken to commit it, but afterwards it is found to be deceit and bitterness. The very suffering caused by the evil I have committed suffices to prove that evil is evil, that Thou condemnest it, and that Thou wilt punish it! Yea, the anguish which precedes the indulgence of sinful passions, the vanity of the meanwhile enjoyment, the permanence of the regrets which succeed these, ought to suffice to restrain me; but they restrain me not. Evil is attached to me, or, rather, I to evil. It is a chain which I shake, because it wounds me; *but* it is a chain which I rivet each day! What a mystery, what a contradiction, what folly, what weakness! Lord, I need that Thou shouldest come to my rescue! Oh, hear Thou me! Deliver me from sin, give me to walk with head erect, spirit free, heart joyous, devoted to holy thoughts and deeds! Living for Thee and my fellow-creatures! Yea, and have not moments of truest happiness been thereby derived? Has not a holy devotedness to Thee resulted in as much happiness, as sin has produced of misery? Yea, have I not experienced that “godli-

ness hath the promise of this life?" Well-doing has never caused me regrets; evil-doing always brings remorse. Yes, when I calmly reflect, there is a seal of demonstration in all this; but when temptation arises, it is effaced. Do *Thou* then watch for me, and around me! Deliver me from evil, and give me, from this hour, an entrance into a new life, exempt from regrets, because free from sin; full of joy, because full of holiness!



LXXXII.

A DIVIDED HEART.

MY heart is not entirely Thine! It is not altogether in the world! It is divided between Thee and the world, Lord! My aim has long been to make my conscience and my passions agree. But the attempt has never succeeded, though I have been long in coming to the conviction that it never can. Conscience has re-echoed those words of Jesus, "No man can serve two masters; ye cannot serve God and Mammon." My whole life is marred by this conflict. I am weary of so many struggles, I will no longer subject myself to them. Henceforth may I desire to have no other Master than Thee—no will but Thine—no other work than Thy work. I will deny myself, and living in Thee, and for Thee, my holiness and

happiness will be promoted. Alas! how I have wasted my days in striving to reconcile what cannot be reconciled. But perhaps it was good for me that my experience should re-echo what Thy Word has declared! Now I believe, because I have, as it were, seen and touched the truth. In future the recollection of failure and misery will unite with Thy Word in opposing my unbelief! At each new temptation the remembrance will be renewed, and if Thou comest to my aid I shall triumph! I thank Thee that Thou hast made even this experience to work for my good. But henceforth be Thou my Leader! Suffer me no longer to follow the windings which Satan points out, deceiving me with the pretext that I should arrive finally at the right end. Oh that uprightness and singleness of purpose may henceforward characterise my life! Let no thought proceed from my heart—no word from my lips—no act from my life of which Thou art not the Author and the End! So may my actions be circumspect, because performed in faith, and may they be devoid of haste, because I know that Thou wilt be my fellow-worker! When adversity comes, may I remember that the cloud, though dark on the side towards the earth, is radiant with sunshine on the side of heaven! In short, Thou hast not required me to govern the world, but Thou dost call on me to govern my own heart! My Father, I believe that Thou wilt fulfil these desires, and I thank Thee, inasmuch as Thou hast begun to work, even during this prayer!

LXXXIII.

ON LOST TIME.



HOW much of this short life I waste! How many hours are passed in awaiting the next! How many are consumed in vain meditation, frivolous reading, useless employments! And my deceitful heart consoles me in the midst of to-day's indolence with the thought of to-morrow's activity. If I could sum up the hours thus devoured in long projects of future usefulness, I should find the total to be the greater part of my life. And when I seek for what the years I have spent in the Christian life have produced, I find the result is next to nothing. The world progresses in art, science, industry, pleasure, and sin. But my sanctification does not so advance! I go, I come, I make much stir in doing nothing. Oh, do Thou make these useless distractions, these idle conversations, this fruitless reading to cease! Let me be wholly occupied with thoughts, words, and works conformable to Thy will. Give me to act with calmness, order, and confidence in Thee! I know that it is not accumulated labours, but a steady, peaceful practice that Thou requirest of me. Oh that my whole life might be thus occupied! Ah, if I but knew what it is to live thus, my happiness would be greater. No regrets for time mispent; no rashness in action then, but patience in con-

fronting obstacles ; despairing not in adversity, contented because occupied according to Thy will.



LXXXIV.

*WHO SHALL DELIVER ME FROM THIS
BODY OF DEATH?*




HO shall deliver me from this body of sin? Oh that Thou, my God, wouldst free me from the tyranny of temptation and evil! If Thou wert to cause *good* to become as easy and pleasant to me as evil is oftentimes, how happy should I be here below! But what have I said? Is not this *Thy* will? And why has it not been fulfilled in my happy experience? Even because I have not asked it of Thee in faith and sincerity. I would be changed without prayer and without watchfulness; changed as by the magic effect of a word! It is not sin, but the regret *for* sin, which causes me pain! What I love is not so much holiness, as freedom from remorse. I am suffering and unhappy under Satan's bondage, and then I pray to Thee to deliver me. But *goodness* and Thee, Lord, I love not as I ought. So weak is my love to Thee that it seems scarcely more than an imagination, or a theory. My understanding tells me that I ought to love Thee, whilst my heart remains unloving! Oh, pity me; take

away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh—the new heart! What an enigma, that I can know Thee without loving Thee! That I can approve what is good and not perform it! That I can both detest evil and pursue it! Yea, that I can long to commit evil! That I can begin anew each day what I have blamed yesterday, and do again what I lamented! How plainly Satan's work appears in this! Deliver me, O my Saviour, from my adversary! Break his weapons! Stretch forth Thine hand and raise me up! Fight Thou for me, O God! Give me the victory over sin, and grant that I may ever peacefully accomplish Thy holy will!



LXXXV.

PEACE AND UNION.

“OW good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” How much good their mutual outpourings do! Sweet it is to receive, and sweet to give confidence, and thus to make two hearts beat in unison. Thus conversing, I feel transported as into another world! It is like heaven upon earth! My brethren become Thy messengers. We feel that Thou art with us, that Christ is in the midst of us, and that Thy Spirit is descending on us. But why are these mo-

ments so rare and so short? Alas, it is because I do not seek for them frequently! Do Thou multiply them! I know not how to seek them. Sometimes pride, sometimes false shame, sometimes useless occupations, interfere to hinder Christian intercourse, and so trouble and divisions arise where peace and union should dwell. Thus, with all the elements of happiness within our reach, we are unhappy. Whilst I wish for peace, I do not seek it. I love union, but I do not labour for it. A breath of passion arises in my heart, and thenceforth I abandon my life to it, and become at once my own executioner and martyr. O my God, rescue me from these wiles of Satan! Give me patient endurance and love, wherewith to meet the infirmities of others. Let me overcome them not by anger, but by gentleness, not by reproaches, but by resignation, not by carnal weapons, but by prayer. If I but knew how to stretch out my hand to lift up many drooping hands, to open my heart to many timid and fearful hearts, what pure joys, what Christian friendships, might be realised by others and myself! How easily might I then win those whom now my coldness distances! How much I might benefit desolate souls, and what a treasury of grace I should gain for myself! Yea, Lord, when it relates to Thy benefits, to give is to receive! Grant unto me, then, to give much love unto my brethren; to follow peace with all men, and to realise here below the union which will hereafter make all our joy in heaven.

LXXXVI.

HUMILITY.

IN vain do I say and remind myself that I ought to cultivate humility; that it is the first of Christian virtues, that it finds favour alike with God and man, that it is only the humble who are amiable and happy! In vain do I say to myself that pride is the torment of the spirit, the cause of hatred on the part of others, and, still more, that it brings down Thy condemnation! In vain, for still it pervades my heart, swells my actions, poisons the morality of the best of them, and my very life itself. Yea, I am both sinful and mad through this pride which I caress the more in proportion as it causes me to suffer! Oh, have compassion on a poor creature writhing from the venom of that accursed serpent! Give me, by means of my sin and folly, to be duly humbled. Give me that rare humility which shall make me feel lowly among my brethren, as well as lowly before Thee. Let me "esteem others as better than myself." Let me be ready to take the lowest place! Let me live in peace without pride, and without contention, amidst a world into which Thy Son came to be a servant of servants!



LXXXVII.

THE WISDOM OF GOD.

HOW I marvel to think that I *need* to remind myself that Thou art wise, or that I ought to seek for traces of wisdom in Thy works!


