

**The Meditations of**

**William of Saint-Thierry**

Translated by

A Religious of CSMV

The author, a Flemish noble and personal friend of Saint Bernard, was abbot of Saint-Thierry in the early part of the twelfth century. Of these meditations he himself said, ‘They are not altogether useless in training beginners in prayer.’

The work has best been described by M. Étienne Gilson: ‘William of Saint-Thierry has everything: power of thought, the orator’s eloquence, the poet’s lyricism, and all the attractiveness of the most ardent and tender piety.’

This English version, the ﬁrst to be made, has all the readability and unforced simplicity which we have learnt to associate with the translator.

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THE MEDITATIONS OF WILLIAM OF SAINT-THIERRY

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The Meditations of

William of Saint-Thierry

MEDITATIVAE ORATIONES

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN BY

A Religious of CSMV

[i.e., Ruth Penelope Lawson]

REVISED AND ANNOTATED BY

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With an Introduction and Notes

GREENSBOROUGH, VIC

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№ 9975

First published by

A. R. Mowbray & Co., London, and

Harper & Brothers, New York,

in 1954.

Edited, re-typeset and published in a new edition by

Stephen Plustwik, Greensborough, Vic,

in 2015.

This edition’s annotations, layout,

typography and recast front cover

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ISBN 978-0-9942623-4-9 PDF

ISBN 978-0-9942623-5-6 Spiral bound

INTRODUCTION

‘*I have composed some Meditations; they are not altogether useless for training beginners in prayer.*’

That is its author’s judgement on the little work presented in translation here. He wrote to help beginners, novices; and this ﬁrst English version is intended for the ordinary reader too, not for the scholar or the specialist. In this Introduction, therefore, we shall indicate only what sort of person William of Saint-Thierry was; and in the Notes we shall conﬁne ourselves almost entirely to scriptural references. We shall make no attempt to trace the inﬂuences that formed our author’s thought, nor to assess his teaching as a whole.

He was a Flemish noble, born at Liège in or about the year 1085. In due course he and another youth called Simon, who was probably his brother, set out to ﬁnd a master under whom they might pursue their education. Like many other students at this time, they were attracted by the rising schools of northern France; and it is almost certain that they chose the school of Laon, and studied there under the famous Master Anselm, who was himself a pupil of his greater namesake of Bec. And it is quite certain that Abelard studied at Laon, and that William knew him. ‘I too loved Peter Abelard,’ he wrote years later, when the notoriety of that strange genius was at its height and he himself in controversy with him, ‘and I should like to love him still.’ No details of William’s student days are known; but it is worth remembering that he had what was then the nearest equivalent of a university education. The next we hear of him is in 1113; in that year he and Simon entered the Benedictine abbey of Saint Nicasius of Rheims. Saint Nicasius was a good Religious house, stricter than most Cluniac houses of the time; Simon and William made good monks, the latter studying the Scriptures and the Fathers with especial zeal. But the real turning-point of William’s career came about ﬁve years later, towards the end of the year 1118. In the course of a journey he visited Clairvaux.

Clairvaux was a daughter-house of Cîteaux, the centre and birthplace of the Benedictine reform inaugurated by Robert of Molesmes twenty years before. It was three years old when William paid that visit, and Bernard, its ﬁrst abbot, was about twenty-eight. He had been very ill and was convalescing in a hut on the abbey land, having the time of his life with leisure for reading and prayer. He had leisure also for his visitor; they held sweet converse together on spiritual things, and Cluniac William, although the older man, found in the Cistercian abbot his ideal Religious and his dearest friend.

In the following year William himself, then about thirty-four, was called to take authority, being chosen abbot of Saint-Thierry of Mount Hor, north-west of Rheims. It was a prosperous house, but not so strict as Saint Nicasius. William, who like Saint Bernard had natural charm as well as wisdom and determination, won the monks’ co-operation in raising the standard of Religious life within its walls. He also, for their beneﬁt, began to write, his ﬁrst works being two short treatises, *On the Nature and Dignity of Love* and *On Contemplating God*; and it was probably during this same period of his life that he wrote all but the last of the *Meditations* given in this book. As abbot of Saint-Thierry, he also paid at least two further visits to Clairvaux; on one occasion he and Bernard both were ill, and the white abbot sent his brother Gerard to invite the black one to the Valley of Light to die or to get better as quickly as he could. Administrative cares were pressing hard on William by this time; he longed to get away from them and give himself to prayer. At every meeting his admiration for Saint Bernard was intensiﬁed; so also was the conﬂict in his soul.

Not a few black monks shared his predicament in those eleven-twenties. The Order of Cîteaux was spreading rapidly, and the new model of Religious life that it presented appealed strongly to many of the ﬁner spirits in the Cluniac ranks. Feeling between the two ran high. What was a Cluniac to do, whose sympathies were with Cîteaux? Should he remain in his own Order and work for its improvement from within? Or should he leave it for that other, also Benedictine after all, that already led the life for which he longed? William’s own mind was clear. He wrote to Bernard in 1124, asking to be admitted to Clairvaux. Bernard refused point-blank. ‘Stay where you are,’ he wrote, ‘and try to serve the souls under your care. Do not run away from honours, for it is in your power to use them for the common good. It would be disastrous indeed if you were in authority and yet of no use; but it will be still more so if, in your reluctance to command, you fail to serve.’ Most deeply disappointed, William stayed, working with Bernard to promote reform in his own Order and peace between the two, for another eleven years. Then, at the age of ﬁfty, weakened in health and weary of responsibility, he ﬁrmly took the law into his own hands. Clairvaux itself was closed to him; Signy, a little daughter-house in the Ardennes, was not. He left Saint-Thierry and his abbatial dignity, and received the white Cistercian habit at Signy in 1135.

It was a daring and tremendous step, hard to take and harder still to persevere in; for the ex-abbot found Cistercian life extremely hard. The food upset him, and the manual work soon proved beyond his strength. He felt useless and—what is much worse in a community—an incubus, a nuisance to the other monks. In giving him his heart’s desire the Lord, Who ever chastens His beloved, had sent leanness withal into his soul. Distressful doubts assailed him. Had he done right to come? Could he go on?

He did go on. Relieved of manual work on grounds of health, so as not to be wholly idle he returned to his writing, and put together and completed sundry works begun at Saint-Thierry; he also wrote the thirteenth meditation, which is here for the ﬁrst time attached to the preceding twelve. William’s own modest opinion of that collection was written in 1145. Three years later his great and suﬀering spirit passed to its reward.

‘William of Saint-Thierry,’ writes M. Étienne Gilson, ‘has everything: power of thought, the orator’s eloquence, the poet’s lyricism, and all the attractiveness of the most ardent and tender piety.’1 Ardent is the right word, for William had a passion for God; with him it was in his own phrase ‘non amor sed ardor.’ That passion is the tie-rod in these deeply personal *Meditations*, which are but loosely linked together otherwise. In parts of them he seems to echo Bernard, but we must not be too sure. If radio and television could reach backwards in time and reproduce for us those meetings at Clairvaux eight centuries ago, it might turn out that sometimes it was William’s thought that Bernard made his own. And the two friends in fact are very diﬀerent, and that not least from the translator’s point of view; Saint Bernard’s graceful Latin almost translates itself, whereas some of William’s, even when no less graceful in itself, is diﬃcult and baﬄing to the last degree.

The text employed for *Meditations 1–12* was that of Marie-Madeleine Davy, *Guillaume de Saint-Thierry: Meditativae orationes*, published in 1934.2 This text contains a number of obvious misprints, and I suspect some more; the accompanying French translation does not aﬀord much help, and it rather evades the diﬃculties and in places seems to miss the sense. Meditation 13, which is not found in either of the twelfth-century MSS on which M.-M. Davy’s text is based, has been recovered by Dom Jean-Marie Déchanet, OSB, from another MS of the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, where it occurs between two other of William’s treatises. This text is printed in an Appendix to Dom Déchanet’s book, *Guillaume de Saint-Thierry: l’Homme et son Oeuvre*, published in 1942, and the translation in this book was made from that. Both these French books are obtainable at no great cost; some readers of this version may be moved to get them, and if they should see daylight in any passages for which I have failed to ﬁnd a satisfactory rendering, it would be an act of charity to let me know. But please let no one be put oﬀ by these occasional obscurities.3 A personality as vivid and endearing as his friend’s, a theologian more profound than he, a master of spirituality strong to help struggling souls to-day out of his own hard-won experience speaks in this book across the centuries. ‘William has everything,’ as M. Gilson says.

*June 1953*

*Wantage, Oxon*

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THE MEDITATIONS OF WILLIAM

OF SAINT-THIERRY

MEDITATION 1

*The soul contemplates the Foreknowledge of God, and ponders the mystery of Predestination and of Reprobation*

‘O the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past ﬁnding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor?’1 For Thou hast mercy, Lord, on whom Thou wilt have mercy, and showest pity on whom Thou wilt have pity. Election ‘is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.’ The earthen vessel recoils from the Hand of Him Who made it, of Him Who says by the prophet, ‘I have made and I will bear’;2 deserving of destruction as it is, ﬁt to be crushed and broken, it breaks away from the Hand that holds and carries it and cries, ‘Why doth He then ﬁnd fault? For who resisteth His will?’ And it continues, ‘Why hast Thou made me thus?’

So speaks the earthen vessel unto Thee, O Thou Eternal Wisdom; so speaks the pot of clay, the vessel of reproach and wrath, made for perdition; when it behoves it rather to tremble before Thee and to pray to Thee, Who out of the selfsame lump hast power to make one vessel for an honourable use, another for reproach. But the chosen vessels, those that are made for honour, they endure. They are the vessels of mercy prepared by Thee for glory; and they do not speak so, but rather acknowledge Thee as their Creator and their Potter, and themselves as clay to which Thy Hand has given form—and woe to them if they fall from Thy Hand, for then they will be broken and crushed and reduced to nothing! They know this, and do not forsake Thy grace.

Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy; Thou art our Potter, and we are the clay. Somehow or other, we have held together until now; we are still carried by Thy mighty Hand, and we are clinging still to Thy three ﬁngers, Faith, Hope, and Charity, wherewith Thou supportest the earth’s mighty bulk—that is to say, the whole weight of Thy holy Church. Cleanse our reins and our hearts by the ﬁre of Thy Holy Spirit, and stablish the work that Thou hast wrought in us; lest we be loosed asunder and return again to clay or nothingness. We were created by Thee for Thyself, and toward Thee our face is set. We acknowledge Thee our Maker and Creator; we adore Thy wisdom, and beg that it may order all our life; we adore Thy goodness and mercy, and beg them ever to sustain and keep us. Thou Who hast made us, bring us to perfection; perfect in us the Image and the Likeness of Thyself for which Thou madest us.3

The earthen vessel destined to return to earth demands of Thee, ‘Why hast Thou made me thus?’ But the vessel made for honour does not address Thee so; for it believes with the heart unto righteousness and confesses with the mouth unto salvation that Thou art good, and hast done all things well. Even in making one for honour and another for reproach Thou hast done well, in that Thou hast bestowed free-will on both, so that each, acting as he does not of necessity but of his own deliberate choice, should have the degree of merit proper to the virtue he displays. For virtue is precisely the deliberate assent of the good will to what is good.

But, O Eternal Wisdom, since Thou knowest all things, Thou didst foreknow concerning both how they would use that freedom of will, and how they would decide their destiny; and Thou wast ready to bestow Thy grace on one as on the other, if only he would not receive that grace in vain. Yet Thy foreknowledge in no way forces them to be what they will severally be, as though their future were determined by the fact of Thy foreknowing it; rather, Thou foreknowest that they will be so, because they will be so, and therefore Thou, Who knowest everything before it comes to pass, knowest this too; and Thy foreknowledge can make no mistakes. Moreover, Thy foreknowledge, O my God, is one thing with Thy wisdom, which is with Thee from and to all eternity, and so would it have been with Thee, had never a creature existed. In it is the eternal ground of all that happens in time, and by that same foreknowledge do all creatures come to be in their own time. And yet creation was never in the future in regard to Thee; for Life was in Thy consubstantial Word, Who made all that was made; in Him was Life as it was to be in the future, exactly as it was to be, because Life was in Him.4 But that Life did not force it so to be; it existed thus in Him, because it would be so.

What then? Does the temporal form of the future determine the Being of God, His very Eternity? For it seems that, if the future were not to be cast in this mould, it could not exist eternally in the Word of God. But Thy knowledge, O God, and Thy foreknowledge are Thy Truth that says, ‘I am the Truth.’ And as Thou by foreknowing dost not constrain the future to be such as Thou foreknowest, so canst Thou not Thyself be forced to foreknow anything by the mere fact of its futurity. There is no past with Thee, nor future either; but Thou art ever what Thou art, and all that exists in any mode whatever, be it past or present or future, is Life in Thy Word.

‘The wicked walk round in a circle.’5 Betake yourself, O Man, away from the circumference of error to the centre of Truth. When the earthen vessel turns to clay again, it does so under no compulsion from the fact that God foreknew it would do so and that its future was not hid from Him; and yet, because God knew that this would happen, He foreordained it to destruction. God’s foreknowledge is at the same time His goodness, which He is eternally ready to bestow on all, although not all are ready to accept it. Who will accept and who will not, this also is within the ﬁeld of God’s foreknowledge which, if it be equated with His goodness, as I said just now, was ready for all from all eternity, even had nothing ever been created. For this goodness is the Holy Spirit, co-eternal with the Father and the Son. Wherefore it is written that, at the creation of the world, the Spirit moved upon the waters6—that is to say, He was oﬀering Himself to all and showing Himself to them by doing good and providing things needful for their use, as it is His function to do; but at the same time He was ﬂeeing from the soul that was ill-disposed, into which wisdom can eﬀect no entrance.

Foreknowledge concerning things created, therefore, is foreknowledge on the part of God; but, when viewed in regard to men, it is predestination, which term includes election and reprobation equally. That is why He tells us, ‘Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.’ Predestination is at once the preparation for grace and the result of it.7 And why one should be taken into grace and another rejected, is a question you had best not ask, unless you wish to go astray. If a man is proud, the fact of his pride is no secret to God; and you do not escape the providence by which He has foreordained you to the punishment made ready for proud men. ‘For God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.’8 Pride, therefore, is at once the thing that merits reprobation and the sign of it, just as humility is that which both deserves election and denotes it.

If, then, the earthen vessel says, ‘Why hast Thou made me thus?’—that is to say, ‘Why hast Thou foreordained me to destruction?’ the Truth will answer, ‘To speak in your own terms, it was because I knew beforehand that you would be a vessel of wrath meet for destruction, a fool who neither knew salvation nor desired it, a soul so proud that you would scorn humiliation. Because I knew all that, I lodge no further complaint, but you will go irrevocably to destruction. You do not stay the operation of My will, since My will is that My mercy should be very near the wretched—to those, that is to say, who know their wretchedness, but that those who are mighty in iniquity should suﬀer mighty pains. Only on the humble will I show My pity; it is on the merciful that I have mercy. Ask Me no more, “Why didst Thou not give me humility?” I gave you a greater gift than that—free-will. And you have waxed mighty in iniquity by the use of that very gift; you have loved malice more than kindness. What is more, you have tried to make Me responsible for your ill deeds; for so determined are you to excuse yourself that you have laid the blame for them on Me! You refuse to admit the hatefulness of your iniquity; therefore shall you go to your own place, vessel of wrath that you are and meet to be destroyed.’

MEDITATION 2

*The soul presents herself to God, desiring to receive His light and, with a mind detached from things of sense, to meditate upon the Holy Trinity*

‘Come unto Him and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be ashamed.’1 But I am ashamed, O Lord, and confounded with a hideous and terrible confusion, as often as I come to Thee and ﬁnd the door of vision shut; almost I seem to hear the fearful words, ‘Verily I say unto you, I know you not.’2 I was desiring that Thou shouldst enlighten me; and now my grief of heart and sore perplexity have thrown me into darkness so complete, that it almost seems it had been better for me if I had not come. For where shall I seek comfort, if desolation is Thy will for me? Away with every consolation that neither is Thyself, nor comes from Thee! ‘Woe to him that is alone,’ says Solomon.3 Woe indeed to me if I be alone, if Thou be not with me, nor yet I with Thee!

I reckon myself blessèd, Lord, and highly blessèd, if I feel Thee with me; but I am wearisome and hateful to myself whenever I perceive that I am not with Thee. As long as I am with Thee, I am also with myself; I am no longer myself when I am not with Thee, for no existence is possible for me apart from Thee. I could not exist in any way at all, either in body or in soul, save by Thy constant grace; and I could never ﬁnd Thee, did not Thy mercy and Thy goodness run to meet me on my way. In all these things I am with Thee, and I am conscious of Thy grace at work in me; the fact that I exist and am alive seems good to me; my soul makes her boast in the Lord. But if, when Thou art present in thus doing good to me, I am myself absent from Thee in mind and heart, the operations of Thy grace, it seems to me, are like burial rites duly and carefully fulﬁlled upon a corpse.

If sometimes I feel Thee passing by, Thou dost not stop for me but goest on, leaving me crying after Thee like the Canaanite woman.4 And, when Thou weariest of the crying with which my misery importunes Thee, speaking as to a dog Thou dost reproach my sullied conscience with its past impurity and present shame; and Thou drivest Thy dog unfed and famished from Thy table, or lettest him depart. Should I draw near again, when this occurs? Yes, surely, Lord. For the whelps that are chased with blows from their master’s house return immediately and, hanging watchfully about the place, receive their daily bread. I come again when I am driven out; shut out, I cry; and beaten, I implore. A dog cannot live without a man’s companionship, nor can my soul without the Lord her God. Open to me, therefore, Lord, that I may come to Thee and be enlightened by Thee. Thou dwellest in Thy heavens; but Thou hast made darkness Thy secret place, even the dark waters amid the clouds of the air.5 And, as the prophet says, ‘Thou hast set a cloud before Thee, so that our prayer may not pass through.’6

But, as for me, I have rotted on earth, I have made the thick and earthy covering of my heart more heavy even than it was before; Thy heavenly stars shine not for me; the sun is darkened and the moon gives no light. In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs I hear Thy mighty acts proclaimed; out of Thy Gospels Thy words and deeds shine forth at me; and the examples of Thy servants strike unceasingly upon mine eyes and ears; Thy promises in Scripture, the promises Thy Truth has made, obtruding themselves without cease upon my sight and battering my deafness with their din, shake me with fears and taunt me. But long persistence in bad ways, along with very great insensibility of mind, has hardened me. I have learned to sleep with the sunshine full on my face, and have grown used to it; I have become accustomed to seeing not what takes place before my eyes and, dead at heart as I am, though I am set in the midst of the sea, I have ceased to hear the roaring of its waves and the thunder of the sky.

How long, O Lord, how long? How long wilt Thou defer to rend the heavens and come down? How long wilt Thou delay to fulﬁl Thy wrath upon me, and so to shatter my dullness that I may be no longer what I am, but may know that it is Thou that rulest Jacob and the utmost bounds of earth, and so be turned, at least at eventide, and hunger like a dog and run about Thy city (whereof a portion sojourns still on earth but the greater part rejoices already in heaven), so that perchance I may ﬁnd some who will receive my fainting soul into their habitation, my soul that has no couch of her own whereon to lay her head?

