



THE PRECIOUS BLOOD



THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

OR

THE PRICE OF OUR SALVATION

BY

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Author of

*“All for Jesus,” “Spiritual Conferences,” “Bethlehem,”
“The Foot of the Cross,” “The Blessed Sacrament,” etc., etc.*

“Habet magnam vocem Christi Sanguis in terra, cum eo accepto ab omnibus gentibus respondetur Amen. Hæc est clara vox Sanguinus, quam Sanguis ipse exprimit, ex ore fidelium eodem Sanguine redemptorum.”

—St. Augustin, *contra Faustum* 1. xii. c. 10.

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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CONFRATERNITY
OF THE MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD
IN THE CHURCH OF THE LONDON ORATORY.

MY DEAR FRIENDS:

I have written this little book for you, and now dedicate it to you with feelings of the warmest affection. It is ten years next August since the Holy Father set up our Confraternity. Since then we have enrolled upwards of thirty-eight thousand members, and a hundred and four Religious Communities. Besides this, several other Confraternities of the Precious Blood have been set up and affiliated with ours; and their members are also very numerous. Some others have been erected in imitation of ours, and independently of it, and are successfully propagating our favorite devotion.

The meetings at the Oratory on Sunday nights testify to the abundant blessing which our Lord has given to this apostolate of prayer. Letters are arriving daily, and from the remotest quarters of the world, either asking our prayers, or returning thanks for unexpected answers to prayer, or recounting signal conversions, obtained through the intercession of the Confraternity. Of late these divine favors have greatly increased; and, while this is a fresh motive for the love of God and for confidence in prayer, it also deepens our feeling of our own unworthiness, and greatly humbles us. The Confraternity is now so extended that the correspondence includes letters from Ireland and Scotland, from France and Germany, from Canada and Newfoundland, from the

United States and Central America, from California and Brazil, from Australia and New Zealand, from the East Indies and the Chinese Missions, from the Cape of Good Hope and other British Dependencies. When we think of all this, we must prize more and more the privileges of this grand union of intercessory prayer. The success of the Confraternity is naturally an object of lively interest both to you and me. To you, because it is connected now with so many secret joys and sorrows of your lives, and so many hidden mercies and sweet answers to prayer, which are known only to yourselves: to me, because it is the realizing of my hopes beyond what I ever could have dreamed: and to both of us, because it is an humble increase of the glory of our dearest Lord.

I have watched the growth of the Confraternity with a pleased surprise; and the tokens of God's blessing upon it have overwhelmed me with gratitude and confusion: and I have thought what I could do. Though many of you are present at the London Oratory every Sunday evening by your letters, comparatively few of you can be there in person. Yet I have felt that we belong to each other, and that I should satisfy my own feelings, while I should be gratifying yours, if I could make some affectionate offering to the whole of my dear Confraternity.

Therefore I have written this little book. I have tried to tell you all I know about the Precious Blood, all that many years of hard study and much thought have enabled me to learn; and I have tried to tell it you as easily and as simply as I could. I thought I could not please you better than by this. I thought I could not show my gratitude to our Blessed Redeemer better than by striving to increase a devotion which he himself, by his blessing on the Confraternity, has shown to be so pleasing to him. I believed we could not repay the paternal kindness of the Sovereign Pontiff, our Father and Founder, who has enriched us with Indulgences, in a manner more welcome to himself than by an effort to propagate the devotion to the Precious Blood, in whose honor he has

established a new feast in the Church of God. I know that I could not please myself better, than by magnifying the Precious Blood, which of all the glorious objects of Catholic devotion has been for years the dearest to my heart.

Accept, then, this little but loving gift. Let it stand as a memorial of my love of you, of your love of Jesus, of the filial devotion of both of us to the Holy Father, and of our united thanksgiving to our Blessed Savior for his goodness to our Confraternity, and for our salvation through his Blood.

Your affectionate Servant and Father,

FREDERICK WILLIAM FABER,
Priest of the Oratory.

The London Oratory.
Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul,
1860.

CHAPTER I

THE MYSTERY OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

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THE MYSTERY OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

SALVATION! What music is there in that word — music that never tires but is always new, that always rouses yet always rests us! It holds in itself all that our hearts would say. It is sweet vigor to us in the morning, and in the evening it is contented peace. It is a song that is always singing itself deep down in the delighted soul. Angelic ears are ravished by it up in heaven; and our Eternal Father himself listens to it with adorable complacency. It is sweet even to him out of whose mind is the music of a thousand worlds. To be saved! What is it to be saved? Who can tell? Eye has not seen, nor ear heard. It is a rescue, and from such a shipwreck. It is a rest, and in such an unimaginable home. It is to lie down forever in the bosom of God in an endless rapture of insatiable contentment.

“Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins.” Who else but Jesus can do this, and what else even from him do we require but this? for in this lie all things which we can desire. Of all miseries the bondage of sin is the most miserable. It is worse than sorrow, worse than pain. It is such a ruin that no other ruin is like unto it. It troubles all the peace of life. It turns sunshine into darkness. It embitters all pleasant fountains, and poisons the very blessings of God which should have been for our healing. It doubles the burdens of life, which are heavy enough already. It makes death a terror and a torture, and the eternity beyond the grave an infinite and intolerable blackness. Alas! we have felt the weightiness of sin, and know

that there is nothing like it. Life has brought many sorrows to us, and many fears. Our hearts have ached a thousand times. Tears have flowed. Sleep has fled. Food has been nauseous to us, even when our weakness craved for it. But never have we felt any thing like the dead weight of a mortal sin. What then must a life of such sins be? What must be a death in sin? What the irrevocable eternity of unretracted sin?

From all this horror whither shall we look for deliverance? Not to ourselves; for we know the practical infinity of our weakness, and the incorrigible vitality of our corruption. Not to any earthly power; for it has no jurisdiction here. Not to philosophy, literature, or science; for in this case they are but sorry and unhelpful matters. Not to any saint, however holy, nor to any angel, however mighty; for the least sin is a bigger mountain than they have faculties to move. Not to the crowned queen of God's creation, the glorious and the sinless Mary; for even her holiness cannot satisfy for sin, nor the whiteness of her purity take out its deadly stain. Neither may we look for deliverance direct from the patience and compassion of God himself; for in the abysses of his wisdom it has been decreed, that without shedding of blood there shall be no remission of sin. It is from the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ alone that our salvation comes. Out of the immensity of its merits, out of the inexhaustible treasures of its satisfactions, because of the resistless power of its beauty over the justice and the wrath of God, because of that dear combination of its priceless worth and its benignant prodigality, we miserable sinners are raised out of the depths of our wretchedness, and restored to the peace and favor of our Heavenly Father.

Is hope sweet where despair had almost begun to reign? Is it a joy to be emancipated from a shameful slavery, or set free from a noxious dungeon? Is it gladness to be raised as if by miracle from a bed of feebleness and suffering, to sudden health and instantaneous vigor? Then what a gladness must salvation be! For, as there is no earthly misery like sin, so is there no deliverance like that with which Jesus makes us free. Words will not tell it. Thought only can think it, and it must be thought out of an

enlightened mind and a burning heart, dwelt on for a long, long while. The first moment after death is a moment which must infallibly come to every one of us. Earth lies behind us, silently wheeling its obedient way through the black-tinted space. The measureless spaces of eternity lie outstretched before us. The words of our sentence have scarcely floated away into silence. It is a sentence of salvation. The great risk has been run, and we are saved. God's power is holding our soul lest it should die of gladness. It cannot take in the whole of its eternity. The least accidental joy is a world of beatitude in itself. The blaze of the vision is overwhelming. Then the truth that eternity is eternal—this is so hard to master. Yet all this is only what we mean when we pronounce the word salvation. How hideous the difference of that first moment after death, if we had not been saved! It turns us cold to think of it. But oh, joy of joys! we have seen the face of Jesus; and the light in his eyes, and the smile upon his face, and the words upon his lips, were salvation.

But there are some who do not feel that sin is such a horror or captivity. They say it lays no weight upon their hearts. They say their lives are full of sunshine, and that time flows with them as the merry rivulet runs in summer with a soothing brawl over its colored stones, and its waters glancing in the sun. They say it is so with them; and truly they should know best. Yet I hardly believe them. If they are happy, it is only by fits and starts; and then not with a complete happiness. There is ever an upbraiding voice within. An habitual sinner always has the look of a jaded and disappointed man. There is weariness in the very light of his eyes, vexation in the very sound of his voice. Why is he so cross with others, if he is so happy with himself? Then are there not also dreadful times, private times when no one but God sees him, when he is chilled through and through with fear, when he is weary of life because he is so miserable, when the past weighs upon him like a nightmare, and the future terrifies him like a coming wild beast? When death springs upon him, how will he die? When judgment comes, what will he answer? Yet even if the sinner could go through life with the gay indifference to which he

pretends, he is not to be envied. It is only a sleep, a lethargy, or a madness—one or other of these according to his natural disposition. For there must be an awakening at last; and when and where will it be? They that walk in their sleep are sometimes wakened if they put their foot into cold water. What if the sinner's awakening should be from the first touch of the fire that burns beyond the grave?