Is it possible that I can ever doubt whether such traces are to be found therein? *Am* I loth to declare that ignorance is on my side, and that of *Thee* I must ask an account of what I understand not? Full well I feel the justice of Thy reproaches to Job! "Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth? Knowest thou the order of the heavens? didst thou hurl the thunderbolt? didst thou create intelligence?" What height, what depth in Thy designs, O Lord, which I shall never penetrate! What height, what depth, even on the borders of those mysteries which Thou hast given me at times to understand! From that brilliant lightning reflecting Thy glory, may I not judge of the beauty of the whole of Thy work? And because the flashing lightning shews me, for an instant, Thy brightness and Thy wisdom, and then leaves me in darkness, does the brightness and the wisdom cease to exist? Ah, if to me Thou seemest to be dark, the fault is mine! My unbelief breathes upon and obscures Thy glory, and then I complain that I cannot discover it! Oh, purify my heart, enlighten mine eyes!

Shew me in all Thy works the seal Divine, which Thou hast placed there ! Grant that, in considering them, I may always be assured of Thy love and power ! May I enter upon such studies with the conviction that *Thou* canst not err, but that I, without Thy grace, am always prone to err ! May Thy grace fall upon a humble spirit, and reveal to me the hidden wisdom of Thy Word and works ! When I consider Jesus born in a manger, living in poverty and trial, dying on a cross, shew me herein Thy wisdom. In Thine eyes, the straw and the gold are alike, and Thou respectest nought but holiness ! Shew me in this Saviour at once my Elder Brother and my God ! May I behold Him as the willing and precious sacrifice who has appeased Thy justice and opened a free course to Thy mercy ! Oh that I may learn to know Thee better, and to adore Thee more humbly. So might I follow after holiness with a profound sense of Thine infinity and of mine own ignorance !



LXXXVIII.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

NE of Thine apostles tells us that "God is Love." Nature, by a thousand voices, exclaims, "God is Love;" and I, a poor, insignificant creature, lost in the dust of worlds, can say to myself, I am the object of Thy love. Thou hast thought of me to create me. Thou thinkest of me in preserving me; and, through endless ages, Thou wilt be thinking of me, and maintaining my existence and my happiness. And what have I done? What response have I made to so much love? Ah, I have enjoyed the benefits Thou hast bestowed, forgetting Thee, the Giver. I have depended on the promises of Thy Word, whilst neglecting Thy commands. I have desired Thy love without responding to it. I have acted like an ungrateful child, who presumes upon a father's tenderness to countenance disobedience. Yea, whilst Thou hast been benefiting me in Thine house, I, like the prodigal, have meditated on flight into a far country. I have lived in the world in pleasure, in sin, without calling Thee to mind, excepting in times of danger and distress. But, even then, has mine been a thorough returning unto Thee? No! less wise than that prodigal, I have stopped by the way; and when from afar I have beheld Thee, with arms ex-

tended towards me, I have not chosen to draw nearer to Thee. I, who can burn with ardour for many imperfect or unworthy objects, have only a transient and lukewarm love towards Thee. Yes ; I have to excite in myself a sense of shame or of duty, as a goad to drive me to love Thee ! How unworthy is my heart ! How niggardly is my devotion ! How wretched I am ! Lord, I need that, having loved me, Thou shouldest teach me and impel me to love *Thee* ! Oh, how long shall I feel bound to the sin which I hate, and to which, notwithstanding, I cling ? How long must I be the accomplice of my own enemy ? Oh, change my wretched nature ! Take from me this "heart of stone," in which Thy law is *written* but as the dead inscription on the tomb ! Give me instead a heart of flesh, living to love, to love Thee, who so lovest me ; and, after Thine example, to love those who hate me !



LXXXIX.

*ON THE DIVINE CHARACTER OF JESUS
CHRIST.*



THANK Thee, Lord, for giving me the life of Thy Son to contemplate. Such a model humbles me when viewed in contrast to my depravity ; and it rejoices me when I contemplate it in its beauty. This Jesus is no mere man.

His character is at the same time simple and grand, humble and noble. Virtues, which are apparently opposed, unite and form in Him a perfect and beautiful harmony. His life is evidently a reality under the pen of the evangelist—a reality in the heart of Jesus! Herein is no arrangement or art, but a record of His words and deeds just as they passed. I have the strongest conviction that Jesus said what He thought, and only what He thought. He did not philosophise, but He lived; and oh, what a life! Where in the world, or its history, could we find a similar existence? What man ever lived like this man? Where is His brother—His equal here below? Humble without meanness, humble without arrogance, profound in His thoughts, simple in His words, devoted even unto death, and yet commanding devotion; speaking with authority, and yet surrendering His will; speaking always justly, and never saying anything that I should have divined, yet striking my heart with unexpected light, more intense and sweet the longer I contemplate it. But, Lord, I acknowledge that human words could not interpret this Divine character. It seems as if this holy life has been placed before mine eyes less as a true resemblance than as a model. Give me, then, grace to tread in Jesus' footsteps! Give me to reproduce, in the eyes of unbelievers, some features of that Heavenly Image! They will not go to the gospel to contemplate Jesus—my example may gain those who will not heed my words.

XC.

ON LITTLE FAITH.



H, if I had more faith, how my whole life would be simplified! My heart would become calm, my work persevering, my life holy and happy! Thy Word declares it. I have even experienced it. Notwithstanding, I ask Thee neither ardently nor frequently for this faith. I have a vague desire, but I do not implore it with tears. When Thou grantest it to me, I know not how to keep it. Yea, at the moment when I fancy myself most secure, it escapes me. Then I am again uneasy, troubled, and fearful of the least noise of men and of events. I am *like* one who imagines that the universe proceeds without Thee—that chance presides over thousands of worlds in the midst of chaos. As if even to this day Thou hadst not watched over me and mine. What a strange delusion! When I review my past, I see Thy hand throughout, yet when I look towards the future, I fear that I may not discern it anywhere. This proceeds from folly and ingratitude. Oh, pardon me! Thou knowest that I desire that I may never again be thus guilty. I desire to walk leaning on Thee. I desire to bear in mind that it is Thou who hast created and preserved me; Thou who hast given me the gospel and Thy Holy Spirit; Thou who hast never suffered me to lack anything. Thou hast

made even sickness and adversity to work for my good, and Thou hast given me to understand how, when Thou hast removed the trial. Yes, all is well that Thou doest. This I know, but I forget it. Wilt Thou recall the truth to me until I forget it no longer? Henceforth may firm confidence in Thee, my God, my Father, and my Saviour, issue in corresponding activity, devotedness, peace, and joy!



XCI.

CHARITY.

WHAT have I ever done to deserve the blessings with which Thou loadeest me? What *less* than I have they done, the poor, the ignorant, the suffering? Alas, when I contrast my position with theirs, and compare my charity with theirs, I stand self-accused of hardness! I retrench nothing from my abundance, wherewith to supply their needs! Have I any right to speak words of consolation to those whom I do not aid? Did not my Master care for the body as well as for the soul? And does my charity evaporate in sighs? What an account have I to render Thee! I resemble the rich man clothed in purple, much more than Lazarus dying of grief and hunger. And yet, so ungrateful am I towards Thee, that I know

not how to thank Thee. Yea, when there seems danger of losing a little of my abundance, how ungrateful am I; as soon as the breath of adversity blows on me, what murmuring! Thou alone canst fathom the depths of this moral plague. Alas, prosperity has blunted my sensibilities, and the sight of others' miseries has hardened me against feeling for them—those very means which Thou didst design to soften my heart and to draw out charity! Oh, grant me Thy pardon and Thy grace to do better! Give me to place myself in thought at the table of the poor, and on the sick-bed, that so I may learn to fly to the succour of sick and poor. I would say to myself, that these despised ones of the world are nevertheless the brethren of Jesus Christ, and that in aiding or neglecting them I am aiding or neglecting our Lord and Saviour. Then shall I hear beforehand the gracious words, "Forasmuch as ye have done it unto these, thou has done it unto Me!" Lord give me to have the love of Jesus, that according to His example I may descend from the paradise of my prosperity to the depths of misery into which so many of my fellow-creatures are plunged. Yea, with the bread of this life I would convey to them the consolation, the peace, the joy, and the life eternal, which are in Jesus Christ.



XCII.

*WEARY OF CONTEMPLATING SELF, I
RISE TO THEE.*

MY God, I am weary of myself! weary of studying myself! weary of contemplating the sad picture of my spiritual miseries! I am weary of laying them before Thee. Alas, what shall I say unto Thee? I have so often laid my wretchedness before Thee, and so often in vain, that I dread incurring fresh responsibility. Oh, turn away from myself my weary view, and transfix it on better things! Turn it to Thee, Lord, my Creator and my Father! to Thee who hast formed me out of nothing; who lovest me still, notwithstanding all my ingratitude! Carry my thoughts to Jesus, Thy Son, who became my Brother that He might resue me from eternal condemnation, and procure eternal felicity for me! Oh, that I might learn to love Him who has so loved me; who from being my Lord, made Himself as a servant, and who at this moment intercedes for me at Thy right hand! Transport me by faith into that future of light, of love, of holiness, of glory, where I shall no longer have to fight against sin, but where obedience will be sweet and easy! Shew me those thousands of angels who fly at thy commands! Cause me to catch the sound of those harps of gold—of those seraphic songs which shall resound under

the celestial vaults in the depths of eternity! May I even now advance on wings of faith from world to world, to study the universe, to contemplate Thy glory, to adore Thy wisdom, to bless Thy love! What unexpected ineffable joys would be discovered in this new world! What ecstasies in the contemplation of Thy face, reflected in all Thy works, and hereafter to be revealed! Oh, when shall I know Thee as I am known of Thee? But awaiting, as in exile, this blessedness, give me, after Thine own example, to pour love and consolation into the hearts of many who are as yet strangers to Thee! Give me to love, to teach, and to guide them to that land which they know not; and may we there meet at last, numerous, loving, and holy.