Sometimes indeed I hear Thy Spirit’s voice and, though it is no more than as the whistling of a gentle air7 that passes me, I understand the message, ‘*Come unto Him and be enlightened*.’ I hear, and I am shaken. Arising as from sleep and shaking oﬀ my lethargy, a certain wonder ﬁlls me. I open my mouth, and I draw in my breath; I stretch my spiritual muscles and rouse them from their sloth. I turn my back on the shades of night wherein lies my conscience, and come forth to the Sun of Righteousness, Who is rising now for me. But I am drowsy still; and my reason’s eyes are dazzled when I try to look at Him. For they are used to darkness and unaccustomed to the light; and, while both pupils and eyelids tremble and blink at the unwonted brightness, as best I can I wipe the rheum of my long sleep from them, with the hand of exercise. If, by Thy gift, I ﬁnd a fount of tears, the which is wont to spring up speedily in lowly ground and in the valleys of a contrite soul, I wash the hands wherewith I work and the face I lift in prayer. Then, as the falcon spreads his wings towards the south to make the feathers grow, I stretch out my two hands to Thee, O Lord; and my soul is as waterless ground in Thy sight, and as desert land, unwatered and untrod, do I appear before Thee in Thy holy place, that I may see Thy power and Thy glory. And, when I raise the eyes of my mind and my reason’s perception to Thee, O Sun of Righteousness, it happens to me as is wont to happen to persons drunk with sleep or of weak eyes; seeing one thing, they think that they are seeing two or three, until in the process of seeing it dawns upon them that the defect is in their sight, and not in the thing seen. For when my soul, that has been used to ﬁnd her pleasure through the senses and in things that they can apprehend, is roused from these preoccupations, she is forthwith confronted with a mental picture that baﬄes her with images derived from things of sense; her powers of perception have been blunted by her former exclusive attention to things sensible, with the result that now she does not know how to apprehend or think of anything except under such forms.

For this cause, therefore, when on awaking from the sleep of negligence I suddenly direct my gaze on God, concerning Whom the Divine Law instructs me, saying, ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord thy God is One God,’8 and while I ﬁx my soul’s regard entirely on Him from Whom I look for light and Whom I am about to worship or implore, I am confronted with the fact of God as Trinity; which mystery the Catholic Faith, rehearsed by my forebears, impressed upon me by long use and commended to me by Thyself and those who teach Thy truth, declares to me. But my soul’s foolish way of picturing things sees and regards the Trinity in such a fashion, that she fondly thinks that there is number in the simple Being of the Godhead Which, Itself beyond all number, made all that is by number and by measure and by weight; and she thinks of the several Persons of the Trinity as having Each His place, and prays to the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit, as though she passed from the One to the Other through the Third. And so my mind, befogged by the One, is scattered between the Three, just as if there were three bodies to be diﬀerentiated or to be made one.

When the imagination—that is to say, the mind that thus envisages the Trinity, does so in spite of itself or suﬀers that mode of thought unwillingly and under protest, faith comes and censures it; reason through faith gives judgement; authority condemns, and all that is within me cries out likewise what was said before, ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord thy God is *One God.*’ For, though faith and reason and authority alike all teach me to think of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit Each by Himself, they will allow no element whatever in my thought of the Trinity, which either suggests division of Its substance in time or place or number, or seems to imply confusion of the Persons. They so assert the Oneness of the Trinity as to rule out Onlyness; and the Threefoldness of the Unity they so declare as to exclude from the Being of God plurality of number. Thy grace, O Lord, which precedes everything of worth in us, every capacity or skill or virtue, gives us some little knowledge of ourselves and Thee. And grace submits us to humility, humility to authority, authority to faith; faith teaches reason; reason, by means of faith, either reﬁnes the picture that the mind has formed, or else destroys it and supplies another. Reason, however, does not teach faith in order to bring it to understanding; rather, through faith it looks for understanding to come down from above, from Thee, the Father of lights, from Whom is every good and perfect gift. And the understanding which is not derived from reason, nor reached by process of thought, but comes from the throne of Thy greatness as the reward of faith, and is determined by Thy wisdom—that understanding is altogether like the Fountain whence it springs. For, entering the mind of the believer, it takes reason to itself and makes it like itself; by it faith also is imbued with life and light.

Frightened and bewildered, therefore, stands the soul about to pray to Thee, her God, holding herself in her hands all the time that she may make herself an oﬀering to Thee. Fearful of that to which she has been used, and dazed by things unwonted, she bears the signet of Thy faith with which to ﬁnd Thee, but so far has not found the wax to yield to its impression. She seeks Thy Face, O Lord, she seeks Thy Face, not knowing, yet not wholly ignorant of what she seeks. The phantoms of her heart concerning Thee she hates as idols. She loves Thee as her faith presents Thee to her; but her mind fails to win the sight of Thee. Aﬂame with longing for Thy Face, to Whom she would present her sacriﬁce of righteousness and duty, her oblations and burnt oﬀerings, she is more troubled when she is put oﬀ. And when for all her asking she still fails to win the light of faith from Thee in Whom she trusted, she grows sometimes so disconcerted that she can scarce believe she does believe in Thee, and hates herself because it seems to her she has no love for Thee! But far be it from her that she should not believe in Thee, who is so anguished by desire for Thee; or that she should not love Thee, who desires Thee to the exclusion of all things that are and even of herself! How long, O Lord, how long? If Thou light not my candle, if Thou illumine not my darknesses, I shall not be delivered from these straits; nor, save by Thee, my God, shall I surmount this wall.

MEDITATION 3

*The soul gives utterance to her longing to see God, and dwells upon the joy of that same Sight*

I dare not now, Lord, look upon Thy face; for all that I desire It even unto death; for Thou didst say to Moses, ‘There shall no man see Me, and live.’1 I do indeed desire to die that I may see, or see that I may die; and yet I hide my face as Moses did, not venturing to meet Thee eye to eye. For so is it there written, ‘And Moses hid his face, for he dared not look upon the Lord.’2 He would have looked upon the Lord, perhaps, had he tried to see not Who God is, but What. For Who God is he had already heard; ‘I am the God of Abraham,’ God said, ‘the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And yet to this same Moses who, on hearing that his death was near, was all aﬂame with this selfsame desire and prayed that Thou wouldst let him see Thy glory, Thou didst make reply, ‘I will show thee All Good.’3 And where, Lord, is All Good, save in Thy Face? That is why David, burning with the same desire, says, ‘Thou shalt ﬁll me with joy with Thy Face.’4 Forgive me, Lord, forgive my heart’s impatience for Thee; I seek Thy Face; by Thine own gift I seek Thy Countenance, lest Thou shouldest turn It from me at the last.

I know indeed, and I am sure that those who walk in the light of Thy Countenance stumble not, but walk in safety; and by Thy Face their every judgement is directed. They are the *living* people; for their life is lived according to that which they read and see in Thy Face, as in a copybook. O Lord, I dare not look upon Thy Face against Thy will, lest I be further confounded. Needy and beggared and blind, I stand in Thy presence, seen by Thee, though I see not Thee; and, standing thus, I oﬀer Thee my heart full of desire for Thee, the whole of whatever I am, the whole of whatever I can do, the whole of whatever I know, and the very fact that I so yearn and faint for Thee. But the way to ﬁnd Thee I ﬁnd not.

Where art Thou, Lord, where art Thou? And where, Lord, art Thou not? This much at least I know, and that most certainly, that Thou, in Whom we move and have our being, art in a manner present here with me; and that from that most health-giving Presence comes the longing and the fainting of my soul for Thy salvation. I know in very truth, most healthfully am I aware that Thou art with me; I know, I feel, I worship, and I render thanks. But if Thou art with me, why am I not with Thee? What hinders it? What is the obstacle? If Thou art with me, working for my good, why am I not likewise with Thee, enjoying Thee, the Supreme Good of all? Is it because of my sins? But where is He Who took them out of the way and nailed them to His cross? And surely it is not because I do not love Him! Would I not die a hundred and a thousand times for Thee, Lord Jesus? If this is not enough for Thee, no more is it for me; for nothing satisﬁes my soul, nor does she seem to herself to love Thee at all, if she have not joy of Thee. But she cannot so enjoy Thee, until Thou grant her to see and know Thee after her own manner.

But why does she not see Thee? As now I love Thee even unto death, so would I love in death, so would I love unto eternal life. Already, Lord, some of Thy nameless fragrance reaches me; did I but sense it perfectly, henceforward I should search no more. Thou dost indeed send me at times as it were mouthfuls of Thy consolation; but what is that for hunger such as mine? O Thou Salvation of my soul, tell her, I pray Thee, why Thou hast breathed this longing into her; surely it is not merely to torment and rend and slay! Yet O that it would slay! Lord, I implore Thee, is this then my hell? So may it be! Nor do Thou ever cease to torture me, nor may I ever cease to burn therein, nor may I suﬀer any respite from its pains one single day or hour or moment even, till I appear before Thy Presence, and behold Thy glory, and the eternal feast-day of Thy Face has shone upon my soul! When Moses, Lord, of old covered his countenance and veiled his face before Thee, he symbolized the people under his command, who were for ever ﬂeeing from the Face of God. But Paul, Thy Paul, who is all ours because he is all Thine, the clarion voice of the New Testament, says of himself and his disciples in Thy desire and love, ‘We all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory.’5 That man of Thine was ﬂeeing *to* Thy face, and not away from it.

Forgive, O Lord, forgive my boldness and my importunity; we dare so much only because we are consumed with longing, because Thy ﬁre drives us, which Thou didst come to send on earth and didst so greatly long to see enkindled.6 By Thine almightiest goodness, Lord, I pray Thee, by Thy most tender patience towards us, yield something to my quest, and tell my soul what she desires when she seeks Thy Face; for so purblind is she, so vexed within herself, that she is waxing feeble even in her longing and knows not what it is for which she longs. Does she desire to see Thee as Thou art? And what means ‘as Thou art’? Of what sort? Or how great? But Thou art of no sort, O Lord, nor hast Thou measure; there is no quality nor quantity in Thee, Who art That which Thou art. What means then ‘as Thou art’? It is beyond our powers so to see Thee; for to *see* what Thou art is to *be* what Thou art. And no man sees the Father but the Son, neither does any see the Son except the Father;7 for to see the Son is to be the Father, and to see the Father is to be the Son. But the Lord adds, ‘and he to whomsoever the Son shall have willed to reveal Him.’ Now the Father and the Son have not two wills but one, which is the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, therefore, the Triune God reveals Himself to any friend of God on whom He would bestow especial honour. But does man see God as the Father sees the Son, or the Son the Father, Who see Each Other (as we said) in such wise as to be not separate, but One God? Never. Man does see God, assuredly; but not in every way.

To make this somewhat clearer, let us consider the physical faculty of sight and the power of apprehension that pertains to it. Every bodily sense, in order to be a sense and to perceive at all, must be in some sort changed, by means of a certain sensible aﬀection, into the thing perceived; sight, that is to say, must be changed into that which it sees, hearing into what is heard, and so with all the rest. Otherwise it does not perceive and it is not a sense. The sense, then, is no sense, neither can it perceive at all, unless, when it has informed the reason of the thing perceived, the soul of the perceiver is changed by a certain transformation of itself into the reality perceived or into its state. If, therefore, it perceives that God is good, by means of love which is its proper sense, and loves Him for His goodness, it must inevitably be made good itself in being thus joined to God by a good disposition.

To return to the sense of the soul, is it not of this that Paul is speaking when he says, ‘Beholding the glory of God, we are changed into the same image’? That is how the soul’s sense functions. For the soul’s sense is love; by love it perceives whatever it perceives, alike when it is pleased and when it is oﬀended. When the soul reaches out in love to anything, a certain change takes place in it by which it is transmuted into the object loved; it does not become of the same nature as that object, but by its aﬀection it is conformed to what it loves. For it cannot love a good person because he is good, without being itself made good by that same person. Is not this the meaning of ‘Think ye of the Lord in goodness,’8 and ‘For to know thee [i.e., Wisdom] is perception perfected,’9 and also of the words of the apostle, ‘Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus’10?

This is Charity, whereby he who loves abides in God and God in him. O Charity, Charity, we owe it to thee that, because we love God and the Son of God, we ourselves are called the sons of God. And such indeed we are; and, although ‘it doth not yet appear what we shall be, when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.’11 Lord, it is good for us to be here; we would fain tarry here, and O that we might die! But grant, I beg, to those who think and speak and write of Thee a balanced judgement, an utterance concise and disciplined, and a heart aﬂame to ﬁnd Thee, Jesus, in the Scriptures that speak concerning Thee. Forgive, O Lord, forgive; the love of Thy love drives me; Thou knowest and Thou seest how it is with me. I am no scrutinizer of Thy majesty; a pauper am I, seeking for Thy grace. I beg Thee by the sweetness of Thy sweetest tenderness, let not Thy majesty crush me, but let Thy grace support me. Forgive, I say; for to see God—here in a riddle only, but hereafter face to face—is faith’s proper desire. Flatter not yourself, O Man, and be not over-conﬁdent; think not to stay here, however much you may be a man of desire like Daniel;12 say not, ‘It is enough!’ Whatever awareness you have here of seeing God, whatever faith here teaches you about Him, is a riddle, darker at times indeed, at others clearer. They only know, who have experienced it, how sweet that vision is when it is present, and how much to be desired when it seems to be withdrawn. For this experience is the stone with the name written upon it, that no man knows save he who has received it.13

And it is said of the vision that shall be face to face, ‘No man shall see Me, and live.’ For he who sees will not live; he will say, ‘O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?’14, hoping exceedingly that, when at last he sees God perfectly, then he will live indeed. What does perception here? Of what avail are mental images? Can reason or rational understanding eﬀect anything? For, although reason sends us to Thee, O our God, it cannot of itself attain to Thee. Neither does that understanding which, as a product of reason, has lower matters for its sphere of exercise go any further than does reason’s self; it is as powerless as reason to attain to Thee. But the understanding which is from above carries the fragrance of its place of origin; there is nothing human in its operation, it is all divine. And where it is inpoured, it carries along with itself the faculties that are akin to it, the faculties, that is to say, that function independently of the inferior reason, except in so far as the obedience of faith requires its exercise.

This sort of understanding makes neither division nor conjunction in the Trinity; but, when and as and as far as the Holy Spirit wills, it controls the believing mind, so that those, who in their prayer and contemplation have got past all that Thou art not, may see something of what Thou art, although they do not see Thee as Thou art. Nevertheless this understanding serves to soothe the loving spirit, for there is clearly nothing in it of that which Thou art not and, although it is not wholly what Thou art, it is not diﬀerent from that Reality. For the Spirit of the Lord of a sudden so clothes the tranquil, humble soul on whom He rests, and so changes him into another man, that no antithesis is felt in the believer’s mind; the Trinity in no way contradicts the Unity nor puts a stumbling-block before the piety of him who seeks the One God; the Unity of Substance dims not the charity of him who rejoices in the love between the Father and the Son; neither the Onlyness nor the Plurality disturbs him, but the Oneness of the Trinity and the Threefoldness of the Unity so avail for him, that with a loving and sober understanding he comprehends the majesty of the Divine Incomprehensibility by the very fact that he comprehends it not. And, as he thus tastes and sees how gracious the Lord is, all of a sudden his whole being waxes so sweet in tasting of His sweetness, and he is so lit up by seeing the light of His truth, and so beside himself with delight in the joy of the Holy Spirit at this sudden plenitude of the Highest Good, that he is conﬁdent he will have won eternal life, if this experience be perfected. For ‘this is life eternal, that they may know Thee the Only True God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent.’15 ‘Come ye to Him,’ therefore, ‘and be enlightened; and your faces shall not be ashamed.’16

MEDITATION 4

*The soul asks for the gift of prayer, and describes its former state and recent desolation*

Pitying and merciful art Thou, O Lord, patient and exceeding kind; Thou art gracious to all and Thy compassions rest on all Thy works. Thou dost Thyself exhort us, Lord, to pray and to watch in prayer; so does Thy Holy Spirit. Thou dost exhort and teach us so to do, out of Thy tenderness and pity and Thy will to show us mercy; and Thou makest out our case beforehand for us, so that, if we pray as we ought to pray, Thou mayest have just cause for showing mercy. And Thou hast ﬁxed for us even our form of prayer, that Thou, Who art for us both Judge and Advocate, mayst fail us in our cause in no respect. And Thou hast bidden us ask boldly in Thy Name, and to believe we shall receive whatever we have asked, and that those things for which we pray will come to pass.1

It is Thy goodness, Lord, that leads Thee to do this; we, on the other hand, are bound by grim necessity. And yet, for all Thine exhortation, we are slow to pray; despite Thy bidding we neglect to do it; and we do not believe Thy promises. Thou, notwithstanding, in Thy mercy and Thy great compassion rousest the slothful and the negligent; Thy patience overlooks our lack of trust. And further, since we know not how to pray aright nor can do so, Thou sendest us Thy Holy Spirit, that He may succour our inﬁrmity and intercede for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.2

We pray, therefore, because Thou biddest us; we ask with conﬁdence, because Thou promisest; and forthwith Thou runnest to meet us and answerest our prayer, ﬁnding in us a ground for Thy forgiveness, because Thou hast Thyself made us forgivable. Loving as Thou art, O Lord, Thou multipliest now Thy lovingkindness on us all; and we begin to see Thy mercies that are over all Thy works. For when, O God, instead of ﬂeeing from us Thou beginnest to draw near and to rejoice our spirits with Thy consolation, the soul’s dead senses catch the fragrance of Thy healing presence and perceive its touch, and straightway come to life; faith leaps up and conﬁdence is cheered; the heart is kindled, and the tears run down to fan the new-lit ﬁre, not to quench it.3

When Thy Spirit helps our weakness thus, Thy sweetness moves us to weep copious ﬂoods of sweet and fruitful tears; and, when Thy loving comfort wipes the tears away, they ﬂow the more profusely and become our meat by day and night, a strong and pleasant food. For it is a happy thing for us who are Thy people and the sheep of Thy pasture, O Lord our God, to weep before Thee Who art our Creator. I, even I, O Lord, am the man that seeth aﬄiction;4 I am poor and beset with troubles from my youth; having been lifted up, I have been humbled and put to shame.5 For through what great and dire troubles hast Thou brought me; and then Thou hast turned and led me back to life, and hast brought me again from the deep of the earth. Thou hast multiplied Thy mighty acts upon me; turning towards me, Thou hast brought me comfort.6 For when of old time in Thy Paradise Thou didst create me, and gavest me the Tree of Life itself for my possession, as of abiding right, Thou willedst—or at least allowedst me to reach my hand out also for the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, to the intent that I, who had grown weary of my inward blessings, might ﬁnd what sort of outward action I could do, with the consent and help of Eve, my ﬂesh. I tasted of the fruit; and I saw not Thy graciousness but mine own shame. I saw myself as one whose infamy needed a cloak to cover it, whose nakedness trembled to meet Thee, whose liberty required the constraint of laws. For I was found in Thy sight destitute of all the inward things men thought that I possessed; I was found shameful in mine inward parts and found in them no refuge from myself, nor yet from Thee; and I, who had received the charge of ruling others, appeared as needing to be ruled myself.

Therefore, O Lord, I hid myself among the trees of Paradise, therefore I ﬂed away to my dark places; I gat me away far oﬀ, not *from* Thee, Lord, but *to* Thee, and abode in the wilderness. And there I wait for Thee, Who hast saved me from faintheartedness and from the storm.7 I have put my mouth in the dust, if so there may be hope,8 as a lone wild ass snuﬃng the breeze of my love.9 And when, being come wholly to myself again, I sit alone and speak not, hearing neither the cry of the driver10 nor the din of battle, and seeing that the time serves me,11 when I thus have leisure to attend to myself, I ask: ‘Who am I?’ and ‘Whence have I come?’ And I recognize myself as one of the sons of Adam, a child of wrath by nature12 but a servant of Thy holy Church by grace; I know myself to be one of those exiled from Paradise, living and toiling on the earth which is accursed, for Thou hast laid a curse on it in all the works of Adam. When I have tilled it, it does not yield its fruits but brings forth thorns and thistles for me in their stead. In the sweat of my brow I eat my bread, according to the stern decree of Thy just judgement, whereby Thou hast rebuked the proud and the accursed who keep not Thy commandments.