But we claim no share in any foolish happiness of sin. We are on God's side. We belong to Jesus. Sin is our great enemy, as well as our great evil. We desire to break with it altogether. We are ashamed of our past subjection to it. We are uneasy under our present imperfect separation from it. Our uppermost thought—no! not merely our uppermost thought, our only thought—is our salvation. We care for no science, but the science of redeeming grace. The cross of Christ is our single wisdom. Once we wished for many things, and aimed at many things. But we are changed now. Our lives are amazingly simplified, simplified by the fear of sin and by the love of God. Our anxiety now is, that all this may remain. We fear another change, especially a change back again. We can think calmly of no change except from little love to much love, and from much love to more love. The right of Jesus to our love, to our best love, to all our love, is becoming plainer and plainer to us. His exceeding loveliness is growing more and more attractive, because it is revealing itself to us every day like a new revelation. What depths there are in Jesus, and how wonderfully he lights them up with the splendors of his eternal love! Do we not feel every day more and more strongly, that we must be more for Jesus than we are, that of all growing things divine love is the most growing, that all idea of a limit to our love of Jesus, or of moderation in our service of him, is a folly as well as a disloyalty? He was the brightness of innumerable lives and the sweetness of innumerable sorrows, when he was but the expectation of longing Israel. What must he be now, when he has come, when he has lived, and shed his Blood, and died, and risen, and ascended, and then come back again in all the unutterable endearments of the Blessed Sacrament? Why are our hearts so cold? Why

is our love so faithless, and our faith so unloving? We try, and still we do not love as we wish to love. We try again, and love more; and yet it is sadly short of the love we ought to have. We strive and strive, and still we only languish when we ought to burn. He longs for our love, sweet, covetous lover of souls as he is. He longs for our love; and we long for nothing so much as to love him. Surely there must be a time and a place, when both he and we shall be satisfied; but the place will be heaven, and the time nothing else than the great timeless eternity.

Salvation is through the Precious Blood. We will take that for our study of Jesus this time. When love is humble, it prays with David to be washed more and more from its iniquity. But there is no washing away of iniquity, except in the Precious Blood of our most dear Redeemer. When love is bold, it prays to be set on fire with the flames which Jesus came to kindle. But it is only the Precious Blood which makes our heart beat hotly with the love of him. So let us take the Precious Blood for our study now: and let us study it in a simple, loving way, not so much to become deep theologians, though deep theology is near of kin to heroic sanctity, but that our hearts may be more effectually set on fire with the love of Jesus Christ. There is so much to be said, that we cannot say it all, because we do not know it all. We must make a choice; and we will choose these six things: the Mystery of the Precious Blood, the Necessity of it, its Empire, its History, its Prodigality, and, last of all, the Devotion to it in the Church.

We must take a saint to guide us on our way. Let it be that grand lover of Jesus, the Apostle St. Paul. His conversion was one of the chief glories of the Precious Blood. Redeeming grace was his favorite theme. He was forever magnifying and praising the Blood of Jesus. His heart was filled with it, and was enlarged by grace that it might hold yet more. After the Heart of Jesus, never was there a human heart like that of Paul, in which all other human hearts might beat as if it were their own, unless it be that other universal heart, the heart of King David, which has poured itself out for all mankind, in those varying strains of every change-ful feeling, by means of its sweet psalms. St. Paul's heart feels

for every one, makes every one's case its own, sorrows and rejoices with those who sorrow or rejoice, and becomes all things to all men that it may save them all. Among the wonders of creation there are few to compare with that glorious apostolic heart. The vastness of its sympathies, the breadth of its charity, the unwearied hopefulness of its zeal, the delicacy of its considerateness, the irresistible attraction of its imperious love—all this was the work of the Precious Blood; and that heart is still alive even upon earth, still beating in his marvellous Epistles as part of the unquenchable life of the Church. It is impossible to help connecting these characteristics of St. Paul's heart with the manifest devotion to the Precious Blood. Let us take him then as our guide amidst the unsearchable riches of Christ and the superabounding graces of his redeeming Blood. As it was with the disciples as they walked to Emmaus with Jesus, so will it be with us as we go along with his servant Paul. Our hearts will burn within us by the way; and we ourselves shall grow hot from the heat of that magnificent heart of him who guides us.