XCIII.

ON INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

DO not my very prayers bear traces of egotism? Am I not too exclusively the object of my sighs? Yes! I feel, I confess that my friends, my relations, and the world, are not often enough brought before Thy mercy-seat. My own wants make me forget the wants of those who are suffering, or injuring themselves around me. If, indeed, I sometimes mention them to Thee, it is at the end of a

prayer begun for myself. Oh, that it might be no longer thus ! Teach me to pray for those I love. Teach me to love for eternity those whom I love in time. Have I ever thoroughly realised the possible separation from those who have walked by my side, who have perchance lived under the same roof, or sat at the same table ? Have I ever said to myself that that hand which I press every day could not, perhaps, even reach me there ; nor my hand carry a drop of refreshing water over the impassable gulf ? Oh, the horror of such a thought ! Suffer me no longer to remain indifferent concerning the fate of so many souls that are dear to me. I entreat Thee to sanctify those that are already converted, and to convert those who are not. That I may attract others unto Thee, give me grace to present a daily example of a holy and devoted life ; and, whilst labouring to do good to their bodies, may I strive to benefit their souls ! Oh, if I should be an obstacle in the way of their conversion ! They regard my actions more than they heed my words, and my life too often belies my words, and thus I may be to them a stone of stumbling. Oh, is it not enough that I have to answer for myself ? Am I further responsible for those whom Thou hast given me, and whom I have not kept ? Lord Jesus, Thou who hast never suffered one of Thine own to be cast off, Thou who didst pray for Thine apostles, Thou who didst make disciples of Thy relatives, make Thou of those whom I love after the flesh, brethren in the faith ! Re-

deemed by Thy sacrifice, and reclaimed by my prayers,
may I meet them all again in heaven !



XCIV.

*ON PREACHING TO OTHERS AND
OVERLOOKING OURSELVES.*

HOW often I have been struck with the amount of evil in the world, with the wickedness of men, with the necessity of reforming society !

Many a time I have sought for remedies for all this evil. How happy I should have esteemed myself could I have applied any, could I so speak, so act, so moralise, as to convert the world. What wishes, what projects I have conceived for others, whilst forgetting my own needs ! I say "pray," and I do not pray enough ; "read Scripture," and I do not read it enough ; "follow after holiness," and I do it not. What blindness ; yea, rather, what pride, what slothfulness ! Ah, Lord, cause me to look within, and searching my own heart, to groan over its depravity. But not as those who study their own maladies, that they may know how to treat the same in others ; let my motive be to obtain a cure for myself first. In striving for myself, should I not therein be working for others ? Could I offer them any argument more powerful than a good example ? Was

not Jesus holy whilst He preached holiness? Was not humility even more discernible in His manger, and in His cross, than in His discourses? Ah, yes; it is not for want of an example, but for want of courage to imitate it, that I fail. Come, then, to my aid, O Lord! May I always attempt myself what I inculcate on others! Give me to practise before professing, to act rather than to speak, and, above all, may I speak and act in all sincerity, not in imitation of men, but after the promptings of Thy Spirit in me. Thus may I only offer to others that which I find to be good for myself; and, remembering that my Master made Himself as a servant, may I be humble.



XCV.

OBEDIENCE TO GOD.

HOW incomplete, how dull, how insensible, is my obedience! I obey Thee, but without heart. I obey Thee to rid my conscience of a duty. I obey Thee, but not promptly. It needs that Thy Spirit should again and again remind me of my delays. I obey Thee on great occasions, but in the small things of every moment, I account myself less guilty in following my own will. Alas, I sometimes imagine that I shall atone for to-day's negligence by an obedience deferred until to-morrow! How prone I am

to rest satisfied with projects! How many times I have postponed acting for the sake of forming some new project! Yes, I am ingenious in satisfying, and in justifying my indolence. If I devised the same skill in doing Thy will as in thus doing Satan's, I should, doubtless, find cause at this moment for thanksgiving instead of self-humiliation. Oh, do Thou give me that prompt and joyful obedience which I have but tasted as yet! Give me the obedience which springs from love, and which is no less happy than complete. My God, I would be like Thy holy angels, ready to fly at Thy bidding. Did not Jesus himself become obedient, even unto the death of the cross? And when upon that cross, did He not still breathe prayer and pardon? How far from that am I! But I desire not to turn my gaze again upon self. I would have it fixed on the holy obedience of Jesus Christ. I would look at the constant activity of the apostles. I would shape my life by theirs. I would that henceforth my existence may run on in joyful obedience to Thy will.



XCVI.

ON FAITH.



THE more I meditate on the faith which Thou requirest, the more I feel that it is the solution of all my difficulties! What *else* could I give Thee? I who am so weak—I to whom nothing belongs! If it had been possible for me to offer Thee something, whereby I might have procured Thy heaven for my works, notwithstanding pride, avarice, and a cold heart incapable of loving Thee, then Thou wouldest but have given me the just reward! But when I think that Thy goodness gives me all, heaven and earth, time and eternity, pardon and holiness, and all by grace and gift—when I think that Thou hast chosen me, and endowed me with Thy Spirit—that Thou offerest me even that faith which Thou demandest of me—oh, then, my heart itself seems dissolved into tears of gratitude. When thus I measure my love by the amount of Thy benefits, I love Thee without effort and without calculation. To love Thee is to be happy. My sole regret now is, that I have not known how to love Thee more, and how to obey Thee completely. What peace, what serenity, a strong faith would have shed over my life! I know it by those intervals, too short and rare, in which I have enjoyed this deeper faith than usual. How easy all appeared then! At such times I have felt ready

for anything, content with everything, and assured that all things were working together for my greatest good. Man might *then* applaud or blame me, help or oppose me, what did it signify to me? I know, O Lord, that final victory is mine, and that even if my path were hedged in behind and before, Thou wouldest open others by my side. Yes, faith is a healing balm; it is an oil poured on the wounds of the soul; it is strength given to the exhausted frame. Now I implore of Thee one gift, oh, give me that abundantly! Faith, full and entire; confidence in Thy providence and in Thy love; faith in Jesus who died for my sins; faith in the Holy Spirit to renew my life; faith in the promises relating to Thy heaven and Thy eternity!



· XCVII.

THE HAPPINESS OF DEVOTION TO GOD.



YES, it is sweet to devote one's being to the Lord, and to one's fellow-creatures! It is sweet to expend one's life in Thy service—sweet to combine my work with Thine; yea, rather to unite my work with Thy work. Thus might I follow His example who does good to all—who governs the universe, and who gives life eternal. Ah, there is in the dignity of work thus blended with Thine a fulness of joy which the whole world cannot offer, but which Thou

vouchsafest to the humblest of Thy followers ! Thou, Lord Jesus, hast declared that whosoever shall give up time, food, health, life, for Thy sake, shall receive a hundredfold more in this life. Yea, forasmuch as inward joys are worth more than all these sacrifices, of *such* joys no one can deprive me. Man may, indeed, do much towards depriving me of earthly joys. He may crush me with misfortune, he may refuse me his attention, he may pursue me with his hatred ; but he cannot hinder me from pitying, from praying for him, from loving, from striving to do him good. Man may dispute my right to a place in Thy sunshine, O my God, but not to a place in Thy heart. But, alas ! I so rarely taste the pure joy of devotedness to Thee, because pride and selfishness drive it from me. I know how to appreciate the joy, but I do not seek it. It is rather an ideal which my spirit contemplates than a heart reality. Oh, accomplish that which Thou hast begun ! Thou hast given me to taste and see that Thou art good,—satisfy me with Thy goodness ! I desire to resemble Thee, who lovest without measure and without distinction ! Grant that my prayers and my devotedness may, like Thy rain and Thy sunshine, both descend and shine on the good and on the evil, to unite me to the one and to save the other. Let not their indifference have the effect of repulsing me, neither their ingratitude. For neither my indifference nor my ingratitude have hindered Thee from doing me good, O Lord !

XCVIII.

ON THE HEART'S DECEITFULNESS.