O good Creator! How well hadst Thou created me! How gloriously hadst Thou fashioned me! How blest a place hadst Thou appointed for my dwelling! Thou didst create me, Lord, for the good works which Thou hadst prepared for me to walk in, as the apostle says;13 Thou didst fashion me in Thine own Image and Likeness, and didst put me into the Paradise of Thy delight, that I might till it with my good endeavours and guard it lest the serpent should steal in. The serpent stole in. He seduced my Eve; and, through her, made me a transgressor. And therefore am I driven out of the Paradise of Good Conscience, and made to be an exile in a foreign country, the Land of Unlikeness.14

But, Lord, Who madest all things and sawest all Thy works that they were very good, shall my ill-doing ruin Thy good work? Truly Thou didst not make me for Paradise, but Paradise for me, when Thou didst make me man, supreme on earth. Let it not repent Thee, Lord, that Thou hast made me so, but bid me to be reasonable man, as at the ﬁrst, ruling my earth so that I may subject my body to my spirit and my spirit unto Thee. Do not repent Thee of the dignity Thou hast bestowed on man in giving me dominion over the beasts of my earth, that is to say, the ﬁerce and untamed movements of my soul’s aﬀections, dominion also over the thoughts that creep along the ground and are noxious and deadly with the poison of the earth to which they cleave, dominion over the ﬁshes of the sea and the birds of heaven, worldly thoughts, forsooth, that explore and pursue the secrets of the world and the pride of its day, and over the beasts of burden, namely those powers of the body which Thou didst create in us that they might bear our burdens, as their name implies. O Thou, Who gavest us these faculties, make them submit to the bridle of reason, the goads of holy zeal, and the stall of discipline; and in that stall let them feed on their proper foods and be nourished thereby, to be led thence to work when occasion requires, but never allowed to roam at large in the broad ways of error. The day will come, says He Who gives the promise, the day will come when the lion and the lamb will lie down together, when hurtful things will hurt no one in all Thy holy mountain;15 even the beasts of burden will browse in luscious pastures then, being instruments no longer of our weakness, but rather of our blessèd happiness.

Meanwhile, Lord, hear the heavens, and let the heavens hear the earth; let the earth hear the wine and the oil and the corn, and let these hear Jezreel,16 that is the seed of God that Thou hast sown in us. For Thou didst allure me, Lord, as the prophet says, and broughtest me into the wilderness, promising to speak there to Thy servant’s heart.17 And now I thank Thee that Thou hast so spoken, once and again, and indeed many times; and when my soul tells Thee, ‘Thou art my God,’ Thou answerest sometimes with a gentle kindness, ‘I am thy Salvation.’18 And now, Desire of my soul, the same my soul, desiring to wait on Thee a little space, and to taste and see how gracious the Lord is,19 implores Thy tender mercy to give me peace and silence from all things, whether outward or inward; to keep for me that power over the things within me that Thou hast given me; but outwardly to make a covenant between me and every beast of the ﬁeld,20 every creeping thing of earth, and every bird of heaven, and to banish the bow and the sword, and war from my earth, that my whole place may be in peace and my habitation in Sion. Give me, O Lord, the comfort of my wilderness—a solitary heart and frequent communing with Thee. As long as Thou art with me, O my God, I shall not be alone; but if Thou leave me, woe to him that is alone;21 for if I fall asleep there will be none to keep me warm; if I fall down, there will be none to raise me up.

Lead me away meanwhile, my Refuge and my Strength, into the desert’s heart,22 as once Thou leddest Moses Thy servant; lead me where the bush burns, yet is not burnt up, where the holy soul that has earned admission to a like experience is all aﬂame with the fullness of Thy holy Spirit’s ﬁre and, burning like the seraphim, is not consumed but cleansed. And then there comes to pass for the ﬁrst time a better thing, the miracle of all Thy miracles, the sight of sights; the soul attains to the holy place where none may stand nor take another step, except he be bare-footed, having loosed the shoe-strings of all ﬂeshly hindrances—the place, that is, that the soul may enter only with her aﬀections clean and pure, the place where He Who Is, Who cannot be seen as He is, is notwithstanding heard to say, *‘I Am Who Am,’* the place where, for the time, the soul must veil her face that she see not the Face of God, and yet in humble obedience must use her ears to hear what the Lord God will say concerning her. Hide me then, O Lord, in the secret place of Thy tabernacle in the time of trouble; hide me in the secret of Thy Face from the strife of tongues.23 For Thy yoke is easy, and a light burden hast Thou laid on me;24 and when Thou showest me the diﬀerence between Thy service and the service of the world, gently and tenderly Thou askest me if it is not better to serve Thee, the living God, than to serve strange gods.

As for me, I adore the Hand that lays the load, I kiss the yoke and I embrace the burden; and it is very sweet to me to sweat beneath its weight. For masters other than Thou have long possessed me; and their yoke is not easy, nor is their burden light. I desire to be subject to Thy law; I acknowledge Thy yoke and Thy light burden that lifts me up and does not crush me down. And when ﬁrst I put myself to school in this Thy service, I seem to see a new earth and new heavens, and lo! Thou makest all things new for me.25 I am a countryman, Lord, who comes from the country of the world. Teach me Thy City’s ordered ways, the courtesies and gracious manners of Thy Court. Remove from me the likeness of the world, on which I had modelled myself, and make me like Thy citizens, lest in their midst I seem as one deformed. And teach me too the language that I do not know, the language I began to hear when I came forth from Egypt,26 but do not understand because I am so set in alien ways, the language that Thou speakest with Thy sons, and they with Thee. And make me understand those little signs, whereby Thou givest understanding hearts to know what is Thy good, acceptable and perfect Will.27

And now, O tender Father, thanks to Thee my soul begins to hear Thy voice when Thou addressest her; but she does not fully understand that which Thou sayst to her. For Thy voice never comes empty; Thy voice is Thy grace, and it is heard not outwardly but sweetly and eﬀectively within. Moreover, when I speak to Thee, I turn towards Thee; and that is well for me too. And whatever the object of my prayer, I never pray or worship Thee in vain; the very act of praying brings me rich reward. Teach me then, Holy Spirit, to pray without ceasing, that Thou mayest grant me to rejoice unceasingly in Thee. For though Thy poor man, being poor in spirit, makes lamentation when he prays, either because he remembers his sins or else because he ﬁnds himself in straits, nevertheless his joy is keener in proportion to his grief; whereas on the other hand the man who rejoices in the world is—if he has any sense at all—the more tormented and grieved in the depths of his conscience in proportion to his joy. Devout and single-minded prayer is never without joy.

MEDITATION 5

*The soul enumerates the diﬀerent kinds of prayer; she calls to mind Christ’s Passion and her sins*

When I desire to stir my heart to constant and eﬀective prayer, to practise it therein and develop the habit of prayer, I would have no direction except Thine, Lord Jesus, the Wisdom of God the Father. I call to mind, therefore, the kinds of prayer that Thou didst practise among men on earth, and by which Thou didst give us a pattern for perfect prayer. And I ﬁnd Thee praying sometimes alone and sometimes in a crowd, sometimes in exaltation of spirit, at one time in a sweat of blood, and at another lifted up upon the cross.

Exaltation of spirit and praying alone are very pleasant indeed for me to imitate; but, unless Thou prevent me with the blessings of Thy sweetness, though I shall ﬁnd a solitary place with ease, I shall not ﬁnd a solitary heart. Exaltation of spirit proceeds either from purity of conscience, of which I have no awareness in myself, or else from the abundance of Thy grace, of which I am unworthy. Thou, to Whom no grace was lacking, wast able to pray in a crowd; yet we too shun not praying thus, if the occasion demands it. I know, O Lord, I know that Thy prayer in the bloody sweat and Thy prayer on the cross would be utterly needful for me; for, when I think what there is in me that needs to be sweated out in prayer and forced out by the anguish of the cross, my heart sweats tears of blood before Thy look, although I do not have a bloody sweat.

So too with cruciﬁxion; it is not my body that is cruciﬁed, but my wretched soul that is put to greater inward agony than that of any cross. Yet I am cruciﬁed with Thee, Lord Jesus, at least upon the cross of my Profession, which daily and constantly of Thine own gift I oﬀer unto Thee. But when from my own pleasant cross I look at the cross of Thy Passion, the nails of Thy fear pierce me; I am confounded and all my spirit fails—not from the pain of my cross, which by Thy grace is nothing to me now, but because of the pain of my heart when I consider Thy work revived in the midst of the years,1 revealed in Redemption’s eﬀect throughout all time, both before as well as after the event, Thy work that none can repay and to which no death, no life can ever make adequate response—Thy work which, none the less, is despised by the very world it has redeemed. The force of habit has inured us to the sight of Thee upon the cross, to the thought of Thee as dead and buried and—the which should pierce our hearts more readily and deeply—as buﬀeted and scourged, as mocked and [spat] upon, pierced by the nails and spear, crowned with the thorns, and given gall or vinegar to drink, Who on the cross didst thirst for nothing but our salvation. The earth trembled when Thou was cruciﬁed; we laugh. The heavens and the lights thereof were darkened; we want to shine before the world. The rocks were rent; but we harden our hearts. The opened graves gave up their dead; but we, taking our ease on the bed of self-indulgence, bury our dead selves, who are Thy dead.

Thou didst oﬀer three prayers to God the Father during Thy Passion, Lord, if I remember right; and all agree that those three prayers include all that the same Thy Passion should eﬀect, at the price of Thy Blood, for Thyself, and for Thy friends, and for Thine enemies. When Thou prayedst for Thyself, Thou didst not exercise Thyself in vain, for Thou wast heard by reason of Thy godly fear, as the apostle says.2 Thou didst pray also for Thy friends who continued with Thee in Thy temptations, and for the enemies who cruciﬁed Thee but knew not what they did. When didst Thou pray for those who sin knowingly? Such persons, as long as they continue in their sin, are outside the embrace of the Cruciﬁed Who, with His hands outstretched upon the cross, seemed by the very shape of the gibbet to embrace all for whom He was enduring it.

Therefore the apostle says, ‘No sacriﬁce for sin remains for those who sin deliberately.’3 Unless repentance wash their sins away, unless a sweat of blood expel and the pain of the cross force out the evil from their system, I cannot see that those who sin deliberately and knowingly have any share either in the prayer of Him Who sweat His blood or in the sacriﬁce of Him Who hung upon the cross. Alas for me! My conscience will not let me say I knew not what I did, nor will the truth permit it. By virtue of the price of Thy dear Blood, therefore, forgive me all my sins, O Lord, whether committed knowingly or not; tell Thy poor sinner, whisper in Thy servant’s ear what he must do to make amends for them, and above all for those that he committed, knowing what he did. For if, as it appears, Thou hast excluded conscious sinners from Thy mercy, woe to the whole wide world, for it would seem Thou hast included very few! ‘No sacriﬁce avails for those who sin deliberately,’ the apostle says. ‘A man who makes void the Law of Moses dies without any mercy at the deposition of two or three witnesses. How much more, do you think, is he deserving of worse punishments who has trodden underfoot the Son of God, and has treated as worthless the Blood of the Covenant whereby he was sanctiﬁed, and has oﬀered an aﬀront to the Spirit of grace? For we know Who said, “Vengeance is Mine; I will repay.”’

Lord, truly I have sinned by mine own will and much, after I had received the knowledge of the truth; and I have oﬀered an aﬀront to the Spirit of grace. After receiving from Him the free remission of my sins in Baptism, after receiving knowledge of the truth, I have returned to those sins like a dog to his vomit. But have I spurned Thee, also, Son of God? I have spurned Thee, if I have denied Thee; although I should not think that Peter trod Thee underfoot, for all that he came to deny Thee; he loved Thee most ardently even while declaring once, twice, and even thrice, that he did not know Thee. Have I treated as worthless the Blood of the Covenant? May he who thus despises be anathema! God forbid that such a thought should ever cross my mind, or that ever my lips should make such an admission!

Satan has sought out my faith sometimes, to sift it as wheat; but Thy prayer has reached even to me, so that my faith in Thee should never fail. Virtue consists in the willing assent of the mind to what is good. Thou knowest that my mind has always wanted to believe in Thee; keep Thou it for me in Thy faith unto the end. I have always believed in Thee; I have never denied Thee; I have always loved Thee, even when I sinned against Thee. I shall be sorry for my sin until I die; but I shall never repent of having loved Thee, unless it be because even in death I did not love Thee as I ought; for, had I loved Thee so, I had not sinned. And yet, alas, I am afraid my very love of Thee will bring me into judgement; for if it is so serious a thing to sin after receiving knowledge of the truth, how much more serious is it so to do, after that one has tasted of Thy goodness and received the sweetness of Thy love! For even in my childhood Thy grace enabled me to love Thee, unclean child though I was; and yet my sins against Thee were not childish sins. From that time till this present I have never ceased to sin, and Thou hast never ceased to work my good. What then is left for me, except to hear ‘Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things’?4

But turn, O Lord, Thy mercy into judgement; condemn my sin as sin only so that, although Thou hast good cause to condemn me, by reason of the smallness of my love for Thee, nevertheless I may by grace receive the fullness of Thy love, and so come to Thy judgement seat and appear in Thy holy place and before the eyes of Thy mercy, by the same right as that of the sinful woman, concerning whom Thou saidst, ‘Her many sins are forgiven, because she loved much.’ But ﬁrst, Lord, let the ﬁre of Thy perfect love inﬂame my heart, let its great heat sweat and cook out of me all the poison of sin; let it search out and wash away with the tears of my eyes all that deﬁles my conscience; may Thy cross drive from me all the evil that I have contracted through the lust of the ﬂesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life through the long-continued rusting of my negligence; and may whatever has been charred and sapped by the will of the ﬂesh and the mind’s consent thereto perish at the rebuke of Thy countenance! Lord, any one who likes may hear me thus confessing, and may laugh at me! Any one may see me lying with the sinful woman at Thy mercy’s feet, washing them with the tears of my heart and anointing them with the perfume of heartfelt devotion.5 Let me give my whole substance (whatever that amounts to!), alike in body and soul, to buy the perfume that Thou wilt accept, that I may pour it out upon Thy Head, Whose Head is God, and on Thy Feet, Whose lower part is the nature of our humiliation.

Let the Pharisee murmur, but do Thou have mercy on me, O my God! Let the thief with his money-boxes6 gnash his teeth at me if he likes; as long as Thou art pleased with me, I care but little who may be displeased. O my heart’s Love, may I anoint Thee daily, ceaselessly; for, when I am anointing Thee, then I anoint myself. My nature, hardened by long wickedness, is like a leather bottle in the winter; unless this ointment’s sweet and constant inﬂuence soften it, it freezes and grows hard, it cracks and spills whatever of Thy goodness it might seem to have contained.

Thou saidst, ‘She hath done what she could.’7 Grant, Lord, that I may faithfully devote to Thee all that I have, all that I know, all that I am, and all that I can do; let me keep nothing for myself. I stand to be judged by Thee, and by no man; I lie at Thy mercy’s feet and there will lie and lament, until Thou make me hear Thy blessèd Voice, the judgement of Thy lips, the declaration of Thy righteousness which is mine too, for Thou hast given it me, ‘Her many sins are forgiven, for she loved much.’

O Lord, by the ‘all judgement’ that the Father has committed unto Thee,8 prevent me by this merit and judge me with this judgement; for out of love for Thy love I would rather be merely justiﬁed and saved by this criterion of love, than magniﬁed and gloriﬁed by any other way. Shut me not out, O Lord, from the embrace of Thy Redemption; for I desire in everything to share Thy cross.

Thou saidst, ‘Vengeance is Mine; I will repay.’ No, no, most Merciful! Mine be the vengeance, that I may repent!9 ‘It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.’ Command me as Thou wilt; but give me sense to understand Thy bidding and power to perform it, even as Thou hast already given me a heart prepared thereto; so that neither my heart nor my body may draw back from doing Thy will in any particular. ‘Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; and all my thoughts both recent and long past.’ Unmake me from the pattern of the world, on which I have modelled myself; make me and conform me to the pattern of Thy grace, to which I now have ﬂed; and teach my heart the kind of penitence that pleases Thee. Give me also, O Lord, a faith devout and pure, holy and strong and unassailable; so that, bestowing grace for grace, Thou mayest say ‘Go, for thy faith has made thee whole,’10 even to me.

MEDITATION 6

*The soul contemplates the joy of the blessèd, and heaven, that is God, and the Ark of the Covenant, that is Christ’s Humanity*

‘I saw a door opened in heaven,’ says blessèd John, ‘and the ﬁrst voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me which said, “Come up hither.”’1

O Lord, Thou didst create the heaven and the earth; yet Thou hast cursed the earth in Adam’s sin and work. Thou hast appointed for his children’s dwelling-place this earth whose denizens are all of them under a curse; for, like the accursed inhabitants of hell, they not only bear ceaseless punishments but also, by forsaking Thy commandments, incur fresh penalties from day to day, even as it is written, ‘Cursèd are they that do err from Thy commandments.’2 I am weighed down with this plethora of curses new and old; the things that I never took I am compelled to pay,3 my proper debts I must discharge with compound interest. How eagerly, how gladly would I escape from our earth to Thy heaven, the heaven that Thou hast kept for Thyself since the casting thence of the proud one purged it once for all from pride! O that I could ﬁnd the way of ascent to heaven, and the open door!

They tell me there is nothing there of all the evils that we suﬀer here; there is no morning nor yet evening there, no morning joy that passes, no evening griefs that last. Thou knowest how I should rejoice to see the end of those and, in their place, one day, glad with the ceaseless glory of the sight of Thee, voided of all that could distract from feasting ever on Thy Countenance. No ﬁre, no hail, no snow, no ice, no stormy winds ascend up there, they say, such as down here descend on us so constantly to trouble us at Thy behest.4 No death nor corruption is there, either of body or soul; all pestilent disorders are banished utterly; virtue alone is found, and happiness and joy, and Thine own charity rejoicing in its proper good, unvexed by any fear of losing it. I know, moreover, that that festal day is splendid with the angels’ joyful praises and glorious with the crowns of martyrs and apostles and of all good men who have found favour in Thy sight since time began. I know the Church is gathered there in one, and that she has established for that festal day her everlasting dwellings. Whenever we see two or three of that company gathered together in Thy Name on earth with Thee, Lord, in their midst, their life together seems so good, so pleasant, so fragrant with the unction of the Holy Spirit, that it is plain to all that there the blessing that Thou hast ordained is realized. How much more, then, shall this be so, where Thou hast gathered Thy saints who set Thy covenant before the sacriﬁces, and where the heavens Thou hast made proclaim Thy righteousness!5

For that beloved disciple of Thine was not the only one to ﬁnd the way to heaven, nor was the open door revealed to him alone. Not by a herald nor by any prophet but out of Thine own mouth to all and openly Thou hast proclaimed, ‘I am the Door; by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved.’6 *Thou* art the Door, then, Lord; and when Thou sayest, ‘By Me if any enter in,’ Thou openest, apparently, to all who will. But of what use is it to us who are on earth to see the door in heaven standing open, when we cannot ascend thither? Paul makes reply, ‘He that ascended is the Same also as He that descended.’7 Who is He? He is Love. For love in us mounts up to Thee, O Lord, because the love in Thee comes down to us. Thou, Who didst love us, camest down to us; by loving Thee we shall mount up to Thee. O Thou Who didst Thyself declare, ‘I am the Door,’ by Thine own Self, I pray Thee, open Thyself to us, that Thou mayst show more clearly what House Thou openest, and when Thou openest, and unto whom. The House whereof Thou art the door is heaven, as we said before; and heaven is where the Father dwells, of Whom we read, ‘The Lord’s seat is in heaven.’8 And verily none cometh to the Father, save by Thee,9 Who art the Door.