We are then to consider, first of all, the Mystery of the Precious Blood. It was one of God's eternal thoughts. It was part of his wisdom, part of his glory, part of his own blessedness from all eternity. You know that creation, although exceedingly ancient, perhaps so ancient as to be beyond our calculations, is nevertheless not eternal. It could not be so. To be eternal is to be without beginning; and to be without beginning is to be independent of any cause or power. This is a true description of God. But creation had a time at which it began, and it was the independent act of God's most holy, most condescending will. Thus there was an eternity before creation, a vast, unimaginable, adorable life, not broken up into centuries and ages, not lapsing but always still, not passing but always stationary, a life which had no past and no future, because its whole self was always present to itself. This was the life of God before any creation, an unspeakably glorious life, which we can think of with love and adoration, but which it is quite impossible for us to understand. We shall say more of it in the third chapter. Some holy persons, like Mother

Anne Seraphine Boulier of the Visitation at Dijon, have had such an exceeding devotion to this life of God prior to creation, that they have by God's order shaped their spirituality wholly upon it. Very often, when the troubles of life vex and ruffle us, or when we are downcast and distrustful, it would do us good to think of that ancient life of God. It would fill us with quiet awe. We should feel our own littleness more sensibly, and we should care less about the judgments of the world. The thought of it would be like a bed to lie down upon, when we are weary with work or fatigued with disappointment.

Nevertheless there is a sense in which creation was eternal. It was eternally in the mind of God. It was one of his eternal ideas, always before him; so that he never existed without this idea of creation in his all-wise mind and in his all-powerful intention. Moreover, it was always part of his intention that the Creator should become as it were part of his own creation, and that an Uncreated Person should really and truly assume a created nature and be born of a created mother. This is what we call the mystery of the Incarnation. It is this which makes creation so magnificent. It was not merely a beautiful thing which God made as an artificer, and which he set outside of himself, and kept at a distance from himself to look at, to admire, to pity, and to love. He always intended to be part of it himself in a very wonderful way. So that there would have been Jesus and Mary, even if there had never been any sin: only Jesus would not have been crucified, and Mary would not have had any dolors. But the sight of sin was also with God from the beginning, that is, through all his unbeginning eternity; and thus the Precious Blood also, as the ransom for sin, was with him from the beginning. It was one of his eternal thoughts. If we may dare to say so, it was an idea which made him more glorious, a thought which rendered him more blessed. That same dear Blood, the thought of which makes us so happy now, has been part of God's happiness forever.

He created the angels and the stars. How ancient the angels are we do not know. In all ways they are wonderful to think of, because they are so strong, so wise, so various, so beautiful, so

innumerable. But they do not lie in our way just now; because, although they owe all their graces to the Precious Blood, they were not redeemed by the Precious Blood. Those angels, who did not fall, did not sin, and so needed no redemption; and God would not allow those who fell to be redeemed at all. This makes us sometimes think that God was more severe with his world of angels than with his world of men. But this is not really the case. It only shows us how we owe more to Jesus than we often think of. The angels could not make any satisfaction to the justice of God for their sins. If all the angels, good and bad together, had suffered willingly the most excruciating torments for millions upon millions of ages, those willing torments could not have made up to God for the sin of the least sinful of those angels who are now devils. If our dearest Saviour had taken upon himself the nature of angels, the case would have been different. But he became man, not angel; and so his Passion, as man, satisfied for all possible sins of men. The sufferings of his Passion were greater and of more price than all the torments of countless angels. The severity of God exacted more from him upon the Cross than it ever exacted or is exacting now, from the tortured angels. Thus you see God has not been more severe with them than with us: only that Jesus made himself one of us, and took all our share of God's severity upon himself, leaving us the easy happiness of faith, and hope, and love. You see we come upon the kindness of Jesus everywhere. There is not even a difficulty in religion, but somehow the greatness of his love is at the bottom of it, and is the explanation of it. Wonderful Jesus! that was the name the prophet Isaias gave him. "He shall be called Wonderful." How sweet it is to be so hemmed in by the tokens of his love, that we cannot turn to any side without meeting them! Yet his love would be sweeter to us if we could only repay it with more love ourselves.