VERY skilful am I in deceiving myself, in colouring my conduct, in excusing my faults. Skilful I am in discovering motives for neglecting duty, yea, in postponing, until at last I leave undone. Skilful I am even when I make confession unto Thee ; seeking thereby, perhaps, compensation for the good which I do not. When the moment arrives in which I ought to act, I seek for reasons wherefore I may forbear to act. At the hour of prayer I find good reasons for self-accusation ; and of all I make weapons to justify myself. At this moment it seems as if obedience were easy. But let the time arrive in which to obey, and my hands will hang down as in the past ; my tongue will become timid in Thy cause, bold in mine own ; and again, and yet again, I shall fall back into the wheel-ruts of sin. Oh, awaken my conscience ! Not only in recollection let it be aroused, but amid the world, and in confronting duty ! Deliver me from these pretexts, these deceits, this cowardice, which I call moderation, prudence, and wisdom ; and of which I make my boast, when I ought to be humbled ! Give me to be faithful unto Thee in little things, in that multitude of details which fill up life ! Repress my words, vain or light ! Suffer me not to use

presumptuous words before the sinner and the unbeliever! Give me to have both the good desire and the strength to perform! Incite, impel, constrain me to enter upon the field of labour which is open on all sides, and on all sides forsaken! Yes, I would be sincere with myself, that I may learn to judge myself as well as I can judge others! Thus I shall no longer satisfy myself with words, projects, desires, which are always vain. Then I shall no longer lie to my own conscience; and then I may anticipate happiness in the performance of that which I have contemplated. But, Lord, "I will not let Thee go" until I have ascertained from Thee the secret whereby I may realise that which I desire. *Yet*, is this another of the wiles of my heart? Is it indolence which desires to advance without fatigue, and to conquer without conflict? I have reason to fear and to be humbled. Oh that I may remember my Saviour's injunction, "Watch!"



XCIX.

IGNORANCE ARISES FROM SIN.

HOW difficult it is to attain to self-knowledge! For long years I have endeavoured to search my own heart. Each day my view has penetrated further into its depths, and I have not yet reached the end. There is therein, as

it were, the sanctuary of sanctuaries, filled not with incense, but with darkness ; inhabited not by the Holy of Holies, but by the ruler of wickedness, that arch-deceiver, whom the shrewdest of mankind cannot always detect. Sometimes I flatter myself that intention is everything, and action very little, and consequently I satisfy myself with meditating good. Sometimes, on the contrary, I persuade myself that the great thing of importance is to be *doing*, and then I work for my own satisfaction, and perhaps for my own glory. To-day I take refuge in the weakness of my nature, and I applaud myself for this humility, as for a good work. To-morrow, depending on my own strength, I shall thrust myself into the battle of life, without even a prayer unto Thee ! Who knows whether I am not proud of the grace which Thou hast given me to understand Thy gospel ? And who knows whether (incredible contradiction) I do not, on many occasions, make my ignorance an excuse ? Alas, my heart is an unfathomable abyss, an inexplicable mystery ; but, ah, passions form the bottom of this abyss—sin is the explanation of this mystery ! *Sin*, which I introduce even into Thy work ; sin which I disguise under lying forms ; sin which I love, which I caress, which I deceive my conscience in order to retain. Oh, teach me, Lord, that it is a *guilty* ignorance which is united to an evil will, with a will which would rather remain in ignorance in order to dispense with obedience ! I would bear in

mind, O Lord, that my wilful ignorance does not justify me in Thy sight ; because Thou hast given to me a light, which I put under the bushel of my selfishness rather than be troubled by it. Oh, give me in spite of myself to behold my spiritual disease, and let me have no rest until I have seen all, confessed all, and I am acquitted of all through faith in my crucified Saviour !



C.

ON THE SIN OF GIVING OFFENCE.

ALTHOUGH I am often conscious of the harm resulting to myself from sinning, I seldom consider the injury which I thereby do to others. If I seek to hide my sin from others, it is for my own sake, and not because I fear to be a stumbling-block to them. How much evil may I thus commit ! Nay, I ought to say, how much have I already done ! Who could tell me what seeds of evil my words and deeds have sown in other hearts ? Who could follow through thousands of lives the influence of my sad example ? The thought overwhelms me ! I entreat Thee, Lord, not to drive away this reflection, but to render it profitable ! Oh, how many lost ones may find wherewith to reproach me at the judgment day for having contributed to their ruin ! What a

mass of ruined ones may overshadow with their accusations the *few* to whom I have been a means of blessing and edification! Ah, I comprehend the terror of that declaration, "Woe unto him by whom the offence cometh!" Yes, I understand that; for him who ruins himself and others it would have been better had he never been born! Give me a more lively sense of my responsibility! May my mind be pervaded at once with the greatness and the danger of my task! May I continually bear in mind that by my example I may either lead in the way of salvation or in the path of perdition! May I henceforth carry about with me the sweet fragrance of the gospel! May all within me breathe of faith, love, and peace; and may my outer life be the means of attracting others nearer to Thee! Oh, when I consider the amount of good which thus I might accomplish, but which I do not, I am confounded and humbled! Yet, Lord, I have a yearning desire to do better even from this moment. Oh that my first word on meeting with others may tend to edification; and may my first deed be a deed of love! Lord, let not this my desire be a mere passing emotion! But hereafter may I be enabled to declare in all sincerity before men, "Woe to him by whom the offence cometh!" and "Blessed are the peace-makers!"

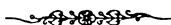


CI.

ON MEDITATING UNITED WITH ACTING.

LORD, my whole life is a series of thoughts and feelings. I think, I rejoice, I deplore on account of myself and of others. But these tumultuous waves of fear or of desire almost invariably disappear before they arrive upon the field of activity. I exhaust my strength in thoughts and feelings, and have none left for action. I dig into my heart; I study minutely my conscience; I render to myself an exact account of all that I see and hear; and thus is the time consumed which Thou gavest me for work. My head is full, my life is empty. My heart is full, but its fulness does not reach the world without. My heated sentiments having bubbled up in my breast, evaporate, as if to experience them were all that Thou hast required of me; as if to feel were to act. Ah, if I had a sincere love for souls, could I thus spend my life in the barren contemplation of my own thoughts? If, indeed, I loved my neighbour, I should be eager to transform into deeds so many and such fine intentions. But instead of this I satisfy myself with words, and with desires instead of self-devotion! *To-day* the intention, *to-morrow* the deed; and yet again *to-morrow* for that which costs me an effort, or which disturbs my ease, or destroys my heart's lusts. Alas, I know not whether I am not now

too well satisfied at having made my confession unto Thee !—whether for the *thought* I do not esteem myself as having *done* the good deed ! Ah, if I could do more and say less ! It would be well if I contemplated self less and laboured for others more ! Alas, Lord, I am incapable of myself, but “I can do all things” by Thine aid ! Come, then, and root up my slothfulness, my lukewarmness, my selfishness, and give me to go from place to place, like Jesus, *doing* good ! Yea, I would remember that the hour is approaching the night of death, wherein I shall quit this world, so full of work to do, and of work undone !



CII.

ON THE DESIRE FOR SECLUSION.



AS I advance in years, I am more disposed to isolate myself. I am happier in silence ; the world presents fewer attractions ; its business and its pleasures contain less to interest me. I would at this moment welcome a command from Thee to go and live in some profound, unknown retreat. But whence arises this disposition ? Comes it from weariness of the evil which I behold, or of the good which I might do ? Would I flee the evil example, or the lawful obligations of society ? Alas, I would fain persuade my-

self that in retirement I should become holy ! But on examining my motives again, I find that it is more for repose than for holiness that I seek ! I would create for myself fictitious duties in order to rid myself of those which are real and painful. I set myself a task of my own choosing, that I may escape that which Thou hast given me. Ah, I need my Saviour's prayer : " I ask Thee not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou wouldest keep them from the evil ! " Yes, my place is in the world, and amid sinful men. My duty is to remain there without partaking of the sin. Ah, I confess that it is *more* from weariness in well-doing than from fear of evil example that I retire from my fellow-men. To justify my retirement, I exaggerate to myself their faults. But I do not consider that the greater their errors, the greater their danger, so much the more imperative is the necessity laid upon me to help them. Ah, if Jesus, wearied of His disciples, had ascended into heaven without passing through Calvary, where would be now the thousands of souls redeemed by His death ? Ah, yes ; this love of seclusion is, after all, one of Satan's wiles ! It is but a development of the indolence which I disguise under the names of prudence and humility ! Oh, give me the courage which I lack, and suffer me to have no more yearnings for repose on this side of eternity !



CIII.

LIFE IS ONE LONG GROANING.