But one of Thy servants says that those who still take pleasure in the beauty of things seen cannot perceive God spiritually,10 for they conceive of heaven only in terms of earth; their point of view would be more endurable, however, if they were to believe that the God, of Whom they still form only a material image, was in heaven rather than on earth. For Thou, O Maker of all times and places, art neither moved by time nor limited by place; Thou art not held up in a material heaven lest Thou shouldest fall, nor dost Thou dwell therein in such a manner as not Thyself to ﬁll both heaven and earth. For Thou art present everywhere, if one may use that word at all of Thee, Who art above all place; and everywhere Thou art in Thine entirety, if one may predicate entirety in or concerning Thee, Who knowest no division into parts. Yet Thou Thyself hast taught us to say ‘Our Father which art in heaven’;11 and this belief that God inhabits heaven is so general that all men hold it, even Jews and heathen. It is, however, one thing to hold a false belief, and another to present the truth in such terms as will both enable men of understanding to receive it and also allow those, who lack the power of thought and cannot grasp things as they really are, to hold their opinion less oﬀensively, because of the terms employed. The prophet who says, ‘There is a God in heaven,’ adds shortly afterwards, ‘Who dwelleth in Jerusalem.’12 Make answer then, I pray, to us who seek and yearn for Thee. ‘Master, where dwellest Thou?’13 Swiftly Thou answerest, saying, ‘I am in the Father and the Father in Me’; and, in another place, ‘At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in Me, and I in you’;14 and yet again, ‘I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect into one.’15

The Father, then, is where Thou art; and Thou art where the Father is. Nor is that all; for *we* are where Thou art, and Thou art where we are. Since then, Lord Jesus, Thou art in the Father and the Father is in Thee, Thou art Thyself the place of Thine abode; Most High and Undivided Trinity, Thou art Thyself Thy heaven. Just as Thy Being has no fount outside Thyself, so needest Thou no place wherein to dwell, save of and in Thyself.

When, therefore, Thou indwellest us, we are Thy heaven, most assuredly. Yet Thou art not Thyself sustained by dwelling in us; no, it is Thy sustaining that makes of us a heaven for Thee to indwell. And Thou too art our heaven, whither we may ascend and wherein we may dwell. Our dwelling thus in Thee and Thine in us alike are heaven for us, it seems to me; but the heaven of heavens for Thee is Thine eternity, where Thou art what Thou art in Thine own Self. The Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father; and the Bond that unites You, Father and Son, is the Holy Spirit, Who comes not as it were from somewhere else, to put Himself to be the link between You, but exists for this very purpose by virtue of His unity of Being with You Both.

It is the Holy Spirit too Who creates and sets in order the unity that makes us one among ourselves, and one with Thee; He makes us, who were by nature sons of wrath, to be sons of God by grace, as the apostle says, ‘Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and be the sons of God.’ We are sons by the gift that is the Holy Spirit, verily. And a little further on we read, ‘Belovèd, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.’16 But whereas the Birth of the Son from the Father is the nature of eternity, our birth as sons of God is the adoption of grace. The former Birth is not something that happens, nor does it eﬀect a unity; it is itself a oneness in the Holy Spirit. The latter birth, however, has no existence of itself, but comes to being through the Holy Spirit, in so far as it is stamped with the Likeness of God; this unity of course transcends the limits of our human nature, but falls short of the unity that belongs to the Being of God. For the Holy Spirit is also called the *seed* of this birth; that same apostle says of Him, ‘Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for His seed remaineth in him, and therefore he cannot sin.’17 Moreover, the Likeness of God will be conferred on us by the sight of God, when we not only see that He exists but see Him as He is; that is the Likeness that will make us like to Him. For the Father, to see the Son is to be what the Son is, and vice versa. For us too, to see God is to be like God. This unity, this likeness is itself the heaven where God dwells in us, and we in Him.

Thou art the heaven of heavens, O Truth supreme, Who art that which Thou art, Who hast Thy Being from and of Thyself, belonging and suﬃcient to Thyself; Thou lackest nothing, yet hast no excess; there is in Thee no discord nor confusion, no vacillation, no change nor shadow of turning, no need, no death; rather, Thou hast within Thyself supremest concord, utmost clarity, most perfect fullness and completest life. No foulness in Thy creation aﬀects Thee; no malice hurts Thee, nor does any error make Thee go astray. For Thou hast pre-ordained for all the righteous their own abodes of virtue or of blessing, and they must come to them, whatever circumstances let or hinder them. And for the wicked in their evil too Thou hast appointed bounds which, even if they will, they cannot overpass.

O Lord, this height, this depth, this wisdom and this might, are these the heaven whereof Thou art the Door? It is so, truly; that is why the Ark of the Covenant was seen in heaven when the door was opened, as the same John says. For what does the Ark of the Covenant that was seen in heaven mean, if not ‘the dispensation of the mystery, which from the beginning hath been hid in God Who created all things’? Thou art Thyself that Ark; in Thee from all eternity was hid, and in Thee in these latter days has been fulﬁlled all that from the beginning of the world has been revealed to all the saints and prophets, by the Law and by the prophecies, by wonders and by signs. Thou art the Ark that is covered with pure gold in every part; for the fullness of God’s wisdom rested on Thee and invested Thee completely with its glory. In Thee is the vessel of gold that contains the manna, the holy and spotless soul in which the fullness of the Godhead dwelt corporeally; in Thee is Aaron’s rod that budded, the dignity of the eternal priesthood; in Thee are the tables of the Covenant, by which the world is made heir of Thy grace and the nations are made co-inheritors and fellow-heirs and sharers of Thy promise. Above all these things are the bright cherubim, the plenitude of knowledge; but they are not above them because of their own excellence and worth, but rather as needing to be carried and upheld by them; their overshadowing of the mercy-seat testiﬁes to the incomprehensibility of the mysteries of Thine atoning grace.18

These blessings, that were hidden in Thy secret heaven through the ages, Thou didst unveil at the ages’ end to the world’s longing eyes, when Thou openedst in heaven the Door that is Thyself. Thou openedst that Door when Thy grace appeared to all men, teaching us; when Thy kindness and love appeared, saving us not by works of righteousness that we had done but according to Thy mercy.19 The heavens being thus opened, all the good and glory and delight of heaven poured itself out on earth. And then, O God, Who sparedst not Thine own Son but deliveredst Him up for us,20 the greatness of Thy kindness in respect of us was published openly to all; Thou madest known Thy salvation to the world, and in the sight of all the nations didst reveal Thy righteousness, which Thou hast made over to us by the Blood of Thy Sole-Begotten Son; and He Himself rendered to Thee for our salvation the pure obedience that proceeds from love, and gave to us the love that sprang from His obedience. Then didst Thou bless our earth; thenceforward she began to yield her fruit. Thenceforward the high road to heaven lay open to all men, the high road trodden by the feet of martyrs and apostles and of all the saints who, by Thine example and the grace of charity received from Thee, have set themselves at nought for love of Thee and have not been afraid to give their lives for Thee.

Those unsearchable riches of Thy glory, Lord, were hidden in Thy secret place in heaven until the soldier’s spear opened the side of Thy Son our Lord and Saviour on the cross, and the mysteries of our redemption ﬂowed therefrom; so that we now may not only thrust our ﬁnger or our hand into His side, like Thomas, but through that open door may enter whole, O Jesu, even into Thy Heart, the sure seat of Thy mercy, even into Thy holy soul that is ﬁlled with the fullness of God, full of grace and truth, full of our salvation and our consolation. Open, O Lord, the Ark-door of Thy side, that all Thine own who shall be saved may enter in, before this ﬂood that overwhelms the earth; open to us Thy Body’s side, that those who long to see the secrets of the Son may enter in, and may receive the sacraments that ﬂow therefrom, even the price of their redemption. Open the door of Thy heaven, that Thy redeemed may see the good things of God in the land of the living, though they still labour in the land where all men die. Let them see and long, and yearn and run; for Thou hast become the Way by which they go, the Truth to which they go, the Life for which they go.21 The Way is the example of Thy lowliness, the Truth that of Thy purity; the Life is eternal Life.

All these—the Way, the Truth, the Life—Thou hast become for us, merciful Father, sweet Lord, loving Brother. Thou hast become the Way, the Truth, the Life for us Thy children unto whom Thou saidst, ‘My little children, yet a little while am I with you’;22 for us Thy servants to whom Thou saidst, ‘Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am’;23 for us Thy brethren whom Thou biddest to go whither they shall see Thee. O good Father, loving Brother and sweet Lord, Thou art all that is good and sweet and loving; the sum of goodness overﬂows in Thee. Open Thyself to us, that Thy sweetness may ﬂow forth from Thee to us and ﬁll us. Open Thyself to me, O Thou Who art the Door, so that through Thee I may by longing love attain sometimes to the place of Thy wondrous dwelling,24 even the House of God, although I am not worthy yet to enter there in full reality.

For Thou hast opened Thy servant’s ear sometimes, to hear a little of the voice of that exultation and the songs of those that feast; but beyond that he was not suﬀered to proceed. Thou hast good reason, therefore, to be sad, my soul; with right art Thou disquieted within me. But ‘put thy trust in God: for I will yet give Him thanks, which is the help of my countenance and my God.’25 Open to me, O Lord, so that, although I am a stranger unworthy of enrolment yonder as a citizen, yet none the less I may by Thy gift be suﬀered on occasion for a little while to journey there, that I may see Thy glory verily, and not come forth again unless I be cast out. And if I be found worthy to mount up thither oftener, to tarry there sometimes, and to go back again even at the eleventh hour, I shall become known to Thy citizens who do not suﬀer now but dwell there all in joy; their joy no words can tell, and our fellowship with them is for joy, and joy alone. They will not reckon me a stranger, if Thou command me sometimes to repose among them for a space, in some part of that House of Thine. Lord, my heart is restless and impatient for Thee; and I ﬁnd no rest for it apart from Thee. When, therefore, I am driven out of heaven, I am so weary of my life that I am ready sometimes to go down alive into hell—may I never descend there dead!—to ﬁnd out what is happening there too.

But when I ﬁnd it written on the very threshold that there is nobody in hell who worships Thee, I curse the place and ﬂee. I hear the weeping and gnashing of teeth within; but please, Lord, do not let me go down there! Mine eyes are ever looking unto Thee, O Lord, to Thee Who dwellest in the heavens, to Thine House and to Jerusalem Thy city, whence Thou camest down to us, and of the which Thou broughtest with Thee such a marvellous pattern. Kindled thereby, I run back thither often with ardour and desire. If I ﬁnd Thee, the Door, ajar, I enter in; and well is me when that is so. But, if I ﬁnd it shut, I come again, distressed. Debarred from seeing Thy glory, I am sent back wretched to my own abode, and driven to endure my native and familiar poverty. O if only I may see, if only I may persevere, if only I may hear some day, ‘Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,’26 and may in such wise enter in as never to come out again at all! Lord, Thou art mighty, and Thy Truth is round Thee on all sides. Finish Thy work, and give what Thou hast promised.

MEDITATION 7

*The soul expresses longing to see God*

‘My heart hath talked of Thee, my face hath sought Thee: Thy Face, Lord, will I seek. Turn not away Thy Face from me, shun not Thy servant in wrath.’1

It seems surpassing boldness and eﬀrontery to make comparison between my face and Thine, Lord God. For Thou seest and judgest all men’s hearts and, if Thou enter into judgement with Thy servant, the face of my iniquity can only ﬂee before that of Thy righteousness. But if, in order to excuse and help my poverty, Thou shouldest grant me burning love and dutiful humility, then I, for my part, should not ﬂee Thy Face. For love is greatly daring, and humility fosters that conﬁdence. I am not conscious of these virtues in myself, yet I avow myself Thy friend. For, if Thou ask me, ‘Dost thou love Me?’ as Thou askedst Peter, I shall say plainly, I shall tell Thee boldly, ‘Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I want to love Thee.’ And that is as much as to say, ‘If Thou ask me the same thing a thousand times, I shall as often make the same reply, “*Thou knowest that I want to love Thee.*”’2 And that means that my heart desires nothing so much as it desires to love Thee. I cultivate humility as well, which those who make such deﬁnitions call contempt of one’s own excellence; but as long as I continue sometimes to accede unthinkingly to certain little suggestions of my own superiority, and fail to shake myself free of them with suﬃcient speed when they are oﬀered me, I know quite well I am not really humble.

There is another sort of humility—namely, the knowledge of oneself. In that, if I am judged according to what I know about myself, it is, as they say, all up with me, and my appearance before Thy just tribunal is ill-starred.3 But, if the fact that my sin is ever before me is adjudged a virtue in Thy sight, of that I think I am not wholly destitute; for my inward gaze turns so often to the foulness of my sins, even when I do not want to think of them and am intent on better things, that I detest myself because of it. O Lord, what more shall I say about my shamefaced conscience? Whatever it is like, whatever its condition, its whole face so desires Thine that it scorns and despises all the things of this life, and even life itself, for the love of Thy Face; it cares no whit what else it sees, as long as it sees Thee.

Thus, O Desire of mine eyes, my face seeks Thee meanwhile. I seek Thy Face and, I beseech Thee, turn it not from me; but in the meanwhile teach me, O Eternal Wisdom, by the illumination of Thy Countenance, what is that Face of Thine and what is mine. For, though I burn with answering desire to see Thee face to face, I do not know enough as yet of either Thine or mine. I know well enough that, if it was not granted to Paul the apostle in this life to see Thee face to face, and if Thy beloved disciple, loving and loved as he was, was not allowed to see Thee as Thou art, then a man who hopes and seeks to see Thee so is not right in his head. And yet, when I hear David speak like this of face and Face, hearing another hope in Thee I cannot help but hope myself; and this is not because I have forgotten who I am, but because my trust is in Thy tender mercy and, although I make poor progress in my loving, I would not like to love Thee less than any other of Thy lovers does. For, though it seems that Moses was denied what David by no means despaired of attaining, David himself sings and chants concerning this same Moses and the other fathers that ‘they gat not the land in possession through their own sword, neither was it their own arm that saved them: but Thy right hand and Thine arm and the light of Thy countenance.’4 And of himself he says, ‘O Lord, in Thy favour Thou gavest strength to my beauty, Thou turnedst Thy Face from me, and I was troubled.’5 Turn then to me, O Thou most Sweet, that Face which once Thou didst avert from holy David; and, as he was troubled, so shall I be consoled. Turn Thou on me that Face whereby, before Thou turnedst it from him, Thou willedst to increase his beauty. Let Thy right hand and Thine arm and the Light of Thy countenance, which gat possession of the fathers’ land, in whom Thou was well-pleased, possess my land also.

Indeed I ﬁnd nobody who speaks and treats so often and with such familiarity about Thy Countenance and Face as David; and I cannot think that he lacked experience of it, seeing that he calls for every judgement that he gives to issue from Thy Face, and looks for it to ﬁll him full with joy. Moreover, when declaring the blessedness of ‘the blest people that can rejoice in Thee,’ he says, ‘They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance.’6 How much more purposefully can I walk, O God of my heart, when I keep looking to the same Thy Face, that it may guide my judgement in this matter, my conscious mind giving its full assent! I ﬁnd then that Thy Countenance, Thy Face, means knowledge of Thy truth; for it is when Thy blessèd people show to Thee the face of good intention that they rejoice greatly in the Holy Spirit and keep the feast of the great Year of Jubilee in contemplation and enjoyment of Thy truth. In the light of that truth, that Face they walk, directing all their goings and doings after the judgements of Thy righteousness.

The knowledge of Thee has another face, another countenance. Concerning this, Moses was told, ‘Thou canst not see My Face, for there shall no man see Me, and live.’7 It is to the sight and knowledge of the Divine Majesty that these words refer; that knowledge is best known in this life by unknowing; the highest knowledge that a man can here and now attain consists in knowing in what way he does not know.

8And yet, O Lord, though Thou hast made the darkness of our ignorance and human blindness the secret place that hides Thy Face from us, nevertheless Thy pavilion is round about Thee, and some of Thy saints undoubtedly were full of light. They glowed and they gave light, because they lived so close to Thy light and Thy ﬁre; by word and example they kindled and enlightened others, and they declared to us the solemn joy of this supreme knowledge of Thee, for which we look hereafter, when we shall see Thee as Thou art, and face to Face. Meanwhile, through them the lightnings of Thy truth have given shine unto the world, and ﬂashes have shone forth that rejoice those whose eyes are sound, but trouble and perturb those who love darkness rather than light. For this manifestation of Thy truth, through whomsoever it comes, is like Thy sun that Thou makest to shine upon the just and upon the unjust—the sun that, while ever retaining the purity of its own nature, nevertheless makes use of the substances of which things are made, drying up mud, melting wax, illuminating every eye whether sighted or blind, but with diﬀerent eﬀect, in that the seeing eye sees more when so illumined, while the blind continues in its blindness. So too, when Thou, Wisdom of God and Light of Truth, by Whom all things were made, didst come into the world, Thou didst enlighten every man that cometh into the world; but the darkness comprehended Thee not. And to as many as received Thee and the light of Thy truth Thou didst give the power to become the sons of God.

MEDITATION 8

*Of the manifold face of man, and the kiss and embrace of the Bridegroom and the Bride*

O Sun of Righteousness, that makest the light of Thy Face and the splendour of Thy Truth to shine before the eyes of all, thus dost Thou invite Thy Bride, whoever she may be—‘*Show Me thy face, My sister!*’1 Forthwith the soul of good will, the soul that has received the news of peace from heaven, the man (that is to say) who is Christ’s brother and whose soul is called His sister, this soul longs to appear before Thee in Thy holy place just as she is, and in Thy light see light. If she is a sinner, she shows to Thee the face of her misery, and seeks for the face of Thy mercy. If she is holy, she runs to meet Thee with the face of her righteousness, and ﬁnds in Thee a face resembling her own; for Thou, O righteous Lord, lovest all righteousness. But the soul that has a harlot’s brow has no desire to blush, and, ﬂeeing from Thy truth, comes face to face with Thy most fearful justice. For the human soul turns to Thee as many faces as she has dispositions. Yet Thou, O Truth, receivest all and, though Thou dost adapt Thyself to all, Thou art Thyself unchanged. Devout humility ﬁnds in Thee friendly favour; a burning love ﬁnds sweetest fuel for its ﬂames; the lowly heart’s contrition ﬁnds in Thee the righteousness it sought; the harlot’s brow ﬁnds itself put to shame.

Thus, O Thou Righteousness supreme, do truth and mercy meet in Thee,2 when the righteous soul humbly acknowledges the truth of human righteousness; and the truth of Thine own righteousness, as righteously, has mercy on the soul that makes this true confession. And when she thus proﬀers the kiss of a righteous confession, Thou dost receive her with the kiss of peace. This is the mutual kiss of Bridegroom and of Bride; and that her face might merit to receive Thy kiss, O Lord, Thy Face was spat upon; that her face might appear as fair and beautiful, Thine own was smitten by the hands of men and bruised with blows from rods. Thy Face was covered with dishonour in the eyes of men, that hers might be found beautiful and lovely in Thy sight. Moreover, Thou didst prepare for her the laver of Thy precious Blood, that the children of God might be washed therein. Thou didst bear fearful things for us; for we had done such fearful things that no face of repentance, no matter how great, could possibly atone for them before the Face of utmost Righteousness, had not Thine innocence been added to the things that Thou didst suﬀer for our sake, hadst Thou not been Thyself the Son, Whose plea was heard by reason of Thy godly fear.

For my hands, Lord, that did what they ought not, Thy hands were pierced with nails; Thy feet were pierced for mine; for my unlawful use of sight and hearing Thine eyes and ears suﬀered the sleep of death. Thy side was opened by the soldier’s spear, that through Thy wound out of my unclean heart might ﬂow at last all that in the long process of disgrace had burned and penetrated into it. Thou diedst, lastly, so that I might live; and Thou wast buried, so that I might rise. This is the kiss Thy tenderness bestows upon Thy Bride; this is Thy love’s embrace for Thy belovèd. Woe to the soul that has not shared this kiss! Woe to the soul that falls from this embrace! The thief’s confession on the cross earned him this kiss; Peter received it when the Lord looked on him in the time of his denial and, going out, he wept bitterly; and many of those who cruciﬁed Thee were turned to Thee after Thy Passion, and so united to Thee in this kiss. In the embrace from which the treacherous disciple fell, Mary, whom seven devils formerly possessed, rejoiced. In this embrace the publicans and sinners were enfolded, whose friend and fellow-guest Thou didst become. It included Rahab, the converted harlot, Babylon that knows Thee, strangers, Tyre, and the black Ethiopians too.3

Whither, Lord, dost Thou draw those whom Thou thus embracest and enfoldest, save to Thy Heart? The manna of Thy Godhead, which Thou, O Jesu, keepest within the golden vessel of Thine all-wise human soul, is Thy sweet Heart! Blessèd are they whom Thine embrace draws close thereto; blessèd the souls whom Thou hast hidden in Thy Heart, that inmost hiding-place, whom Thine arms overshadow from the disquieting of men, whose only hope is in Thy covering and fostering wings. Those who are hidden in Thy secret Heart are overshadowed by Thy mighty arms; sweetly they sleep and joyfully do they look forward from amidst the lots,4 for they share with them the merit of good conscience and the anticipation of Thy promised reward; they neither fail from faintheartedness, nor murmur from impatience.

But those who kiss thus sweetly mingle their breaths, and count it pleasure thus to share each other’s sweetness. Receive, O Lord, and reject not my whole breath that I pour out on Thee in its entirety, for all that it is altogether foul. Pour into me Thy wholly fragrant breath, that through its fragrance mine may stink no longer, and the sweet smell of Thee, O Thou Most Sweet, may permeate me ever more and more. This is what happens when we do that which Thou badest us to do in Thy remembrance,5 than which Thou couldst not have ordained a sweeter or a mightier means to forward the salvation of Thy sons. This is what happens when we eat and drink the deathless banquet of Thy Body and Thy Blood; as Thy clean beasts6 we there regurgitate the sweet things stored within our memory, and chew them in our mouths like cud for the renewed and ceaseless work of our salvation. That done, we put away again in that same memory what Thou hast done, what Thou hast suﬀered for our sake. When Thou sayest to the longing soul, ‘Open thy mouth wide, and I will ﬁll it,’7 and she tastes and sees Thy sweetness in the great Sacrament that passes understanding, then is she made that which she eats, bone of Thy bone and ﬂesh of Thine own ﬂesh. And thus is the prayer fulﬁlled, that Thou madest to Thy Father on the threshold of Thy Passion;8 for the Holy Spirit eﬀects in us here by grace that unity which is by nature between the Father and Thyself, His Son, from all eternity; so that, as You are one, so likewise we may be made one in You.

This is the Face with which Thou meetest, Lord, the face of him who longs for Thee; this is the kiss of Thy mouth on the lips of Thy lover; and this is Thy love’s answering embrace to Thy yearning Bride who says, ‘My Belovèd is mine, and I am His; He shall abide between my breasts,’9 and again, ‘My heart hath said: “My face hath sought Thee.”’10 For, if our soul’s face does not seek Thy Face, her face is not a human face at all, but a beast’s face and a mask. Who would not seek Thy Face? Who will not spend his strength for it? Who will not languish, who will not faint for it? Who will not die? Have mercy, Lord! In seeking for Thy Face, I should be dead already of I know not what manner of death, had not Thy visitation kept the breath in me.

In the time of Thy Face an enemy, by contrast, ﬁnds in Thee a ﬁery oven; a sinner ﬁnds the portion of his cup, fetters and ﬂames, sulphur and stormy winds; the proud ﬁnds the power that resists the proud; the hypocrite the light of truth that he abhors. And all these, whose consciences are branded each with the face of his own particular evil, present in general the face of unrepentant badness; Thou dost receive them with the face of Righteousness that judgeth righteously; their hatred of uprightness meets Thy hatred of all sin. For because they proved that they had not God in their knowledge, Thou gavest them over, O Lord, to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient,11 things that it is shameful to mention before Thee. Yet they do them brazenly before Thy Face, showing Thee no respect; and from their lusts and the daughters thereof, and their sins and their sins’ sons and grandsons, from all this throng of misdeeds they fashion for themselves as it were with links of iron that long, hard, woeful chain that makes a pleasant clanking now, but binds irrevocably and drags them down to hell where none will ever praise Thee, O my God, where is no hope and whence is no return. Concerning such, I wonder whether, when they are in hell, it will be given them in any way to know how great a good it is to enjoy Thee; if that is so, I think that hell can hold no greater torment than the lack of seeing Thee.

But alas, alas, those who have committed fearful crimes will also suﬀer fearful penalties; Thy Blood, O Christ, will not avail for the impenitent; rather, they will be counted guilty by reason of Thy Blood which they, by sinning, have trodden underfoot. This is the face of Thy wrath, at the prospect of which the prophet is ﬁlled with dread, trembling for those for whom it waits, as the apostle says, ‘A certain fearful looking for of judgement and ﬁery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.’12 Lord God, Thou Judge of quick and dead, there will be these two ﬂocks on Judgement Day, one on Thy right hand, one upon Thy left. Between these destinies, these ﬂocks, between the lots of life and death, perdition and redemption, wrath and favour, where shall *I* ﬁnd myself?

O Truth, Truth, by the glory and the splendour of Thy Face, hide not that Face from me; but cause Thou all its beams to shine on me, that in Thy light I may see light, may see how my face looks to Thee and Thine to me, and whether the truth is in me, as regards my former way of life, to the putting oﬀ of the old man which is corrupted by deceitful lusts, even as the truth, Lord Jesus, is in Thee. I know, O Truth, with utter certainty that I am seeking Thee; but whether I seek truly, that I do not know.

This, then, is the face I lift to Thee, the face of my sore plight and my great blindness. For though Thy comforts do rejoice my soul sometimes, I only know what I have been, and not what I am now. One thing I have desired of the Lord, that I will require—namely, that, even as the face of my sore plight is lifted in its anguish unto Thee, so may Thy mercy’s face shine on me more and more, till it consume entirely my wretchedness and gloom.

MEDITATION 9

*The soul takes stock of her thoughts and her aﬀections*

There is in me, O Lord, so vast and dense a mass of misery, that I can neither analyse it into its component parts, nor get a view of the huge thing in its entirety. The fog of it enwraps me now, as it is wont to do, shrouding the sight of Thee, O Lord my God, to Whom I long to speak, dulling my ears against Thy voice that I desire to hear. Always it happens thus; my own house, my own conscience, casts me out. Is this the meaning of the words, ‘Let the wicked be taken away, that he see not the glory of God’?1 And when, with mental vision thus obscured, I try to grope somehow towards my goal, my ardent longing wearies and grows shattered in the quest, and from Thy heights I fall back to my depths; I fall from Thee into myself, and from myself I fall below myself. For, when the motive power of my eﬀort is exhausted, I ﬁnd myself, like some poor thing of dust cast from the surface of the earth to be the plaything of the winds, a prey to phantom notions, impulses, and longings as many as the faces of mankind, the minutes in the hours, and the ins and outs of circumstances and events. So, while the face of Thy goodness is always bent on me to work my good, the face of my misery, bowed ever down to the dull earth, is so enshrouded in the fog of its own blindness that it knows not how to reach Thy presence; indeed it cannot do so, save in so far as it can never be hid from the face of Thy truth, that sees through everything, whatever its condition.

Leaving my gift before the altar, then, and giving myself an angry shake, I kindle the lamp of the Word of God, and in wrath and bitterness I enter the dark house of my conscience, determined to ﬁnd out whence these shadows and this hateful fog proceed, that come between me and the light of my heart.

And then, behold, a sort of plague of ﬂies erupts into my eyes, and almost drives me out of my own house! I go in, all the same, as into something that is mine by right; and straightway I am met by a crowd of thoughts so impudent, so uncontrolled, so diverse, so confused, that the heart of man that begat them is powerless to sort them out! I sit down, notwithstanding; for I mean to examine them. I bid them stand before me, so that I may distinguish them, and their appearance and the notion each contains; for I intend to assign to each of them its proper place in me. Before I can look at them closely, however, before I can tell them apart, they scatter; and, changing places ceaselessly, they seem to mock at me their judge.

I am indignant now, and angry with myself. I stand up; I am going to take more drastic action now against my thoughts, as king in my own kingdom. I call to mind and summon to my aid those thoughts that formerly I have found sure and stable, thoughts that I drew from out the Saviour’s wells.2 He is the Judge, and He is the Accuser; He is the Witness too. I pick out my worst thoughts, the unclean ones, as not deserving to be heard at all, needing no judgement to condemn them and calling for the penalties of penitence to punish them. Idle and troublesome thoughts I drive away like a swarm of unmannerly ﬂies; but I admit those busy thoughts about my work, to which hearing and expression may reasonably be allowed, and I allot to each of them its proper place and time. The thoughts which the judgement of conscience condemns receive their sentence without a murmur. The idle ones, seeing that I am set on serious business and fearing to disturb the process now in train, take ﬂight or are subdued. The busy thoughts, seeing themselves neglected and of small use when their occasions have been taken away, blush to be reckoned with the idle ones, and go away.

Having thus dispersed the fog of my thoughts for a little while, I turn my attention to their origin, in order to eﬀect the discipline of my aﬀections; and I ﬁnd that, because of the solitude to which I have ﬂed, their entrances and exits are blocked to the things of the ﬂesh; should I, however, ﬁnd these open, I confess with shame that I should look with great suspicion on my frailty. But love, the prince of my aﬀections, by the grace of Him that strengtheneth me reduces the whole crowd of them to bondage to himself; with ﬁrm determination he makes room only for that aﬀection which I seek. He issues laws, he orders their behaviour, and sets them limits that they may not overpass.

All fog dispelled, therefore, I now can look with healthier eyes on Thee, O Light of Truth. All other things excluded, I can shut myself away with Thee, O Truth, alone. Making Thy secret Face my hiding-place, I speak to Thee more intimately and in more homely wise; throwing open to Thee all the dark corners of my conscience, shedding the garment of skin that Thou madest for Adam to cover his disgrace and shame, I show myself to Thee as naked as when Thou madest me, and say, ‘Behold me, Lord, not as Thou madest me, but as I have made myself to be by my apostasy from Thee. I expose everything, alike Thy beneﬁts conferred on me, and my ill deeds. Thou didst create me in Thine Image, and Thou didst put me in Thy Paradise; Thou gavest me a chosen place amid Thy sons and from my very childhood, polluted as it was, Thou hast shed the light of Thy Face upon me as a seal. But as for me, I ﬂed the Paradise Thou gavest me, and in its place I found a drain, and hid myself therein. I kept the seal of Thy Face in my aﬀection always; but by my actions I rejected it. For by pursuing my desires and my heart’s vanities I lost my youth, and almost embarked on the way of the ﬂesh. But, all the same, my spirit always loved Thee, even when my ﬂesh neglected Thee.

When I took ﬂight from these, I ﬂed to Thee; and from the whirlpool of the world Thou didst deliver me. I made a treaty with Thee; I swore and I resolved to keep the judgements of Thy righteousness. Thou openedst Thy mercy’s arms to me and gatheredst me therein; and, while I rested sweetly there, I saw the day of man and longed for it. But, willy-nilly, Thou didst send me forth—yet not away from Thee. If I forgot my God at any time, if I stretched out my hands whither I should not, straightway my conscience’s secret tormentors, armed with Thy chastening rod, broke my soul’s bones within me every one; and sinners wrought upon my back without. Falling and rising, dying and living again, long time didst Thou sustain and hold me up. When ﬁnally both mind and body failed, and out of the belly of hell I cried to Thee, Thou wast with me forthwith; Thy hand outstretched withdrew me from the lake of misery. Thou didst restore me to my former state, and gavest me the joy of Thy salvation more fully than before.

So was I, Lord, and so I am; I stand before Thee now in my entirety. My obvious ills are hidden from neither Thee nor me; but there are many others, evident to Thee, that my forgetfulness and blindness hide from me. If there is any good in me, there is none quite unspoiled; for the Enemy has snatched much of it away from me or, failing that, has ﬂawed it in some way; though indeed I have spoiled more things of myself than he has damaged for me. Behold my face before Thee, Lord, my face of misery, uplifted to Thy Face, Mercy supreme. I do not hide from Thee its secret nooks and corners; Thou knowest, Truth, that this is so, and I implore that it may be the truth that I thus show to Thee. For I fear no one as I fear myself, lest, knowingly or otherwise, I should deceive myself.

Do I then not believe Thee, O my God? Do I not trust Thee, nor believe in Thee? O let not those that limit and put restrictions on my faith make mock of me!3 With heart and mouth, with all I do or write, I oﬀer Thee, O Light of Truth, my willing and complete assent to everything the Catholic Church believes concerning Thee. If these be bounds suﬃcient for my faith, then ﬁll them full; and, if they be not wide enough, then widen them. Concerning hope, however, I am bold to say that I do not truly believe, if I hope for something other than that which I believe. Thou, Lord, art my belief; Thou art my hope. Give me Thyself, and I ask nothing else. But, if I do not love, I do not hope; nor do I love, unless I hope; and therefore, Father, since my love is poor, my hope is feeble too. And when that wilts which springs up from the root of faith, the root itself grows weak. Nevertheless, O everlasting life, my faith and hope and love are set on thee.

O Fatherland, O Fatherland, that from afar I see and greet, where no bad things are found, but all are good! Concerning the bad things, I know that there the evils I have learnt so well from long and wearisome experience do not exist; but as to the good things there, my knowledge is as small as my experience.

Have mercy, Lord! Look, I have run and have made straight for Thee! Rise up to meet me, then, and see; and let me know mine end and the number of my days, that so I may gain knowledge of what it is I lack.4 I stand in Thy faith; I go forward in hope; poor and a beggar, I supplicate Thy love. O Love, O Fire, O Charity, come into us! Be Thou our Leader and our Light, the Fire that consumes and burns in the repentant sinner. Be Thou our Paraclete, our Comforter, our Advocate and Helper in all the things for which we pray. Show us what we believe; grant that for which we hope; and make our face like to the Face of God, that we may say, ‘My heart hath said to Thee, “My face hath sought Thee.”’

MEDITATION 10

*A Consideration of the Incarnation and the Passion of Christ*

‘God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.’1 My turning, my conversion is to the Cruciﬁed. His cross is my glory; with it my brow is signed, in it my mind rejoices, by it my life is directed and my death made dear. Suﬀer me not, O Lord, to be despised for this by those who merit to behold Thee sitting uplifted high upon the throne of Thy Divinity and ﬁlling all the earth with majesty. For the mysteries of the condescension of Thy dealing with mankind, they also ‘ﬁll the temple’ of all contemplation, however vast it is.2 Let Thy holy angels have their own glory in heaven, but let them sometimes share their privilege with us on earth as well; for they in their blessèd perfection both love to do us service and ﬁnd it sweet when, as the apostle says, the manifold wisdom of God is made known through the Church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.3 May they, therefore, forgive us, Lord, even if sometimes we are led by love of Thee to yearn to see with them that which with them we love; we do not yet rejoice in perfect charity with them who see what we, as yet, do not deserve to see.

May they in Thy wisdom blissfully behold the majesty of Thy Divinity, that was beheld before our time and will be after, that holds within the present of its own eternity the whole of all that was and all that is to be and, reaching from one end to the other mightily, has further strewn with love our own times too, the times of Thy dealings with mankind, sweetly ordering all things for the sake of the daughters of Jerusalem4—that is to say, for souls, devout but weak as yet, who, since their faculties are not yet trained to contemplate those lofty mysteries, nevertheless love to be touched and moved by the lowliness wherein Thou art made like unto themselves. Among these souls my spirit also, Lord, will be taught5 sometimes to worship Thee, Who art a Spirit, in spirit and in truth, nor will the ﬂesh oppose my doing so when its desires have ceased or grown less keen.

But, in the meantime, since it cannot move as freely as it ought among Thy matters, Thou wilt dispose for it its own concerns as sweetly as beﬁts it. For, since I have not yet progressed beyond the elementary stage of sensory imagination, Thou wilt most graciously permit my as yet undeveloped soul to exercise her native genius upon Thy lowly things by means of that same mental picturing. Thou wilt allow her, for example, to embrace the manger of the newborn Babe, to venerate the sacred Infancy, to caress the soles of the feet of the Cruciﬁed, to hold and kiss those feet when He is risen, and to put her hand in the print of the nails and cry, ‘My Lord and my God!’ And in all these things, as Job says, ‘visiting Thy beauty, I shall not sin,’6 when I worship and adore what I see and hear in my imagination, and what my hands handle of the Word of Life. For I will conﬁdently assert that in the sweet ordering of Thy wisdom this grace was provided for us from all eternity; and it was not the least of the chief reasons for Thine Incarnation that Thy babes in the Church, who still needed Thy milk rather than solid food, might ﬁnd in Thee a form not unfamiliar to themselves, which in the oﬀering of their prayers they might set before themselves, without thereby hindering their faith, while they were still unable to behold the brightness of Thy Godhead’s majesty.

Wherefore, although we know Thee now no longer according to the ﬂesh, but as Thou sittest gloriﬁed at the Father’s right hand in heaven, being made so much better than the angels as Thou hast by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they7—therefore, I say, we make our prayer, present our worship and oﬀer our petitions to that same Flesh of ours, which Thou hast not cast oﬀ, but gloriﬁed and made the footstool of Thy feet; for David bids us do this when he says, ‘Adore the footstool of His feet, for it is holy.’8

O blessèd is that temple of the Holy Spirit, wherein the memory of Christ uplifted on the cross is ever green, the temple where His blood ﬂows ever fresh to save the faithful, loving soul, in whom the prophet’s prayer, ‘O deliver me and be merciful unto me’9 is ever being answered! For the eﬀect of our redemption is repeated in us as often as we recall it in aﬀective prayer. And, since we cannot do this either as we would, with even greater daring we make a mental picture of Thy Passion for ourselves, so that even our bodily eyes may possess something on which to gaze, something to which to cleave, worshipping not the pictured likeness only, but the truth the picture of Thy Passion represents. For, when we look more closely at the picture of Thy Passion, although it does not speak, we seem to hear Thee say, ‘When I loved you, I loved you to the end. Let death and hell lay hold on Me, that I may die their death; eat, friends, and drink abundantly, belovèd, unto life eternal.’10 And thus Thy cross becomes to us like the linen sheet that was shown to blessèd Peter, let down from heaven by four corners.11 All sorts went into it, clean creatures and unclean; and we rejoice that we are lifted up to heaven, where also we, who were unclean, are cleansed.