MY prayer is but one moan prolonged. I can pity and blame myself. But I am less disposed to thank Thee, to meditate upon Thy presence and Thy love. Yea, Lord; and notwithstanding all Thou doest for me, I remain the same. What though some causes for sighing are removed, other causes are soon found. Dost Thou afflict me? I cry for deliverance. I promise to make a better use of prosperity. Dost Thou send prosperity? I fall into idleness, lukewarmness, ingratitude. And still I pity myself, if not for my trials, at least for my infirmity. Furthermore, after self-accusation, I do not reform; I fall back again into the mire of iniquity, without having the will or the power to avoid it. And now, what shall I say? Thou showerest blessings upon me, and I know not how to use them. Shall I wait for privation and suffering to drive me to a better mind? Alas for me if my better feelings are only to exist during the pressure of trial, for that is not the time to serve Thee actively! and oh if prosperity should again induce lukewarmness! Oh, am I created only to compassionate myself, and is perpetual inconsistency the law of my existence? Am I placed in the world to do only that which I disapprove? Shall I continue until death this vain struggle

against the bands of sin? I cannot believe it; for I know that there is a haven to be reached by this ocean, but I know not how to arrive at it. Oh, do Thou cast the anchor for me in the depths of Thy grace, and bind me strongly with the cords of Thy love! Thus, may I no longer be tossed by the thousand contrary winds of temptation which lead me to sin,—even to such sin as leads onward to despair!



CIV.

ON THE GIFT OF SPEECH.

H, give me to make a good use of the gift of speech! How much good, or how much evil, I may do by the words which are continually falling from my lips! How easily might I encourage or exhort! How often I might quote Thy holy word, or tell of Jesus, or brighten hope by calling to mind Thy promises! Not more easily can the sower cast from his full hands the seed which is to maintain the family. Yet, though it would be so easy thus to do good, I leave it undone. I am chary even of good words, and so I allow thousands of opportunities to escape wherein I might shed them as the healing balm on a diseased heart. And, ah, this is not all! For I know not how to be silent in season. I am apt to speak

when there is no need, and what I say amounts to nothing. Wherefore then do I speak? Sometimes to utter reproaches, sometimes to search for what is wrong in others, sometimes to boast and prove myself to be right, and sometimes, alas, for the satisfaction of sending back a wound to one who may have wounded me! That which I sow abundantly is the tare. Yes; censure, evil-speaking, hasty judgment flow in large waves, as a tide which I cannot stay. Not until my own conscience revolts indignantly, or until it receives some check from others, can this satanic pleasure be interrupted. Never was there a more striking proof of the depravity of my heart. With this tongue, instead of doing good, I do evil. Times without number I have reproached myself, and committed the evil again. Oh, sanctify me, my God, and fill me with love towards all with whom in future I may hold intercourse, whether known, or unknown, friends or enemies!



CV.

ON IMPATIENCE.



HOW little can I endure of contradiction! Daily and continually I am irritated, and my patience fails me. Especially am I wont to manifest impatience towards those for whom affection should teach me how to practise it. A mere


nothing agitates me—a word which is too loud or too low suffices to provoke my murmurs. Not one even of the attentions which are lavished on me but makes me impatient, as perhaps the neglect of them would have made me equally impatient. Yes, I am unjust and ungrateful, both towards Thee and towards those whom Thou hast given me. I lack submission under a multitude of circumstances, whilst I complain of obstacles which Thou Thyself hast appointed. I would do Thy will, but I would do it in my own way, and not in Thine—according to my plans, and not according to Thy decrees. I will not yield my will to Thee. Oh, give me to exercise that humble submission and that holy patience under Thy will which Jesus manifested! What right, indeed, have I to be irritated against those who dare not even complain of my irritability? What right have I to direct the events of the world? Yea, what right to order the events of my friends or my family, whilst I know not how to control my will, how to overcome my temper, or how to practise heartfelt submission? I feel that I have no such right. But I desire henceforth to commit all into Thy hands, to accept without murmuring that which comes upon me from without, and to have no struggle excepting with myself! Come then to my aid! For although my desire is sincere I have no strength in myself, and without Thee I shall surely fall again; but if Thou strengthenest me I can do all things. I ask of Thee patient endurance, and love for my neighbours,

even under the lightest crosses! Give me confidence in Thee, even under the smallest circumstances!



CVI.

ON THE TWO ASPECTS OF RELIGION.

H, why do I find so much difficulty in rising towards Thee, my God? Why does it cost me an effort to meditate on heaven? Why, when as it were transported heavenward by Thy Spirit, do I descend again so quickly? Is it then distasteful to me to occupy myself with the things which concern salvation? No; for my spirit willingly turns to them; but it always falls back on itself and its sins, on the world and on its miseries. I can for a time fix my thoughts on the humbling state of my own heart; but I can scarcely rise to the steady contemplation of celestial joys. I can better smite upon my breast than give thanks unto Thee. Religion is to me like the vast clouds which separate the heavens from the earth. I look at it from below, and it seems to me sad, human, reflecting the lower world. But I cannot transport myself to that other side of the cloud which faces the heavens, and glows with sunlight. Yet it is the same cloud. So it is the same religion, but seen from an earthly point of view. My faith is too weak to carry me higher. My

miseries are too great to be possibly forgotten ; and I am overwhelmed by the weight of my earthly chains. When I attempt to follow the thoughts by which my brethren rise to a greater height, I find it too much for me. Then I begin to question their real elevation ; and I am ready to accuse them of having gone beyond the measure of their feelings by the height of their expressions. Does my own weakness render me unjust towards others, or are they as miserable as I? This I know not. But I am ashamed of being so earthly-minded. Yes; I deplore that I rise so seldom to the contemplation of a radiant future. Yes, by being about habitually the heights of heaven and the depths of eternity, I might soar above the miserable interests of a perishing world. O Lord, transport me in spirit even now to Thy heavenly habitation ! There would I breathe a sanctifying air, there would I taste the sweetness of Thy love, and then return to earth, thoroughly imbued with Thy peace and joy.



CVII.

ON UPRIGHTNESS AND SIMPLICITY.

LORD, give me to have much of uprightness and simplicity! May there ever be a complete agreement between my feelings and my words, between my words and my deeds!

Let there be no parading of a false humility! Let me not be ambitious of a vain glory before my fellow-men. It is so easy to depart from the strict path; nay, so convenient to satisfy one's self with a good cause, and a good motive, whilst using unlawful means. Meanwhile, I am apt to overlook the fact that Thou, who hast created heaven and earth, and who dost govern the world, wilt cause truth to triumph in the end. *Do I* imagine that the creatures of Thy hand can work *for* Thee in the way which Thou disapprovest? Ah, Lord, if my faith were more lively, my life and my language would be more simple! If I trusted Thee more, I should attach less importance to the dictates of my own human judgment; and if indeed I were seeking to promote Thy glory, I should be at once more simple and more true. But I "seek to please men;" and I wish to serve myself whilst engaged in Thy service. Then apprehensions arise lest I should be misjudged—whether others may judge of me too well, or too harshly; and this has the effect of multiplying or diminishing my

words. My ever-changing thoughts follow the windings of the desires of my heart ; and having first deceived others, I arrive at deceiving myself. But, Thou Searcher of Hearts, none can deceive Thee. Thou knowest of my guile even before it has developed itself in action. Oh, tear away the veil which I place before mine own eyes ! Purge my conscience from all exaggeration ; yea, before my lips depart from the strict truth, let Thy Holy Spirit chide me ! Give me to seek for happiness in freedom and uprightness ! May my speech be Yea, yea, Nay, nay—knowing that Thou hast taught us that all exaggeration comes from the Evil One !



CVIII.

"THE WORLD PASSETH AWAY."

YES, the world passeth away ; and yet all things seem to me as if they remained unchanged ! The earth is the same, its inhabitants the same ; and so are their works, their pleasures, and, alas, their passions ! The child plays as formerly, the man labours as before, and the aged seek repose and leisure. Moreover, I continually see the fair head, and the dark or silvery locks, as heretofore, and I regard them as if they were unchanged. But, oh, strange illusion ! For I forget that these men *are not*

the same, and that the old man of to-day was the child of former days. I do not consider that, if things have remained, men have passed away ; and that to-day they lay him in the tomb who but as yesterday was welcomed into life. Yes, all pass away ; though, as in the days of Noah, they buy and sell, and marry, yea, and die. Yes, and although, as in the days of Noah, they think neither of the ark nor of death, neither of salvation nor of condemnation. Oh, suffer me not to be dragged into this vortex of worldliness ! Keep me from losing myself in it ! Give me so to realise how short my time is, that I may henceforth make a better use of it ! Henceforth may I forsake the ambition, glory, fortune, and all earth's futile joys ! Let me despise the opinion of the crowd ; and may all my anxiety concerning men bear reference to their salvation and to their benefit ! May their promises and their threats, their approbation and their scorn, pass over my soul, as passes the water over the marble, without leaving a single trace ! May my whole care be to please Thee ; to be watchful over my own heart ; to increase in faith and holiness ! Give me the boldness of Noah, the preacher of righteousness, that I may go forth proclaiming the gospel to those that are ready to perish ! Give me to declare it with meekness and with power, in season and out of season ! And when old age shall arrest me in my works, give me grace still to pray for those whom I shall no longer be able to warn !