For through this picturing of Thy Passion, O Christ, our pondering on the good that Thou hast wrought for us leads us forthwith to love the highest good. Thou makest us to see that good, as Thy work of salvation reveals it, not with the understanding that results from human eﬀort, not with the eyes of our mind, that tremble and shrink from Thy light, but with the peaceful apprehension that is born of love, and turning to good use our sight and our enjoyment of Thy sweetness, the while Thy wisdom sweetly orders our aﬀairs. For a man who goes uphill to reach some place makes eﬀorts; but he who enters by Thee, O Door, walks on the ﬂat and comes to the Father, to Whom no one may come, except by Thee. And he labours no longer to understand knowledge beyond his reach, for the bliss of a well-disposed conscience absorbs him utterly. And as the river of joy ﬂoods that soul more completely, she seems to herself to see Thee as Thou art, while in sweet meditation on the wonderful sacrament of Thy Passion she muses on the good that Thou hast wrought on our behalf, the good that is as great as Thou Thyself art great, the good that is Thyself. She seems to herself to see Thee face to face, when Thou thus showest her, in the cross and in the work of Thy salvation, the face of the Supreme Good; and the cross itself becomes for her the face of the mind that is well-disposed to God.

For what better preparation, what happier arrangement could have been made for the man who wanted to ascend to his God, to oﬀer gifts and sacriﬁces according to the precept of the Law, than that, instead of going up by steps to the altar, he should walk calmly and smoothly, over the ﬂoor of likeness, to a Man like to himself, Who tells him on the very threshold, ‘I and the Father are one,’12 and that forthwith, being himself gathered up to God in love through the Holy Spirit, he should receive God coming to himself and making His abode with him, not spiritually only but corporeally too, in the mystery of the holy and life-giving Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ? This, Lord, is Thy Face towards us and our face towards Thee, full of good hope. Deck me with this Thy health;13 conform me to this Face of Thine Anointed, for Thou canst not turn that Face away whenever it appears before Thee in Thy holy place. Go, man, whoever you are who ﬁnds this treasure hidden in the ﬁeld of your own heart! Sell all that you have, sell yourself as a slave for ever, that you may gain this treasure for your own.14 For then you will be blest and all will be well with you. Christ in your conscience is the treasure that you will possess.

MEDITATION 11

*He lays bare his blindness, desiring God to give him light and let him lay aside his pastoral charge*

‘Turn us again, Thou God of hosts: show Thy Face, and we shall be saved.’1 Thanks to Thy gift of grace, O Lord, my heart’s face is not turned to ﬂeshly things; for Thou hast put all these behind my back, together with the world and all that goes with it. Why, then, I pray Thee, is it, that when in my whole-hearted search for Thee I have at last with joy discerned Thy Face, which alone mine own desires, I ﬁnd myself forthwith cut oﬀ from Thee? Why hidest Thou Thy Face? Dost Thou account me as Thine enemy? Wilt Thou consume me for the sins I did when I was young? Is it that I am not yet turned to Thee, or that Thou, Lord, thus far art turned away from me? Turn me, O God of hosts, if I am not turned; and turn to me, O God, if Thou art turned away, for Thou hast said, ‘If thou wilt return, O Israel, return to Me,’2 and again, ‘Turn ye unto Me, and I will turn to you.’3 Thou knowest the gift of grace that is in Thy poor servant’s heart; ‘O God, my heart is ready, my heart is ready.’ Bid what Thou wilt; make me to understand Thy bidding; as Thou hast given me the will to do it, so also give the power; and in me and concerning me Thy whole will shall be done. I have set my will to do Thy will, O God, and I embrace with all my heart Thy law in Thy commands.4

Thou hast another law, however, an undeﬁled law converting souls;5 and that I do not know, for it is hidden in Thy Face’s secret place, whither I may not enter. If Thou but once wouldst grant me entrance there, that I might see that law, then with the pen of that swift scribe the Holy Spirit6 I should write it twice and three times on my heart; so that I might have somewhere whither to return and, understanding what I was about, might then go straight ahead with conﬁdence and with simplicity. But I am groping in the noonday like a blind man now, fearing lest I be tripped and fall whenever I would fain give my assent. And, like a blind man, I am told to go hither or thither, by this way or by that, while I myself, just like a sightless person, know not in what direction I am travelling nor by what road I pass. Send out to me, O Lord, Thy light and truth; they have led and brought me to Thy holy hill and to Thy dwelling.7 ‘I am the Way,’ Thou tellest me, ‘whereby you shall go; I am the Truth to which you shall go; I am the Life for whose sake you shall go. Whither to go ye know, the way also ye know.’8 And I, Lord, know not whither I am travelling, and how can I know the way? Thou hast holden me by my hand and led me in Thy will.9 Thou heldest my hand when Thou stretchedst out Thine to me, blind as I was and crying after Thee with tears, and saidst, ‘Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden; and I will refresh you.’10

Since I heard that, I have run the way of Thy commandments, for Thou hast set my heart at liberty.11 I came to Thee, O God, and I oﬀered Thee my heart, my ready heart, saying, ‘What wilt Thou have me to do?’ And Thou repliedst, ‘Go, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come and follow Me.’12 I went, I ran, I sold all that I had, even my body and my soul; I gave nothing to the poor, because I possessed nothing. I sold to Thee, O Lord, all that I had, and Thou art my reward. Thou knowest that I have kept nothing for myself; if there is anything that has escaped me and still lies hidden in some secret corner of my conscience, I will search it out and faithfully oﬀer it to Thee. But when I ask Thee to repay me, Thou chargest me with the oﬀences of my youth,13 an ancient debt. Have patience with me, Lord, I pray; for I have not the wherewithal to pay Thee back.

I have come thus far, and now here I stand; I may go no further. A poor blind beggar sitting beside the road along which Thou dost pass, I cry to Thee, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’14 The crowds bear down on me, rebuking me and bidding me be quiet. But I cry out so much the more, ‘Have mercy on me, Son of David!’ I am weary from crying, my throat is hoarse, my sight fails me for waiting so long upon the living God; but Thou dost pass by him who cries to Thee. Sometimes Thou standest still for me, but only for a little. Thou biddest me to come to Thee and sayest, ‘What wilt thou that I should do for thee?’ I say, and all my bones say with me, *‘Lord, that I may see!’*

Yet Thou dost pass. Have mercy on me, Son of David! I cannot follow Thee, for I am blind. Have mercy on me! From Thee I had whatever little motive power there was that drew me towards Thee; but I have not suﬃcient power to run after Thee. Have mercy on me, Son of David, have mercy on me! Have mercy on me, you at least who are my masters and the servants of God, and say to Him, ‘Dismiss him, for he crieth after us!’15 Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged! My soul hath been long time a sojourner in the house of darkness.16 What have I done? What have I achieved? It is the Lord; He will do what He sees to be good.

I will sit beside the road. I will not leave the road. Maybe He will come back some time without the crowds, and see me who see not, and pity me. For in my heart I treasure a good Word of His, ‘Wait for the Lord, do manfully, and let thy heart be comforted and hold fast to the Lord.’17 Gather yourselves meanwhile, my soul and all my inward parts; the Word of God is living and eﬀective; sharper than any two-edged sword, it pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; neither is any creature unseen in His sight; all my concerns are naked and open to His eyes.’18 ‘I said unto the Lord, “Thou art my God: my lots are in Thy hand”’19 expresses the same thing. Let us have done, then, with the lot, the sin entailed by which has brought on us this evil, that God should turn away His Face from His own child! The purpose of my lot is the ﬁnding of Thy truth, O God. As the Lord lives, if my right hand, my eye or my foot oﬀends me, I will not spare it; I will cut it oﬀ and cast it from me. Tell me, O Word of God, can it be that I have not done well in trusting Thee so wholly as to leave all and follow Thee? My every thought, all the intents of my heart, my soul and my spirit, my joints and my marrow answer, ‘Yes, you have done well!’ I go on to inquire, ‘Was this good act perhaps ill-done?’ My thoughts whisper the answer and say, when they are given leave to speak, ‘The Lord said unto Peter, “Lovest thou Me?” He answered, “Thou knowest that I love Thee!” and was bidden “Feed My sheep.” Three times He said it, that it may be seen a threefold cord cannot be lightly broken; for love’s proof lies in shepherding the ﬂock.’20

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‘*Intents*.’ A shepherd who is not a hireling, even though he lay down his life for the sheep, scarcely meets all their needs. But it is a very serious thing for him to be in charge of the ﬂock, when he cannot give it proﬁtable service. There was a time when David the king was so weak in body that he took to his bed, so chilly from old age that no coverings could warm him;21 and from his bed he had to rule God’s people by his word alone, and the eyes of all Israel looked to him in all things. Bewitchment with triﬂes did not as yet obscure the good; the stubborn wickedness of a decadent age had not then reached such a pitch as to withhold its respect from old men of proved worth.

But now, although the Church’s shepherds have to feed the Lord’s ﬂock in body and soul at once—for all the Lord accounts the soul as more important, saying, ‘Seek ye ﬁrst the Kingdom of God,’22 and frees His ministers from care for the body, as secondary, saying further, ‘And all these things shall be added unto you’—in spite of all this, who would listen to any one who preached thus to-day? Who would suﬀer him to practise it? Who would have any consideration for the old man? Who would make allowances for the weak? The wisdom of the ﬂesh, the spirit of this world, a zest for knowledge, elegance of manner, and the like are required to-day of those who control the Church; simplicity is mocked, religion is despised, humility is held of no importance. And whereas hitherto it has seemed suﬃcient if a person in authority was competent in the administration of interior goods, who is there to-day for whom this is enough, unless there be plenty of exterior goods as well?

And O that a superior might know his own limitations! Woe is us for this, for we have sinned. Because of this, as the prophet says, ‘We have given the hand to Egypt and to Assyria, to be satisﬁed with bread.’23 For, in contradiction to the apostle’s teaching, we have become the servants of men,24 of thiefs and usurers, the sons of strangers abounding in the riches of this world. If a superior be not obedient to the nod of such as these to-day, if he be not conformed to the world that is fashioned on these lines, if he do not cringe to those set over his head and ﬂatter his subjects, making pretence of much and concealing even more, what will he do? What can he do? Where will he ﬁnd himself? For to-day even compliance makes only a few friends, and those unsure and independable; and truth makes open, cruel, and persistent enemies.

If only this may really be the way by which we lay down our life for the brethren! If only the outward covering of goats’ hair curtains25 may so absorb the buﬀeting of this wind, that the House of God within may abide in its beauty! And O that the sword may not reach to the soul! For we have grown benumbed by the bewitchment of trivial matters and the importunity of desire, and our hearts have got hardened; we are become as Ephraim, an heifer taught to tread out corn.26 Thus have we departed from ourselves; thus have our heart’s interests been transferred to unavoidable tasks; so that we, whose duty requires us only to perform them, take pleasure in tasks for which we ought to feel nothing but shame and disgust. Yes, and even those on whom they are not laid strive after this same pleasure! Where to-day is Martha, with her complaint that she is left to serve alone?27 Is it not Mary’s grumble that is heard all over the house to-day, because she is permitted to sit at the Lord’s feet?

Having endangered both our body and our soul through long service and the wearing out of our strength by the prolonged and toilsome exercise thereof, it is in our opinion lawful for us now to look to the hands of the royal muniﬁcence, that it may allow our old age recognition of its deserts, and bestow on it a better thing than that which itself is conscious of deserving. Must Jacob always put up with his blear-eyed Leah? Must he always serve for Rachel, and never get her? Moreover Jacob was required to surrender all his transitory goods, since his wages were changed every day, so that he should get the black instead of the white. At home he had his wives consumed with jealousy, abroad was Laban, girding at him with his sons.28 Jacob *must* set his own house in order *some* time; and it seems only right that now at last, when he is old and failing, he should be allowed to go back to his father’s home.

‘*Joints*.’ If the matter begins thus, so will it end. For the joints are dislocated all over the body; and, since the body’s unity is lost, it must needs fall to pieces. And the divided kingdom will be laid waste, and one house will fall upon another.

A wise father of a family, when he is about to set out on a pilgrimage and is setting his house in order and has given to each of his servants authority in some particular task, sets a door-keeper at the entrance of his house.29 A house without a door-keeper is a public lodging-house, where whoever likes comes in and goes out, and brings what he likes inside and takes what he likes away. The Church is a house, and the Door-keeper, Christ Jesus, is Himself the Door. He who either comes in or goes out except by Him is a thief, who climbs up or down some other way. Christ was made obedient to the Father even unto death.30 He who does not obediently keep this rule has departed from Christ, as the apostle says, ‘Consider Him, Who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. For ye have not yet resisted unto blood.’31 Old age and weakness excuse no one, till He, Who led him in, Himself shall lead him out. Otherwise, if there be a door without a door-keeper, open to all comers, what will ensue but that there shall be equal freedom for all and sundry to go out or come in?

‘*Marrow*.’ Alas, alas, ‘the ungodly walk round about; according to Thy highness, O God, Thou hast multiplied the children of men.’ Driven around in the circle of error, we become so dizzy and bewildered that we cannot reach the centre of Truth, the unmoving point of unity which, though itself unmoving, gives movement to the whole. He is the Truth, He Himself said, ‘I am the Truth,’ and also, ‘Ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free’32—free, surely, from the circle of error.

Let us reﬂect, therefore, on the centre of Truth, whether the circle we are pursuing is governed by and through Him. By the laws of truth, if our course is truly set it meets itself; if not, error is manifest. Let us review our aﬀections and actions. Let our aﬀections be ﬁxed on the centre of Truth, and then the outward action will correspond thereto, as the circumference to the centre. Every aﬀection is indeed owed to God. When He is adhered to faithfully, wherever the circle of activity revolves, it cannot err from the right but meets itself truly, so that its radius is of equal length at every point. There can be a point without a circle, but in no way can a circle be drawn without a central point.

Now if circumstances do not demand action, and ability is lacking, aﬀection is suﬃcient to enable action to take place. For when the necessity of charity requires action, the Truth of charity owes it, to God or to a neighbour, as the case may be; if necessity does not require it, the charity of Truth makes it our duty to hold ourselves at leisure for itself. And as we always owe our entire aﬀection to God, so also, when we are at leisure, do we owe our whole activity to Him. And when a neighbour’s need does not require it, he who diverts a part of his aﬀection or activity from God commits a sacrilege. But any one from whom necessity does require action must not be so eager to perform it, that he fails to take stock of his own ability therefor. The centre of Truth must be consulted as to whether he has the ability or not. If he has not, and yet presumes to act, he is not cleaving to the centre, and so he destroys the perfection of the circumference. For there are people who have no love for cleaving to the point of stability; they always want to be circling round outside.

These are the wicked, who go round in a circle;33 these are the sons of men. When the profundity of God’s judgements multiplies them in this present age, or allows them to be multiplied, they become the enemies of unity and Truth. This is the end. Let him from whom action is urgently demanded ﬁx his attention on the Truth, if indeed he can so do, and not refuse to do the act of service. If Truth, when it has been consulted, tells him he is unequal to the task and no ﬁt person for it, then let him ﬁx his soul in stillness on the stability of Truth, lest, being as it were on the rim of the wheel, he be sent over the precipice of error. But if, when necessity makes urgent claim, a person whom the Truth, when consulted, has absolved from meeting it, decides without great fear as to his ability to follow his own will, a great error has him in its toils. For, if he errs knowingly, he is guilty both of neglect towards his neighbour and of deception in relation to the Truth; he does not perform the action, and he lacks the aﬀection. He does not err so much, if he errs unknowingly; but he errs wholly if he thinks it does not matter. He is not, however, wholly a stranger to Truth, even though he fears not the judgement of Truth. Wherefore let us, who must shortly enter into judgement with the Truth, avoid all the windings of error by taking the short way of faithfulness; and because perhaps we want *not* to be able to perform the action, let us not manifest ourselves as liars before the bar of our self-will, so that we may not be found liars before the bar of Truth; that done, and seeking pardon for both aﬀection and action, we shall appear as tellers of the truth before the bar of Truth. For we must not act with guile in the sight of the Truth, lest our iniquity turn out to our undoing.

‘*Spirit*’: I agree. And this is indeed the marrow and centre of the Truth, not to hug one’s disease but to let the poison of one’s inward wickedness drain away.

‘*Soul*’: That is how the matter stands. As once I took pleasure in being in authority, so now my will is to be in subjection; and my self-will is glad now to make the excuse of my own necessity, and does not allow me to attend to the necessity of the brethren.

‘*Spirit*’: Although, O soul, you do not lack a full compassion for the brethren’s need, nevertheless your aﬀection is even as you say. Nothing remains, therefore, but humble confession and striving after every virtue, so that, however unfruitful and useless we may appear outwardly, we may not be found wholly barren and empty inside. And although the crowds bear down to silence us, let us cry with our whole heart and mind,

*‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me!’*

MEDITATION 12

*He makes confession of sin, and of his longing to love God*

‘Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my supplication in Thy truth: hear me in Thy righteousness.’1 Lord, Who art nigh to all who call on Thee in truth, according to the promise to us in the Scripture of Thy truth and even as the truth is present with Thyself, my will is set to call on Thee in truth to-day. Hear me, therefore, O Truth, in the multitude of Thy mercy. For I said, ‘Now have I begun. Be this Thy change, O Right Hand of the Highest.’2 For my past sins and evils, which are great, inveterate, and numberless, have made me vile and despicable to myself; and, as to my good qualities, if any such have been observed in me, when I am most precise in scrutiny, I doubt myself. Therefore I come to Thee to-day, as one whose whole past life is dead; so that in Thee, O Fountain of new life, I may begin again. If I have done any good things, they are Thine; to Thee I hand them over; do Thou return them to me in Thine own good time. The bad things that I have committed are my own; alas, how many and how great they are, and most of them have slipped my memory!

O that a suitable repentance may eﬀace from Thy remembrance too the sins, whereof the horror has so ﬁxed them in my own, that no forgetfulness can ever wipe them thence! I hate the memory of them so much, that oftentimes I wish I had forgotten all of them completely long ago. But Thou, O Lord, remember not my youth’s transgressions; they were the Egyptian ﬁrstborn, whom Thou in Egypt didst destroy; when I came out of Egypt, I left Egyptian deeds behind. Long time Thou leddest me thereafter through the wilderness, and taughtest and didst keep me as the apple of Thine eye; Thou didst rebuke me when I sinned; in grief Thou gavest comfort; Thou didst instruct my ignorance until Thou broughtest me unto the very threshold of the Promised Land. When I stand there, beholding the delights of the land of the living that Thou showest me, and then remember what was said to Moses, *‘Thou shalt see it, but thou shalt not enter it,’*3 then my whole being is convulsed with dread. If *he* deserved to hear those words for the commission of a single sin, what shall *I* hear, who have to-day so many and so great transgressions to wipe out before Thee?

And yet, O Truth, as all my past misdeeds, whether remembered or not, and all the faults from which they came, that are not past, are ever in Thy sight, even when I myself say not a word—even so let them come to-day before Thine eyes as I confess them unto Thee.4 Let them be gathered in a single bundle to be burnt; it will be an enormous faggot too, and more than I can carry, if there is none to help. I do not specify or make a list of them, nor am I able to; but in respect of everything, however great, and in whatever way I have in truth sinned before Thee, O Truth, I own myself the sinner that Thou knowest me to be. Let nobody make light of my misdeeds to me, nor yet exaggerate; let no one make them out as either less or more, not even I myself. Before Thee, O God, I stand for trial. I will not spare myself; O Lord, do Thou spare me. Yet spare me not in such a way as from this day to reckon me Thine enemy, and to write bitter things against me, and cause me to be brought to nought amid the sins of my past life.5

Keeper of men, count me no longer as Thine adversary; for being such has made me a grievous burden to myself. Rather, take Thou away the sin that comes between Thyself and me. If Thou dost pardon, Lord, then pardon me; if it please Thee to punish, then I myself will be Thy fellow-punisher. But do not bruise me with Thy blows as though Thou wert mine enemy; for I am ready to accept the scourge from Thy hand, and my grief shall be ever in Thy sight; I will tell out mine iniquity and remember that I suﬀer for my sin. For I am not handing myself over into the hands of a foe; I am committing myself with complete trust to Thine, of which so often I have had experience. When one of Thy hands strikes me, the other one caresses; and when one knocks me down, the other catches me, so that I be not bruised. But sometimes, in an anger greater than that of foes, Thou stretchest out Thy hand; when Thou turnest Thy Face away from us in wrath, Thou strikest harder than any enemy; and then the heavens become brass to us, and the earth iron,6 and everything is hard and everything is evil; for that is what always happens when Thy Face is turned away. For Thy Name’s sake, O Lord, spare Thy servant in this; ﬂog us as much as Thou wilt, as long as the light of Thy face shines always upon us, and Thou hast mercy on us!

Nevertheless, Thou art the Lord of vengeance, remitting it or mitigating as Thou wilt. For Thou hast turned our evils on Thyself and, paying in Thy Passion the things that Thou didst not take, Thou hast prepared Thy throne for judgement; so that, having been unjustly judged Thyself, Thou mayest in Thy justice absolve the justly judged. Thy judgements then shall help me, Lord, and Thou shalt look on me according to the judgement of those who love Thy Name, even as once Thou gavest judgement on the sinful woman who loved Thee, saying, ‘Her many sins are forgiven, for she loved much.’ May my love for Thee be my advocate to-day in this my cause; if I shall have refused it on earth, I fear lest it may refuse me in heaven; if I have been ashamed to own Thee here, I fear lest Thou be there ashamed of me. I *am* ashamed—because my love is not what it should be.7 And, because to-day is my judgement day, do Thou, Judge of my heart, judge me to-day also in this respect, and sift my cause to see whether in fact I have the advocate I claim. For in this matter my spiritual sight is so darkened, that I am entirely uncertain whether I seem to myself to see what I do not see, or not to see what I do really see.

Now most assuredly I seem to myself to exist because I always love Thy love,8 in so far as I am moved by it, whenever I think of it or am reminded of it. But when this does not happen, when I think of Thee or am reminded of Thee, and am not moved or touched, I fear that perhaps this fact of my unmovedness convicts me of not always loving Thee, although the signs of Thy most present power and goodness strike and arouse the dullness of my perceptions in this respect everywhere and on every side. O Light of Truth, dispel these shadows for me to-day, and drive away the fog! Feed me with the bread of life and understanding and give me the water of wisdom to drink. Indeed to understand Thy mysteries is both food and drink; for they are the things we work and labour at, taking hold of them and as it were chewing them. But some of them, like drink, go through us as they are, and refresh us in their own way.

For when we seek Thy love by means of understanding, and sometimes ﬁnd it, that is the very bread of life that strengthens the heart of man; which bread we often seek with great labour before we get it, for the penalty of Adam’s sin is that we should eat our bread in the sweat of our face.

But sometimes Thy Spirit blows where and when He lists,9 and breathes the favour of Thy love on us; we hear His voice, because we receive the feeling of love; but we do not know by what judgement of Thy mercy it comes, nor by what judgement of Thy justice it passes us by, as it were with only a greeting, sometimes more swiftly, sometimes more lightly. This is drink. Feed me to-day with Thy bread that giveth life unto the world; and concerning these questions that I ask about Thy love, may a solid understanding be given me; and by the sweetness of Thy grace do Thou order and modify the food, as with a wholesome drink, lest the more solid food harm my less capable sense, rather than strengthen it. I ask, O Lord, whether I have Thy love. If I ﬁnd that I have, that is the only claim to praise my soul can make, and I am glad of it. But, if I have it not, then my soul is hateful to me, and there is nothing that I love, seeing I hate myself. I perceive and acknowledge that I have the love of Thy love, in so far as I would love nothing whatever, not even myself, except in and for Thy love. If only I might be found fully worthy to behold its face, to walk openly in its light, and to enjoy its pleasures, I would not mind at all how I gave myself for it, either in death or life.

This is the witness of my conscience, when I call it out and examine it in the light of Thy truth; it seems to me to answer boldly about the love of Thy love. But in regard to Thee, whether it loves Thee, and loves Thee enough, it is afraid to answer in Thy judgement. Certainly, wheresoever I see Thy love and the patent signs thereof in anything, then I am wholly glad; but, although all things on all sides always bear witness to me of the presence of Thy goodness and power, I am sometimes scarcely moved in this respect.

If, then, Thou askest me to-day, ‘Lovest thou Me?’ as once Thou askedst the blessèd apostle, I hesitate to answer, ‘Thou knowest that I love Thee,’ but I do readily and with clear conscience make reply, ‘Thou knowest that I *want* to love Thee.’ Lift up mine eyes, O Lord, and I will ponder all the marvels of Thy law, the law of Thy love. Perhaps the reason why I believe that I love Thy love is that, as often as I think of Thee, and it, I do to some extent perceive and see and taste it; whereas perception of Thyself is quite or almost lacking to me; with sight it is the same, and I have only very slight and meagre taste of Thee. That which does not make itself known directly to the lover is diﬃcult for him to love. Thy great and frequent kindnesses, and Thy love itself, which I most surely love, send me to Thee; but, when I ﬁnd Thee not, I fall back on Thy love and not unhopefully repose therein. For when I have the sweet perception of Thy love by feeling, yet at the same time seek Thyself by understanding of that selfsame love, I love what I perceive, I long for that for which I seek, and I languish for the greatness of my longing. For, even if occasionally the understanding itself is by Thy gift aﬀected to some small extent, it still is not allowed to swallow the full taste of the good savour that it has perceived; for this is as it were snatched out of its mouth, so that it falls back into its previous state of hunger and ignorance, and is not suﬀered to abide in the light of Thy Countenance, till in Thy light it can discern and so conclude this harassing uncertainty.

When in my meditation the ﬁre kindles and I try to ﬁnd out what I have, and what I lack, asking Thy help in the matter, I then begin to make a staircase for myself, by which I may ascend to Thee; and the steps thereof that I ordain for myself in my own heart are these; ﬁrst, a great will is needed; then an enlightened will; thirdly, a will upon which love has laid its hand. Every one who mounts to Thee needs ﬁrst this great will, great as he can make it; he also needs a will enlightened by Thy gift and moved in Thine own way—a will great as Thou hast created it, enlightened as far as Thou hast made it worthy to receive Thy light, and moved according to the form that Thou hast given it.

For, since Thou art neither Form nor anything that has been formed, so neither can Thy love have any form, in such a way as that it should be formed on anything, as something formed. For Thy love is the wisdom whereof it is said, ‘She is the breath of the power of God, and a certain pure outﬂowing of the glory of Almighty God, and therefore no deﬁled thing can come upon her. For she is the brightness of the everlasting light and the unspotted mirror of God’s majesty, and the image of His goodness.’10 And, unless she ﬁrst come to us, and her favour prevent us, the eﬀort of our understanding, whatever it be, avails us little or nothing. For the apostle says that Thou art in the form of God;11 and the form of Thy Godhead is the very simplicity of Thy nature and substance, and that the love of Thy Godhead must of necessity resemble. For, as a certain wise man says in regard to faith in Thee, ‘Because we ought to try to believe in a thing as it actually is, so also should we understand the matter of Thy love; and that all the more because charity surpasses faith. It is aﬀection only that discerns this.’12 My will to Theeward is such that I can have no greater; and I would rather not exist at all, than have it not. Had not the protection of this shield encircled me of old, when men rose up against us, they had haply swallowed us alive.13 I have indeed at times felt some sweet urgings of enlightening grace and aﬀecting charity; but the experience of their fullness is far removed from me. And because, by reason of my sins, such will as Thou hast given me is seldom and but little enlightened and still more rarely aﬀected, and because in this matter my desires and deserts accord so ill, I do not know whether it ought to be called love.

Those who make deﬁnitions deﬁne love as a single intense will; but those who so deﬁne it can form no judgement on the limits of Thy love. If it be called desire, I do not deny it. For in very truth I do desire Thee. But as long as my profession appears so poor and wretched before Thee, my conscience can have no joy. Let him who will laugh and mock at me; I know what I am suﬀering in this matter, and I know that no one shares my suﬀering. ‘My tears shall be my meat day and night, while they daily say unto me, “Where is now thy God?”’14—that is, as long as there is any aﬀection in my soul in which, after His own fashion, my God is not; and especially is this the case with love, which ought to be His special residence in me. He will not rid me of this grief till He reveals Himself to me; when I see what I love, and see it certainly, then with the joy of my mind I shall love what I see; but in the meantime I love in part what I in part perceive; and, if I did not perceive it to some extent, I should not love it at all.

For when I see Thy children feasting at Thy table amid the delights of Thy love, for all that I myself am starving I love Thy love in them intensely, and in my heart I do embrace most tenderly those who love Thee thus. And I see them rejoicing in my joy, which joy I have because of theirs, and I see that they want to express the measure of my joy, but cannot do so. For the aﬀection they enjoy in loving Thee can indeed be perceived in the sensible sweetness of a certain spiritual or divine joy; but, just as the savour of any sort of food can penetrate no one unless he taste of it, so can that savour neither be discussed by reason, nor explained in words, nor perceived by the (bodily) senses. It is something divine, the pledge and the betrothal-gift of the Spirit, whereby Thou, O God, dost rejoice and feed Thy poor servant in this life, lest he faint by the way.

And, in regard to the joy of life eternal, as Job says, Thou tellest Thy friend that it is his, and that he can reach it.15 For the holy soul is refashioned in the Image of the Trinity, the Image of Him Who created her, after the very manner of His own beatitude. For just as we say and believe of the Trinity that there are Three Persons, so also the enlightened and aﬀective will—that is, understanding and love, and the disposition of enjoyment, are three personal aﬀections, in a sort of way; but the substance of beatitude is one, for nothing is loved except by being understood, and when a man is found worthy to enjoy a thing he does not do so unless he also loves and understands.

To have and to enjoy is, then, to understand and love. Happy the conscience whose aﬀection Thou keepest in the way of ordered charity; with constancy that cannot waver it advances towards Thee, and by the help of Thy grace it so prospers in its progress that it will not give up until Thou perfect it, Who with that wealth of Thy sweetness that Thou hidest from the fearful, dost crown the souls who hope, especially those whose works shine before the children of men to Thy glory, O Father Who art in heaven. These are the souls who love Thee; when I see such, and do not ﬁnd myself among them, I weary of my life. Their wisdom comes not from the spirit of this world, nor from the prudence of this present age; being devoid of learning, they have entered into the power of the Lord and, being poor in spirit, they are mindful only of Thy righteousness.16 Wherefore Thou hast taught them that in their life and conversation they may show forth Thy wondrous works.

These are Thy simple servants, with whom Thou art wont to talk familiarly; in coming to Thee they do not put their trust in the chariots of their own cleverness nor in the horses of their own strength, but only in the Name of the Lord.17 Thus with Thy wisdom sweetly ordering all things for them, they come by a short road and lightly laden to their appointed end, where chariots and horsemen fail. They do not form pictures of Thy love or liken it to their own by any subtle reasoning; rather, Thy love itself, ﬁnding in them simple material on which to work, so forms them and conforms them to itself in both aﬀection and eﬀect, that, besides what is hidden within—namely, the glory and the riches of a good conscience—the inner light is reﬂected in their outward appearance, and that not by deliberate eﬀort but by a certain natural connection; so much is this the case that from the charm and simplicity of their expression and bearing there issues a sort of challenge to Thy love; the very sight of them sometimes moves even barbarous and boorish souls to love Thee. Nature indeed returns in people such as these to the fountain whence it sprang; having no human teacher, they are ready to be taught by God; and when, the Spirit helping their inﬁrmity, their spirits pass to the divine aﬀections and their senses are controlled by a certain spiritual discipline, a certain spirituality appears even in their bodies, and their faces acquire an appearance that is more than human and have a singular and peculiar grace. Through devotion to good practices, even their ﬂesh that is sown in corruption begins already to rise again to glory; so that heart and ﬂesh together may rejoice in the living God and, where the soul thirsts after Thee, the ﬂesh likewise may thirst in O how many ways!18 For the blessèd meek possess the earth of their own body;19 which earth, made fruitful by the faithful practice of spiritual exercises, even if pious practices have left it waste and barren, bears fruit of itself in fastings, in watchings, in labours, being ready for every good work without contradiction of sloth.

When I see these people, I am wholly drawn to the love of Thy love, which eﬀects this result in them; which love I grasp by a certain sure experience known to those who love. I love them, therefore, because they love Thee; and I love them much, even as I love the love wherewith Thou art loved, which love I love in them. And if I love them in this way, so that I love nothing except Thee in them and in their natural aﬀection, because I love the aﬀection itself for this great reason that it is full of Thee, but never love my own aﬀection in myself unless I ﬁnd myself aﬀected with the same concerning Thee, what then do I love save Thee, in those whom I love in Thee, and in myself whom I desire to love only in Thee? Nought else, assuredly. For, if I perceive myself to love them and myself in any other way, I hate myself more than I love myself in this respect.

So then I ﬁnd Thee in my love, O Lord; but O that I may always ﬁnd Thee there! For since love is not love, except it love, and yet the will for Thee is always vehement in me—that is to say, Thy love that urges me to Thee, why then are my aﬀections not always moved for Thee? Is love one thing, and the feeling of love another? As I see it, love is a natural thing, but to love Thee belongs to grace; the feeling of love is a manifestation of grace and of that the apostle says, ‘To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to proﬁt withal.’20 For, so long as the body that is subject to corruption weighs down the soul and the earthly habitation presses down the mind that muses upon many things, the soul is bound to experience vicissitudes, however much it loves; and, if the aﬀection did not comfort it at one extreme and restrain it in the other, it would inevitably come to a ruin, from which no further advance would ever raise it.

In the soul of Thy poor servant, therefore, Lord, Thy love is always present; but it is hidden like ﬁre in the ashes till the Holy Spirit, Who bloweth where He listeth, be pleased to manifest it proﬁtably, as and to such extent as He sees ﬁt. Come, therefore, come, O holy Love; come, O Thou sacred Fire; burn up the pleasures of our reins and the thoughts of our hearts on every side, to furnish more abundant fuel of humility for Thy revealing ﬂame; hide, as Thou wilt; and, when Thou wilt, appear, to manifest the glory of a good conscience and the riches it has in its house. Manifest those riches, Lord, to make me zealous to keep them; hide them from me, lest I be led rashly to scatter them, until such time as He, Who has begun the good work, shall also perfect it, Who liveth and reigneth through all the ages of ages.

MEDITATION 13

*He complains that the Lord has not fulﬁlled His promises; and the Lord answers him*

Lord, Thou hast led me astray, and I have followed Thy leading; Thou wast the stronger, and Thou hast prevailed.1 I heard Thee say, ‘Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.’2 I came to Thee, I trusted in Thy word; and in what way hast Thou refreshed me? I was not labouring before; but I am labouring now, and ready to drop with the toil. I was not burdened formerly, but now I am fatigued beneath my load. Thou saidst also, ‘My yoke is pleasant and My burden light.’ Where is that pleasantness? Where is that light weight? Already I grow weary of the yoke, already do I faint beneath the burden. I have looked all round, but there is none to help; and I have sought, yet there is none to give me aid.3 What means this, Lord? Have mercy upon me, for I am weak. Where are Thy mercies of old time? Our fathers, who preceded us along this road, did they possess the earth by their own sword? Was it their arm that saved them? Most surely it was not; it was Thine arm and the light of Thy Countenance. Why so? Because they were found pleasing in Thy sight.4 O Thou Who commandest the saving of Jacob, Thou art my King and God. What, then, is it in me that has displeased Thee, Lord? Why dost Thou not pass sentence on Thy servant? Anent the homage of the sinful woman Thou didst say, ‘She hath done what she could.’5 Have not I also done all that I could? Indeed it seems to me that I have done more than anybody would have thought I had the power for.

*The Lord*: My son, do not despise your Father’s chastening; do not grow weary when you are reproved by Him; for ‘whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.’ Indeed what son is there whom his father does not correct? If you are beyond chastening, you are a bastard, not a son.6 I have not led you astray, My son; I have led you sweetly on until this present. That which I said to you, that which was cried to you, ‘Come unto Me,’ has been cried aloud to all; but all do not receive the grace to come. To you it has been given so to do, in preference to many great ones who are rich in their own eyes. Have I committed sin in doing good to you? You complain that I do not refresh you. Had I not refreshed you, you would have fainted away. You groan beneath My yoke and weary of My burden. The thing that makes the sweetness of My yoke, the lightness of My burden, is charity. If you had charity, then you would feel that sweetness. Your ﬂesh would not labour if it loved you;7 or, if it did, charity would mitigate the toil. You cannot bear My burden and My yoke alone; but, if you have charity along with you to share the yoke and burden, you will be surprised to ﬁnd how sweet they are.

*Answer*: Lord, that is what I said. I have done what I could. The thing that seems to have been given into my own power, namely my wretched body and my feeble limbs, I have handed over to Thy service. Had it been also in my power to have charity, I should have reached perfection long ago. If Thou dost not bestow it, then I have not got it; and, if I may not have it, I cannot go on. Thou knowest and Thou seest how little I can do. Take of that little whatsoever Thou wilt, and give me that entire and perfect charity.

*The Lord*: Am I then to supply your deﬁciencies, and give you the charity for which you ask as well? But, My son, you must accept My chastening. There is no going except by the Way. You ask for charity; you have set out along the road that leads you to the Way. If you do not forsake this road, then you will reach your goal. I Myself go before you; and you must follow as you see Me go before.8 I endured and laboured; and you must labour also; I suﬀered many things, it behoves you to suﬀer some too. Obedience is the way to charity; and you will get there if you keep to it. But you must recognize how great a thing is charity, and worthy to be bought at a high price. For God is Charity;9 when you reach that, you will labour no more.

*Answer*: Lord, my bones that Thou hast made are not hid from Thee, nor is my substance in the depths of earth. Thine eyes have seen my imperfection.10 I dare not ask to be relieved of labour, nor do I want to do so; but in the meantime, while I have not got charity, who is going to bear the toil along with me?

*The Lord*: I have made, and I will bear.11 But, if you have been ungrateful for the gifts you have already received, you will be judged unworthy to receive greater ones. You have already been given a measure of charity; but you either do not know it, or are ungrateful for it. Charity is proper wisdom;12 and the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord.13 The fear of God has already led you up to this present point; already it has put you in this place whence, if the end should ﬁnd you there, you will go forth in safety. It has led you thus far, it has put you here; it is keeping you here. Have you then made so little progress? Is it so little that you have hitherto received?