CIX.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

FULL well I understand Pilate's inquiry. Full often, in days gone by, I have asked Thee, what is truth? and Thou didst answer me. I have treasured up Thine answer in my heart. It has rejoiced my soul, it has satisfied my mind, it has soothed my conscience. Yet, as Thou knowest, I am still prone to ask at times, what is truth? Why can I not see and touch truth? Why is there always a veil, more or less, between my soul and Thee? I would fain see Thee face to face. Why, then, dost Thou leave me in doubt and misery? Why, when a nearer view of Thee would render me holy and happy? Now my very being is a mystery to myself. I am sure of my salvation, and yet have I doubts about an eternity? I believe firmly in the gospel, and have I doubts about the future? There is in me light and darkness, faith and incredulity, sanctification and sin. After asking with Pilate, what is truth? I add the prayer of him who cried, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief?" Mystery of my being, I cannot penetrate thee! Why cannot I know myself thoroughly? Why may I not behold my God with my bodily eyes? Lord, do Thou extract from my *heart* the thorn! for there I feel it is, and I would give all I possess to be delivered from it.

I will not weary of asking Thee to teach me the truth. Make me to know the truth, cost me what it may! My God and Father, this one thing I crave,—*truth*, whatever that be!



CX.

THE WORD OF GOD.

HOW wondrous is the power of Thy Word! It proves to me nothing. It convinces me of all. I may neglect it through hardness of heart for a season. Yet as soon as I study it again, it interests me; as soon as I meditate on it, it enlightens me; the more I dig into it, the more depth I find; and in every one of the strata of this holy soil I discover unexpected treasure. The oftener I turn this field, the more fertile it becomes. The more I seek for fruit under the leaves of the Tree of Life, the more of it I perceive, the more I gather, the more appears after I have gathered. Oh, marvellous Word, which even thus proves its own divinity. What should I do without that Word here below? All alone, and abandoned should I be to my own reflections. Doubtless Thy Spirit would come to enlighten and to sustain me. But, without Thy Word to guide me, I should be in danger of mistaking for Thy Spirit the promptings of my

own imagination. I bless Thee, Lord, for giving me the example of the spiritual life of Jesus and His disciples to be a counterpart of mine ! What Jesus has said is divine, and Thou hast given me to comprehend it. What He felt as man I may feel. And, moreover, I glory in the thought that the unbeliever can neither understand nor feel it. So that the experience of the world concurs with mine to shew me that I am indeed under the influence of Thy Spirit, and that I have communion with Christ and His people. I admire the wisdom and the goodness of all Thy dispensations ! But this is not enough, Lord ! Do Thou add *warmth* to this light ! Let me not only contemplate Thee, but may I also follow Thee, imitate Thee, live by Thee ! Let Thy Word be identified with me, personified in me ! So would I begin again the life of Jesus Christ. But what strange contradiction ! This Word of Thine, which exercises such power over me, I seldom read. I who so gladly turn to human writings find a difficulty in opening the Scriptures. It would seem that some mysterious influence interposes between the Bible and me, in order to hinder me from reading it, and from drawing out of its fulness. I beseech of Thee to pardon my numerous inconsistencies ! I ask Thee not to explain to me, but to cure my spiritual disease ! Cause me to read with more faith and humility that Word which restores the soul, rejoices the heart, and enlightens the eyes ; until at last I see it living in eternity !

CXI.

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING.

BLESSED should I be if I could pray without ceasing unto my God,—if I could always live as in Thy presence, always raise my thoughts towards Thee, always maintain intercourse with Thee, as with a friend close to me. If in every difficulty I could consult Thee, at all times call on Thee, and pray to Thee for all things, happy should I be. With my hand in Thine, mine eye fixed on Thee, and my life modelled by my Saviour's example, how calm were then my conscience, how peaceful my soul, how joyous my heart! Why is it not thus? Since prayer is at times so enjoyable, why is it oftentimes so languid and painful? Wherefore do I sometimes feel it an effort to utter with my lips prayer without warmth and without love? If an earthly monarch had told me to ask of him, how trustingly and joyfully I should have run to his palace gates! But when Thou, the Lord of the Universe, hast given me leave to ask of Thee, I depart from Thee, and I despise Thy gifts. Is it from folly and ignorance? No; it is the love of sin in me. Ah, perhaps if the sovereigns of the world offered me faith and holiness, I should resort to them! If Thou, the God of Heaven, wert to present me with gold and pleasure, I should doubtless rush to Thee with ardour. Ah, if this *is* folly,

it is also sin, for it is a guilty folly, and one for which *I* have cause to reproach myself ! But Thou canst remove it. Make me to feel the immense privilege of looking up to Thee, of bringing before Thee my troubles and my joys, of communing with the Creator of the Universe as with a friend ! *Still more*, make me to feel how great the privilege of obtaining all I need from Thee ! Yea, Lord, for Thou hast promised faith to sustain me, love to make me happy, holiness to give me favour in Thine eyes, and every gift which can prolong my joy from age to age throughout eternity.



CXII.

ON BEING ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL.

HOW can it be possible that I am ashamed of speaking of Thy gospel before an unbelieving world ? It is to me the greatest of blessings.

How comes it that I am more in fear of the ridicule of a poor sinner than of Thy displeasure, thrice holy God ? Am I destitute of true faith ? No ; I do indeed believe in Thy gospel ! Am I devoid of understanding ? No ; I have intelligence in common with others of mankind, and also the light of Thy Holy Spirit ! Nevertheless, if not by my words, at least by my silence I deny Thee. I am ashamed of Thee before those who

ought to be ashamed of themselves. Before uttering my confession of Thee, I wait to be surrounded by Christians, and either to be impelled by duty or custom at some appointed hour. But if left to myself amidst the crowd, and in the ordinary course of life, I no longer venture to speak the name of Jesus, or to confess my faith. Peculiar circumstances, or strong opponents, are necessary to rouse me from my sinful indifference at such times. Then I find words and proofs, because, alas, I am defending my own cause, and no longer Thine ! Then it is *I* who am attacked, and it is myself I avenge. I am anxious to prove to others then that my faith is wisdom, and that I am as intelligent as they who ridicule my belief. Alas, that when I seek to exalt Thee in the eyes of the world, it should be from motives of self-exaltation ! How seldom the glory of Thy name, or the good of souls, induces me to speak ! How much oftener the love of self and vain-glory actuate me ! *How* shall I escape from the abyss into which I have fallen ? How shall I learn to speak of Thee without fear, without shame, without ceasing—I who tremble before an ironical smile, or a scornful jest ? How great the difference between what I ought to be and what I am ! My God, I feel abased and confounded before Thee ! Do with me as Thou wilt, but, oh, give me courage to confess Thy name ! Give me more faith, more love to souls, and give me boldness to speak of Thee before those who are unwilling to hearken.

CXIII.

ON DEVOTEDNESS TO GOD.

I FEEL that I have no power to give myself entirely to God. I know how to appreciate devotedness, I admire it, and talk of it ; but I know not how to practise it. Nevertheless my will is good. I even resolve within myself to make the effort. *But not now* ; it is yet a vague and distant project. As soon as it takes a precise form, and becomes more pressing, I shrink from the idea. What baseness, what ingratitude are mine ! Was it indeed for me that Thy Son, my Saviour, came down from heaven, lived upon earth, humbled Himself, and suffered even unto the death upon the cross ? Am I verily the disciple of Him whose life was one long self-sacrifice ? Am I of the same class as Paul and Peter,—imprisoned, yet blessing ; martyred, yet praying ? If I were obliged to work at some trade by night, should I still go from house to house by day, announcing the gospel amidst scorn, injury, and danger ? Ah, no ! Judging of my devotedness hitherto, I find it has been cold, calculating, convenient, and easy. Yes, all my sacrifices have been marked by a regard to my own vanity and interests. Said I all my sacrifices ? Alas, what I have adorned with that name have been but egotism disguised ! That which the world approves in me is but a vain show. Those praises make me blush ;

and there are times when they appear to me like grievous irony. It seems to me as if Christians and unbelievers alike praise me for what I *ought* to do, and not for what I do ; and thus their praises give me a lesson. Oh, will it be always thus? Shall I never begin in earnest that life of devotedness which has so long occupied my thoughts and meditations? Shall I leave this world before having put my hand to the work which Thou hast given me to do? I cannot harbour such a thought. No, I will still pray Thee to give me the strength, yea, the love which is lacking to me. So may I learn to give myself to Thee, not in word only, but in deed ; not in purpose merely, but in reality ; not for the future, but for the present ! Oh, teach Thou me to do what I desire !



CXIV.

ON VAIN QUESTIONINGS.