*Answer*: Truly, O Lord, Thou art become our refuge; to Thee have I ﬂed, teach me Thy will and make me do it. Thou hast had compassion on the people that followed Thee into the wilderness. Thou hast had pity and hast provided food, lest they faint by the way.14 I have begun to follow Thee, my Leader, into the wilderness; I have vowed and I am determined, to keep the judgements of Thy righteousness. By Thy grace I will not forsake Thee; I will not withdraw myself from Thee until either I come to the goal whither Thou hast begun to bring me, or I fall in my tracks as Thou Thyself didst fall, if that be possible. For I know that, even if the body is weak and even if the spirit sometimes wearies, I shall not fail if I do not forsake Thee, but shall make progress by means of my inﬁrmities,15 provided Thou forsake not me by depriving me of patience. Have mercy on me, Lord; look upon my low estate and poverty. Help me and carry me, weak and feeble as I am in mind and body both. Inspire those who love Thee, Thy servants and Thy sons, to help me and to carry me, and out of my wretchedness to gain the rewards of their patience and their pity. I am Thine: O save me! Into Thy hands I commend my spirit.16 Teach it and rule it, encourage, comfort and enlighten it. Give me wisdom, that sitteth by Thy throne, that she may be with me and may labour with me, that I may know at all times what is acceptable in Thy sight.17 But do not reject me from the number of Thy children, for I am Thy servant and Thy servants’ servant too.

As to my body, Lord, I know not what to ask; Thou knowest what is good for me concerning it. If it so please Thee, let it be strong and healthy; and equally, if so Thou wilt, let it be weak and sick. And, when it is Thy will that it should die, then let it die, provided only that the spirit ﬁnd salvation in Thy Day. This one thing only do I implore Thy mercy in regard to it—namely, that Thou wouldst teach me so to rule and guard it, while I remain alive, that I may yield to none of its irrational desires, and yet refuse it nothing that it really needs.

The end of the commandment is charity,18 and that is the end of my prayer. O Thou Who hast willed to be called Charity, give me charity, that I may love Thee more than I love myself, and care not at all what I do with myself, so long as I am doing what is pleasing in Thy sight. Grant me, O Father, though I dare not always call myself Thy child, at least to be Thy faithful little servant and the sheep of Thy pasture. Speak to Thy servant’s heart sometimes, O Lord my God and Father. Have pity on my weakness, O my strength; and may it be to Thy great glory that my feebleness continues to serve Thee. Amen.

NOTES

[Throughout this new edition and as appropriate, roman numerals have been replaced with arabic numerals. Scriptural references in these notes have largely been aligned to Bible versions of greater currency than those made reference to by the translating editor: the Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition (RSV-CE) for the Authorized (King James) Version and Revised Version; and the Douay Version (DV) for the Vulgate. Among these RSV-CE, DV and Vulg., the RSV-CE spelling has been preferred for the names of books.—Ed.]

INTRODUCTION

1 Étienne Gilson, *The Mystical Theology of Saint Bernard*, trans. Alfred Howard Campbell Downes (London: Sheed & Ward, 1940), 198. In the appendix from which these words are taken M. Gilson gives an excellent short account of William and a list of his works. Of these, I think that only *The Golden Epistle: A Letter to the Brethren at Mont Dieu* has hitherto appeared in English, and that is now out of print.

2 One of these MSS came from Reuil and the other from Signy. The former only has the collective title *Meditativae orationes*, the separate title being always ‘Meditatio.’ As the former does not translate happily, we have called them simply *Meditations*. The text of the twelve is also in Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 180, but M.-M. Davy says ‘les fautes y sont nombreuses, et les omissions fréquentes.’

3 The diﬃculty does not always come from the same cause. Most frequently it happens because his thought is too big for words; he tries to say too much at once, and a sentence that is overcharged in Latin is inevitably more so in our own less succinct tongue. Occasionally also William gets tied up in his self-searching and seems to lose himself in his own words. At other times one feels that there must be some error in the text. And lastly there are places where the brief, brilliant Latin resists translation with an almost personal force, although one sees quite clearly what he means.

MEDITATION 1

1 Romans 11:33–34. What follows is based on Romans 9:15–23. In v. 19 ‘Quid adhuc quaeritur?’ means rather ‘What more does He want?’ The Douay version, ‘Why doth He then ﬁnd fault?’ presupposes *queritur* (from the deponent *queror*) in place of *quaeritur*, and that is what the Greek, Τί ἔτι μέμφεται, requires. For the ﬁgure of the potter and the clay, see Jeremiah 18:1–6.

2 ‘Ego feci, ego feram,’ Isaiah 46:4.

3 Genesis 1:26–27. The restoration of the Image of God in man is a favourite theme with the Fathers.

4 See Saint John 1:1–4.

5 Psalm 11:9 (DV), cf. 12:8 (RSV-CE).

6 See Genesis 1:2, and cf. Wisdom 1:1–7.

7 ‘Praedestinatio autem est gratiae praeparatio. Gratia vero, ipse est eﬀectus.’ Is *ipse* a misprint? It seems *ipsa* would give a better sense.

8 Saint James 4:6.

MEDITATION 2

1 Psalm 33:6 (DV), cf. 34:5 (RSV-CE).

2 Saint Matthew 25:12.

3 Ecclesiastes 4:10.

4 Saint Matthew 15:21–28.

5 Psalm 17:12 (DV), cf. 18:11 (RSV-CE).

6 Lamentations 3:44.

7 The Vulgate (and Douay) version of the ‘still small voice’ of 1 Kings 19:12, cf. 3 Kings.

8 Deuteronomy 6:4.

MEDITATION 3

1 Exodus 33:20.

2 Exodus 3:6.

3 Exodus 33:19. RSV-CE reads ‘all My goodness’; the Latin *omne bonum* has no possessive adjective.

4 Psalm 15:11 (DV), cf. 16:11 (RSV-CE).

5 2 Corinthians 3:18.

6 Saint Luke 12:49.

7 Cf. Saint Matthew 11:27.

8 Wisdom 1:1 (DV).

9 Cf. Wisdom 6:16 (DV).

10 Philippians 2:5.

11 1 Saint John 3:2.

12 Daniel 10:11 (DV).

13 Apocalypse 2:17 (DV), cf. Revelation (RSV-CE).

14 Romans 7:24.

15 Saint John 17:3.

16 See note 1 in meditation 2.

MEDITATION 4

1 Saint John 16:23–24 and Saint Mark 11:24.

2 Romans 8:26–27.

3 The text reads: ‘lacrymae ﬂuunt, non quae ignem accensum exstinguant, sed *ascendant* amplius.’ We take it that *ascendant* is a misprint for *accendant*.

4 Lamentations 3:1.

5 Psalm 87:16 (DV), cf. 88:15 (RSV-CE).

6 Psalm 70:20–21 (DV), cf. 71:20–21 (RSV-CE). For what follows, see Genesis 2 and 3.

7 Psalm 54:7–9 (DV), cf. 55:6–8 (RSV-CE).

8 Lamentations 3:29.

9 Jeremiah 2:24 (DV).

10 See Job 39:4–8.

11 1 Maccabees 12:1.

12 Ephesians 2:3.

13 See Ephesians 2:8, 10.

14 Because God’s Likeness is defaced by sin. Cf. Saint Bernard, *On the Song of Songs* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1952), 109 (in 12.3. ‘Of the Two Kinds of Ignorance and Knowledge.’ Incorporating serm. 38 of *Sermones in Cantica Canticorum*).

15 Isaiah 65:25. William put ‘lion’ here in place of ‘wolf.’

16 Hosea 2:21–23. The name Jezreel means ‘God soweth.’

17 Hosea 2:14.

18 Psalm 34:3 (DV), cf. 35:3 (RSV-CE).

19 Psalm 33:9 (DV), cf. 34:8 (RSV-CE).

20 See Hosea 2:18.

21 See note 3 in meditation 2.

22 For what follows, see Exodus 3:1–6.

23 Psalm 26:5 (DV), cf. 27:5 (RSV-CE).

24 See Saint Matthew 11:28–30.

25 Apocalypse 21:1 (DV), cf. Revelation (RSV-CE).

26 Psalm 80:6 (DV), cf. 81:5 (RSV-CE). The whole of this Psalm is in William’s mind.

27 Romans 12:2.

MEDITATION 5

1 Habakkuk 3:2.

2 Hebrews 5:7.

3 Hebrews 10:26–31.

4 Saint Luke 16:25.

5 Saint Luke 7:37–50.

6 A reminiscence of Saint John 12:6 (DV).

7 Saint Mark 14:8.

8 Saint John 5:22.

9 A diﬃcult bit. The text reads: ‘Tu dixisti, Mihi vindictam; ego retribuam. Nequaquam, O benignissime. Sed mihi vindictam, ut ego poeniteam.’ The Vulgate of Hebrews 10:30 is of course ‘Mihi vindict*a*.’ Mlle Davy translates ‘Nequaquam . . . poeniteam’ thus: ‘N’agissez pas ainsi, vous qui êtes tres doux; que la vengeance m’atteigne, aﬁn que je me repente.’

10 Saint Mark 10:52.

MEDITATION 6

1 Apocalypse 4:1 (DV), cf. Revelation (RSV-CE).

2 Psalm 118:21 (DV), cf. 119:21 (RSV-CE).

3 See Psalm 68:5 (DV) or 69:4 (RSV-CE).

4 See Psalm 148:8.

5 Psalm 49:5 (DV), cf. 50:5 (RSV-CE).

6 Saint John 10:9.

7 Ephesians 4:10 with the clauses reversed.

8 Psalm 10:5 (DV), cf. 11:4 (RSV-CE).

9 See Saint John 14:6.

10 See 1 Corinthians 2:14.

11 Saint Matthew 6:9.

12 A conﬂation of Daniel 2:28 with a reminiscence of Isaiah 8:18 or Joel 3:21 or perhaps Psalm 124:1–2 (DV), cf. 125:2 (RSV-CE).

13 Saint John 1:38.

14 Saint John 14:10–11, 20.

15 Saint John 17:23.

16 1 Saint John 3:1–2.

17 1 Saint John 3:9.

18 See Hebrews 9:1–5.

19 See Titus 2:11–14.

20 Romans 8:32–33.

21 See Saint John 14:1–6.

22 Saint John 13:33.

23 Saint John 13:13.

24 Psalm 41:5 (DV); 42:4 (RSV-CE) is diﬀerent.

25 Psalm 41:6–7 (DV), cf. 42:5–6 (RSV-CE).

26 Saint Matthew 25:21.

MEDITATION 7

1 Psalm 26:8–9 (DV), cf. 27:8–9 (RSV-CE).

2 Saint John 21:15–17.

3 The ﬁrst line of the Latin text in this paragraph, ‘hujus virtutis non omnino expertem me arbitror,’ is repeated in the seventh. The context shows plainly that its ﬁrst occurrence is an error.

4 Psalm 43:4 (DV), cf. 44:3 (RSV-CE).

5 Psalm 29:8 (DV), cf. 30:6–7 (RSV-CE).

6 Psalm 88:16 (DV), cf. 89:15 (RSV-CE).

7 See note 1 in meditation 3.

8 For this paragraph see Psalms 17:1–12 (DV), cf. 18:1–11 (RSV-CE); 76:19 (DV), cf. 77:18 (RSV-CE); 96:2–4 (DV), cf. 97:2–4 (RSV-CE); and Saint John 1:1–14.

MEDITATION 8

1 See Canticle of Canticles 2:14 (DV) or Song of Solomon (RSV-CE).

2 Psalm 84:11 (DV), cf. 85:10 (RSV-CE).

3 See Psalm 86:4 (DV) or 87:3 (RSV-CE). In the phrase ‘Rahab and Babylon,’ Rahab (= the Stormy One) means Egypt, as also in Psalm 88:11 (DV), cf. 89:10 (RSV-CE); and Isaiah 51:9. William however takes it as meaning the harlot of Jericho, who saved the spies and was an ancestress of our Lord. See Joshua 2:6–17 and Saint Matthew 1:5.

4 See Psalm 67:14 (Vulg.). *Inter medios cleros* would seem to mean ‘in the midst of the clergy,’ and M.-M. Davy translates *au milieu des lévites*. But the Douay version renders it ‘among the midst of lots’; and as Saint Bernard interprets the ‘lots’ as meaning the two Comings of Christ, it is probable that William has the same idea.

5 See 1 Corinthians 11:23–26.

6 See Leviticus 11:2–3 and Deuteronomy 14:4–6.

7 Psalm 80:11 (DV), cf. 81:10 (RSV-CE).

8 Saint John 17.

9 Canticle of Canticles 2:16 (DV), cf. Song of Solomon (RSV-CE); and 1:12 (DV), cf. 1:13 (RSV-CE).

10 Psalm 26:8 (DV), cf. 27:8 (RSV-CE).

11 Romans 1:28.

12 Hebrews 10:26–27. ‘The prophet’ is probably Zephaniah 1:14–18.

MEDITATION 9

1 See Isaiah 26:10.

2 See Isaiah 12:3 (DV). Saint Bernard has a lovely Christmas sermon on this text, which William may have known. See Saint Bernard, *On the Christian Year* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1954), 32–35 (pt. 1, 2. ‘Christmas,’ 3. ‘The Saviour’s Wells.’ From *Sermones in Nativitate Domini* 1.5–8).

3 ‘Non irrideant me diﬃnientes ﬁnes et terminos ﬁdei meae; corde, ore, manu, scripto, tibi oﬀero, lux veritatis, scilicet voluntarium et plenum credendi assensum in omnibus quae de te credit Ecclesia catholica.’ Why this self-defence? Had some one been impugning his orthodoxy?

4 Psalm 38:5 (DV); 39:4 (RSV-CE) is diﬀerent.

MEDITATION 10

1 Galatians 6:14.

2 See Isaiah 6:1.

3 Ephesians 3:10.

4 A reference to the daughters of Jerusalem in the Canticle of Canticles 1:4 (DV), cf. Song of Solomon 1:5 (RSV-CE), 2:7, etc.

5 The text has *docebit* here, but the sense requires *docebitur*.

6 Job 5:24 (DV). The text has *speciem meam*, but the sense and the quotation both require *tuam*.

7 Hebrews 1:4.

8 Psalm 98:5 (DV), cf. 99:5 (RSV-CE).

9 Psalm 25:11 (DV), cf. 26:11 (RSV-CE).

10 See Saint John 13:1, and Canticle of Canticles 5:1 (DV) or Song of Solomon (RSV-CE).

11 Acts 10:9–16.

12 Saint John 10:30.

13 Cf. Psalm 131:16 (DV) or 132:16 (RSV-CE).

14 See Saint Matthew 13:44–46.

MEDITATION 11

1 Psalm 79:8 (DV), cf. 80:7 (RSV-CE).

2 Literally, ‘If thou turnest, Israel, be turned.’ As this does not occur in the Latin Bible, we take it as a misquotation of Jeremiah 4:1, and translate accordingly.

3 Zechariah 1:3.

4 I.e., God’s universal law in His particular commands.

5 Psalm 18:8 (DV), cf. 19:7 (RSV-CE).

6 Psalm 44:2 (DV), cf. 45:1 (RSV-CE).

7 Psalm 42:3 (DV), cf. 43:3 (RSV-CE).

8 See Saint John 14:6.

9 Psalm 72:24 (DV), cf. 73:23–24 (RSV-CE).

10 Saint Matthew 11:28.

11 See Psalm 118:32 (DV) or 119:32 (RSV-CE).

12 See Saint Matthew 19:16–21.

13 See Psalm 24:7 (DV) or 25:7 (RSV-CE).

14 See Saint Mark 10:46–52 and Saint Luke 18:35–43.

15 Saint Matthew 15:23.

16 Psalm 119:5–6 (DV), cf. 120:5–6 (RSV-CE).

17 Psalm 26:14 (DV), cf. 27:14 (RSV-CE).

18 Hebrews 4:12–13. William is chewing on the words of this passage, soul and spirit, joints and marrow, thoughts and intents, to the end of the meditation.

19 Psalm 30:15–16 (DV), cf. 31:14–15 (RSV-CE).

20 See Saint John 21:15–17 and Ecclesiastes 4:12.

21 3 Kings 1:1 (DV), cf. 1 Kings (RSV-CE).

22 Saint Matthew 6:33.

23 Lamentations 5:6.

24 See 1 Corinthians 7:23.

25 Exodus 26:7.

26 Hosea 10:11.

27 See Saint Luke 10:38–42.

28 See Genesis 29:1–30.

29 See Saint Mark 13:34 and Saint John 10:1–15.

30 Philippians 2:8.

31 Hebrews 12:3–4.

32 Saint John 8:32.

33 See note 5 in meditation 1.

MEDITATION 12

1 Psalm 142:1 (DV), cf. 143:1 (RSV-CE).

2 A variant of Psalm 76:11 (DV), cf. 77:10 (RSV-CE).

3 See Deuteronomy 34:4.

4 Reading *me conﬁtente* for *me conﬁdente* as printed.

5 Cf. Job 13:26.

6 See Deuteronomy 28:23.

7 A diﬃcult passage. Does *ipse amor tuus* mean ‘my love for Thee’ or ‘Thy love for me’? The reference to Saint Luke 7:47 suggests the former, but the previous reference to the Passion and the ensuing reminiscence of Saint Matthew 10:33 support the latter. Further, the French translation reads: ‘si j’en rougis, je crains que lui aussi ne rougisse de moi dans le ciel. J’en rougis, puisqu’il n’est pas en moi tel qu’il devrait être,’ which suggests a considerable omission in the text.

8 Another puzzle. The text reads: ‘Certissime quippe mihi esse videor quod amorem tuum semper amo’; but the French translation is ‘Je crois avoir l’entière certitude d’aimer sans cesse votre amour’—disregarding *esse* altogether.

9 Cf. Saint John 3:8.

10 Wisdom 7:25–26.

11 See Philippians 2:6–8.

12 Boethius, *Epist.* 17.

13 Cf. Psalm 123:1–3 (DV) or 124:1–3 (RSV-CE).

14 Psalm 41:4 (DV), cf. 42:3 (RSV-CE).

15 Job 36:33 (DV).

16 See Psalm 70:15–16 (DV).

17 See Psalm 19:8 (DV) or 20:7 (RSV-CE).

18 See Psalm 62:2 (DV).

19 See Saint Matthew 5:4 (DV) or 5:5 (RSV-CE).

20 1 Corinthians 12:7.

MEDITATION 13

1 See Jeremiah 20:7 and Genesis 32:24–28.

2 Saint Matthew 11:28–30.

3 See Isaiah 63:5, and Psalm 106:12 (DV) or 107:12 (RSV-CE).

4 See Psalm 43:4 (DV) or 44:3 (RSV-CE).

5 Saint Mark 14:8.

6 Proverbs 3:11–12 and Hebrews 12:5–8.

7 I.e., if it sought to serve the spirit rather than to ﬁnd ease for itself.

8 See Exodus 13:21, Deuteronomy 1:32–33, and Joshua 3.

9 1 Saint John 4:16.

10 See Psalm 138:15–16 (DV) or 139:15–16 (RSV-CE).

11 See note 2 in meditation 1.

12 ‘Caritas propria sapientia,’ Charity *is* wisdom.

13 Proverbs 1:7.

14 See Saint Matthew 15:32.

15 See 2 Corinthians 12:1–10.

16 Psalm 118:94 (DV), cf. 119:94 (RSV-CE); 30:6 (DV), cf. 31:5 (RSV-CE); and Saint Luke 23:46.

17 See Wisdom 9:4–5, 10.

18 See 1 Timothy 1:5.

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