WOULD fain cease to toil, excepting for the advancement of Thy reign on the earth and in my heart ! Everything short of this seems trivial and unworthy of one who is walking towards heaven. Lord, I desire to live in prayer, in meditation on Thy Word, in holiness, in all that puts me in direct communication with Thee ! I desire to lay aside all those miserable questions of men and forms, which absorb so many hours, and which result in little

more than dispute and hatred! I would leave the Pauls and the Apolloses to go directly to Christ, or I would join my hands to those of Paul and Apollos and with them advance towards our only Saviour. I thank Thee that Thou hast kept me hitherto from vain discussions, and I entreat Thee with confidence to preserve me from them evermore! Paul died not for my sins. Apollos did not rise for my justification. Why should I labour for *their* glory, whilst I lose opportunities of working for Jesus Christ? Why should I occupy myself in discussing the form of a church which is yet unfinished, or already a ruin, whilst numbers of souls are perishing in ignorance of the gospel? I know that there are those who would reply to me that nothing is indifferent which relates to Thy work, and that Thine apostles occupied themselves with questions of the church. But I know also that they who thus exhort me are mainly desirous to win me over to their own particular school, and that if I conformed to them, others who now blame my indifference would then blame my partiality. No, I would avoid attaching myself exclusively to any Christian, that I may also avoid detaching myself from any! I would love them all, both these and those who differ from them, without disquieting myself as to whether they approve or blame me. I would be satisfied that Thou, Lord, dost bestow Thine approbation! Give me evermore elevating thoughts, that I may soar above all earthly churches, and attain to the dimensions of the Church of Christ!

CXV.

*"WHERE THE TREASURE IS, THERE
WILL THE HEART BE ALSO."*

THY Word has told me that wherever my treasure is, there will be my heart ; and to this my experience echoes. I am wont to attach myself to those objects with which I am occupied. Thus, when my spirit feeds too exclusively on the things of earth, my heart quickly follows the same declivity ; and in the end I roll into the abyss, I lose sight of heaven, I grovel in the heart of the earth. Then I see no longer, I muse no longer, except through the clouds of vain-glory and the dust of gold. Then the object of my passion engages my soul, and my whole heart passes into my treasure. Oh, how painful, how wretched, how shameful is this tendency ! Truly it carries with it its just reward, in the fretfulness of spirit which it causes, and the disenchantment which it leaves behind. Yes ; my heart, which is alternately an idolater and weary of its idolatry, turns now from the deceitful pleasures of the world, back unto Thee. Oh, give me grace to set my affections on treasures which rust cannot corrupt ! Give me such treasures in thoughts of my Creator and His works ; in the study of His Word and will ! Let my ambition be set on those things which are of more value than a kingdom ! Give me to live holily,

to spend myself for Thy people, to instruct the ignorant, to be patient under trial, having faith in Thy promises, and a peaceful, joyful expectation of the day in which I shall lose myself in Thee, and behold Thee in heaven, at once the centre of my affections and my treasure! Meanwhile may my riches here be employed in doing good; therewith may I comfort the poor and evangelise sinners! To this may all my fore thought tend, so may I dwell in that sanctuary within which no thief can penetrate!



CXVI.

ON OVER-ANXIETY.

HOW great is my folly to fret with anxiety for those things which Thou alone canst give me, and which Thou hast promised to place at my disposal! Why should I disquiet myself about bread, since it is Thou that givest the increase to every ear of corn? Why torment myself about raiment? Dost not *Thou* make the flax to grow? Thou hast never suffered me to want. Yea, if Thou didst deprive me of all I possess, I could keep back nothing from Thee. Art Thou not my Providence as well as my Creator? Dost Thou not watch over the temporal affairs of those whose souls Thou art willing to save? Thou who hast done the greater, wilt Thou not do the

less? Thou who hast given me Thy Son, wilt Thou not with Him freely give me all things? Ah, these are not so much questions addressed to the Lord as reproaches which I apply to myself! There is doubtless some reason for my unbelief. If I do not exercise confidence in Thee, it must be because my desires are not according to Thy will. I labour for the bread which perisheth, and not for that which endures unto eternal life. I seek after earthly good, not that I may live, but that I may enjoy it, and that apart from Thee. Abundant cause may I at such times discover for my lack of faith in Thy protection. With such desires, I dare not ask of Thee in faith. Then I seek for resources in myself, and discovering my utter weakness, I yield to anxiety and despair. I would be delivered from such a painful state of things! I would cast off this insupportable burden of fears! I would rest in Thee, and depend ever on Thy good providence! I would desire what is according to Thy will, love what Thou lovest, and live as Thy child! Thus living as in Thy sight, and within reach of Thine hand, what though crosses come, what though trials overtake! I shall accept all with resignation, assured that Thou wilt make me to know Thy design in them all. Then I shall see Thy interposition in everything, because there will be none of my own. Then I shall repose with happy confidence in Thee, who hast created, sustained, and saved me, and who wilt sanctify me to my own eternal bliss.

CXVII.

ON FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

JESUS has taught us that there is no merit in loving those that love us, but that our duty is to love those who hate us. My mind approves of this precept; but how difficult it is to my heart to follow it! I can feel a sort of universal benevolence towards beings to whom I am unknown. I would do good to those who may be indifferent, or even cold, towards me. I could ask for the good of those who shun my faith, or myself. If despised and persecuted for Thy sake, it seems as if the greatness of Thy cause had an elevating effect on my sentiments. But when it becomes a question of personal interest and importance, I can no longer endure injustice, and my heart rises in indignation against those who hate me. In vain I seek to take refuge in my integrity; in vain I say to myself that all the wrong is on the part of my enemy. Such arguments do not satisfy me. I confess that naught can justify my resentment, and that I sin in being unforgiving. Oh, how unlike I am to that Jesus, who was entitled to so much love, and who endured so much hatred! Blessing, yet repulsed; loving, yet hated above all; devoted even unto death, but mistaken even to ignominy! Yes, say I, that is easy to comprehend, *because* He was Jesus Christ. I

admire His character, but I cannot imitate Him. I am the disciple of Him who prayed for His adversaries, and *I* have, perhaps, wished evil to *my* enemies ; and always find it a difficult task neither to complain nor to take revenge. Vouchsafe unto me, then, pardon and strength ! What would become of me hadst Thou withheld Thy pardon ? Oh, give me a due sense of my unworthiness, that thus humbled, I may learn to forgive injustice ! and what is more difficult, may I learn to forgive merited contempt !



CXVIII.

TO OBEY IS NOT TO CHOOSE.

LORD, Thou knowest that I would do good, but not in the way in which Thou wouldest that I should. I desire to advance Thy kingdom, but more speedily, and in a different way from Thine. I accept Thy will in general, but not in its minor details. I make a distinction between the great and the little commandments, in order to follow the one and to dispense with the other. I am honest ; but, excepting in the work which I choose, my zeal and my activity are small. I have some love, but I have not patience. My infirmity leads me to believe in my salvation, and to doubt a special promise ; to trust

Thy providence in the government of the world, to mistrust in the ordering of my private affairs. Do Thou give me grace for daily duties, and give me those graces which I have hitherto despised ! for those are what I most need. Give me to be faithful in little things ! Give me to feel as much confidence in Thee concerning my temporal as I feel concerning my spiritual affairs ! May I manifest a persevering patience towards all,—gentleness, evenness of temper, and a readiness to serve even the humble and obscure ! May my sanctification advance each hour, and may it be a heart-work which mingles with all, and rebounds on all sides ! May my soul subsist therein, as my body lives in the atmosphere, without an effort, continually and pleasantly ! Ah, if from *this height* I could always view the little events of this lower world, I should not so often complain at what Thou dost permit ! Then I should accept the difficulties which shackle thy gospel, and the trials which befall me ; and instead of mourning and wishing for deliverance, I should seek for the blessing to be derived from them. Whether it were received or rejected, I should let Thy light shine in me. Whether well or ill, I should preach by example, at home as well as abroad. Always I should find myself in the right place for doing good. O Lord, transform these desires into practical reality ! May I in future obey Thee in those very things which in time past I have neglected, well assured that small things, as well as great ; adversity

as well as prosperity, are working together for the good of those who love Thee, and who implicitly obey Thee !



CXIX.

ON PUTTING OFF TO THE MORROW.

I KNOW not how to use Thy benefits, Lord ! When Thou withdrawest them I feel their value. When Thou sparest them to me I do not profit by them. The means I would have wherewith to do good are never those which I have ; or, if I possess them, they are not at my command. The day in which to perform has never arrived, it is always “to-morrow ;” and when the next day comes it is always too late. I should be so generous if I were rich, but in the meantime I do not understand giving according to the measure of my poverty. Ah, thus Satan comes to me as if he were an angel of light ! He recommends that which is good, provided I *delay* its accomplishment ; he recommends devotion, provided it is convenient. Thus, by means of delay upon delay, of pretext upon pretext, he beguiles me into spending my life in words, in hopes, in projects which never produce any result. I confess unto Thee, Lord, that Thou hast endowed me with the means of doing even that good which I am forward in purposing. I acknowledge that, even when I

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cannot put into practice precisely what I had devised, it is always possible for me to realise some other good. I am not diseased like Job when he yet blessed Thee. I am not so reduced as that widow who gave all she had. I am not on a cross, where a thief still found strength to pray. Nor am I suffering the martyrdom of Stephen, whose faith saw heaven opened through a shower of stones. Have I resisted unto blood? Alas, I have not used the resources with which Thou hast favoured me! My sloth has disdained them. Thus some, less favoured perhaps by Thee, excite my envy. So I wrong those whom I ought to edify. Now I have laid open before Thee the sores of my heart. Oh, pour in the balm of Thy consolations! And, oh, shed upon me Thy Spirit, that henceforth I may put into practice all the good which hitherto I have only contemplated!



CXX.

I DARE NOT CONTINUE IDLY TO PRAY.

O; for my life gives the lie to my prayer. That which I entreat of Thee on my knees I cast off in the world. So my requests and my sighs are but reprovers of my daily conduct. Shall I ask thee again to-day for the strength which I besought of Thee yesterday, and from which I

have not profited? Will not such prayers rise in witness against me at the last day? Am I not deluding myself, and may I not encounter Thine anger at the time in which I expect to depend upon Thy love? Shall I trust more to my pious words than to my worldly life? May I not be of the number of those who shall say, "Lord, Lord," unto whom Thou wilt reply, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity?" The thought of this is overwhelming, and my daily conduct justifies it. I can only groan before Thee; and I would that my tears could efface my sins! I strike upon my breast as it were; but I have no longer the courage to cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner." I am like one who lies bruised, and incapable alike of rising or even of calling for help. Come Thou to my help, and make me to go in the path of Thy commandments! Shall my whole life slide away in sin? Shall I never be delivered from evil whilst here below? Must I to the end of my days be subject to continual falls? Must I always drag in the mire? Must all my efforts prove unavailing? Ah, yes, my Saviour has well called such life a servitude! For I am not free. Satan is my master, my tyrant. Ah, that I could by a single act of my will free myself from his thralldom! for at this moment I should do it. Yes, I feel *now* as if I would willingly consent that the world and its "lusts" were submerged in some bottomless abyss for ever. But Thou hast not so willed it, Lord! No, I must

daily, hourly struggle, and struggle on without conquering. What shall I say now? O Jesus, intercede for me! Thou hast been with me in trials past. Thou wert "tempted in all points like as I am." At this moment Thou sympathisest with me in my suffering. Thy prayers are always sincere, and Thine intercession will prevail!



CXXI.

ON THE FOLLY OF UNBELIEF.

WHEN I meditate on the unbelief which prevails in the world, I always arrive at one conclusion. The only explanation I can find is *pride*. Oh, fools are they who, rather than believe in Thee, believe in chance as their creator and their providence! Oh, fools, who make man better than God! Proud men, who call themselves virtuous, and who will not admit that Thou art holy; as if *they* had discovered the good, the beautiful, the moral, and Thou hadst only dreamt of it! They overlook that all that we have comes to us from Thee. It is, indeed, pride which inspires such thoughts. It is, furthermore, Satan who seduces the man who denies Thee, dethrones Thee, and would make himself a god. I confess that I do not always do that which is right; but I desire it, and I love it. Wilt not *Thou* then much more con-

ceive that which is right? Oh, do Thou pardon the near approach to blasphemy of this expression! It seems as if I need sometimes to touch and to see the folly of unbelief, in order to adhere more to the faith. Yes, my Creator, Thou existest, since I, a creature, am here. Yes, Thou the good God dost hear and answer me, since Thou, Thou alone hast been able to inspire me with the thought of praying unto Thee. Has the poor brute animal any thought of prayer? Yet would not the brute be wiser than I if the God to whom I pray were deaf and blind? In Thy daily blessings I see that Thou lovest me, Lord! But this view of faith cannot always suffice me. I would see Thee face to face! I would know Thee better, I would be more like Thee! Grant unto me, then, *with* the desire after good the strength to accomplish it; and with the example of Jesus Christ the power to imitate Him! Let not my faith in Thee be founded on my heart's imaginings, but on the manifestation and revelation of Jesus Christ!



CXXII.

ON CHANGEABLENESS.

MERE trifle suffices to grieve me, and as small a circumstance can gladden me again. A passing shadow saddens me, a ray of sunshine piercing the cloud rejoices me. Likewise, the least misfortune discourages me, and a very *little* success raises my hopes. It seems as if I were the sport of every breath and circumstance, and that I cannot control either my thoughts or actions. For, according as my imagination is triumphant or sad, my acts are likely to be rash or cowardly. Indeed, fear or hope is scarce kindled in my heart before my acts are tending to one extreme or the other ; so that in the end I have to deplore both. Ah, Lord, if the changeableness were in Thee, and not in me, or if, indeed, I sought Thy glory, and not mine own, I should neither be so soon crushed nor so quickly elated ! Resigned under the dark cloud, calm beneath the radiant sunshine, I should happily receive each event as the expression of Thy will.

But, ah, even in obeying Thy commands, I seek my own will ! I cannot be perfectly sincere and disinterested. Oh, do Thou give me uprightness of heart ! Give me a heart which looks straightforward, and sees only duty ! Give me a heart which will think of Thee

before, as well as after, any event!—a devoted heart, which has but one affection—Thee ; but one end—eternity ; but one work—sanctification ! Then my sadness would no longer resemble that of the desperado, nor my triumph that of the fool. Then calm joy would be mine, even amid trials. Teach mé to soar above this little world, and to see from afar its petty turmoils ! May I never be at a loss for the time and place wherein to speak Thy words and to accomplish Thy will, not troubling myself about present results !



CXXIII.

*ON THE NOTHINGNESS OF OUR OWN
WORKS.*

WHEN, at the close of the day, I ask myself what have I accomplished—when, in retrospect, I survey the course of my life hitherto, and seek therein for the result, I am amazed at the nothingness of my works. *Many* hopes, projects, acts, devised and fruitless, have not even left a trace in my remembrance. Ah, will it be always so, and shall I bid adieu to this world *still* useless as regards Thy glory and others' good ? How such thoughts tend to make me feel my own nothingness ! If, indeed, I had never been born, what would the world have lost ?

Nothing! Furthermore, I beguile myself into thinking and acting as if the universe turned around me, instead of my turning as a mere atom round the universe. Oh, give me humility, in order that I may become more active and devoted! May I so devote myself to Thee, to Thy glory, and to the good of my fellow-creatures, that my labours, being blessed of Thee, may be no longer in vain! Then from eternity I shall be able to look back to my life on earth, and to see that I "have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." There may I meet again the friends I have loved here, the brethren I have been the means of turning unto Thee, and the poor I have succoured! There may those whose hands have grasped each other here together unite in sounding the praises of Thy goodness! Whilst sustained by this blessed prospect, I would remember that life is short! I would remember that time's moments are precious for the accomplishment of what will augment my joy throughout eternity; for that which, if left undone, will cause me endless regret! May I so live and so act each day as if there were no to-morrow! Lord, grant that I may be enabled to give evidence of my love to Thee before Thou callest me to leave this world!



CXXIV.

ON THE DREAMS OF LIFE.

WHERE to-day are the plans that existed in days gone by? Where are the dreams of my youth? Where are the kindred whom I resolved never to leave? Where the friends who were never to be out of my sight? Alas, for projects, dreams, friends, *all* have passed away! Naught of that which I then predicted has been realised; whereas my life has been filled with unforeseen and unexpected events. My years have passed away, leaving naught but recollections behind them, which in their turn are to be effaced. I have seen those die who saw me on my entering into life; and they whose lives commenced in my time will soon see me die. Yet a few more days, short and futile as those I have already passed, and I shall be bending downward, never to rise again! Yes, I shall pass away as those around me, and as all created things. Thou alone remainest, undying and inscrutable. Yes, Thou and Thy Word. If all else grows old, and ends in vanity, I perceive that Thy Word never can. It is always precious—ever new, enlightening, and persuasive. It is as a fruit intended to ripen with my advancing life, and to furnish me with food appropriate for every season. Growing experience confirms to me what Thou hast spoken, and what at one time I could scarcely believe

nor comprehend. Time was when I was wont to say, sin carries its own punishment with it, "godliness hath the promise of this life," faith is the most precious of gifts, and many like truths. But meanwhile I was not penetrated by and persuaded of all this. But now I realise it to such an extent, that those truths appear like new discoveries, and I take possession of them as such. Now I take delight in that heavenly manna, which before I had scarcely tasted. Blessed be Thou for thus enclosing blessings within blessings! Praised be Thou, who dost vouchsafe to our added years a demonstration more grand, a faith more lively, a peace more profound, and an acquiescence in Thy holy will more complete!

THE END.

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