God made the angels and the stars. The starry world is an overwhelming thing to think of. Its distances are so vast that they frighten us. The number of its separate worlds is so enormous that it bewilders us. Imagine a ray of light, which travels one hun-

dred and ninety-two thousand miles in a second; and yet there are stars whose light would take a million of years to reach the earth. We know of two hundred thousand stars down to the ninth magnitude. In one single cluster of stars, eighteen millions of stars have been discovered between the tenth and eleventh magnitudes. Of these clusters men have already discovered more than four thousand. Each of these stars is not a planet, like the earth; but a sun, like our sun, and perhaps with planets round it, like ourselves. Of these suns we know of some which are one hundred and forty-six times brighter than our sun. What an idea all this gives us of the grandeur and magnificence of God! Yet we know that all these stars were created for Jesus and because of Jesus. He is the head and first-born of all creation. Mary's Son is the King of the stars. His Precious Blood has something to do with all of them. Just as it merited graces for the angels, so does it merit blessings for the stars. If they have been inhabited before we were, or are inhabited now, or will at some future time begin to be inhabited, their inhabitants, whether fallen and redeemed, or unfallen and so not needing to be redeemed, will owe immense things to the Precious Blood. Yet earth, our little, humble earth, will always have the right to treat the Precious Blood with special endearments, because it is its native place. When the angels, as they range through space, see our little globe twinkling with its speck of colored light, it is to them as the little Holy House in the hollow glen of Nazareth, more sacred and more glorious than the amplest palaces in starry space.

God made the stars; and, whether the earth was made by itself from the first, or was once part of the sun, and thrown off from it like a ring, God made the earth also, and shaped it, and adorned it, and filled it with trees and animals; and then looked upon his work, and it shone forth so beautifully with the light of his own perfections, that he blessed it, and, glorying in it, declared that it was very good. We know what an intense pleasure men take in looking at beautiful scenery. When we feel this pleasure, we ought to feel that we are looking at a little revelation of God, a very true one although a little one, and we ought

to think of God's complacency when he beheld the scenery of the primeval earth and rejoiced in what he saw. There was no sin then. To God's eye, earth was all the more beautiful because it was innocent, and the dwelling-place of innocence. Then sin came. Why God let it come we do not know. We shall probably know in heaven. We are certain, however, that in some way or other it was more glorious for him, and better for us, that evil should be permitted. Some people trouble themselves about this. It does not trouble me at all. Whatever God does must of course be most right. My understanding it would not make it more right; neither could I do any thing to mend matters, if I understood it ever so well. Every one should keep in his own place: it is the creature's place to believe, adore, and love.

Sin came. With sin came many fearful consequences. This beautiful earth was completely wrecked. It went on through space in the sunshine as before; but in God's sight, and in the destiny of its inhabitants, it was all changed. Jesus could no longer come in a glorious and unsuffering incarnation. Mary would have to die; and, though she was sinless, she would need to be redeemed with a single and peculiar redemption, a redemption of prevention, not of rescue. She also, the Immaculate Mother and Queen of creation, must be bought by the Precious Blood. Had it not been for Jesus, the case of earth would have been hopeless, now that sin had come. God would have let it go, as he let the angels go. It would have been all hateful and dark in his sight, as the home of the fallen spirits is. But it was not so. Earth was dimmed, but it was not darkened, disfigured, but not blackened. God saw it through the Precious Blood, as through a haze; and there it lay with a dusky glory over it, like a red sunset, up to the day of Christ. No sooner had man sinned, than the influence of the Precious Blood began to be felt. There was no adorable abruptness on the part of God, as with the angels. His very upbraiding of Adam was full of paternal gentleness. With his punishment he mingled promises. He spoke of Mary, Eve's descendant, and illumined the penance of our first parents by the prophecy of Jesus. As the poor offending earth lay then before

the sight of God, so does it lie now; only that the haze is more resplendent, since the Sacrifice on Calvary was offered. The Precious Blood covers it all over, like a sea or like an atmosphere. It lies in a beautiful crimson light forever, a light softening the very shades, beautifying the very gloom. God does not see us as we see ourselves, but in a brighter, softer light. We are fairer in his sight than we are in our own, notwithstanding his exceeding sanctity, because he sees us in the Blood of his dear Son. This is a consolation, the balm of which is not easily exhausted. We learn a lesson from it also. Our view of creation should be like God's view. We should see it, with all its countless souls, through the illuminated mist of the Precious Blood. Its spiritual scenery should be before us, every thing, everywhere, goldenly red.

This is the shape, then, which our Father's love takes to us his creatures. It is an invitation of all of us to the worship and the freedom of the Precious Blood. It is through this Blood that he communicates to us his perfections. It is in this Blood that he has laid up his blessings for us, as in a storehouse. This is true, not only of spiritual blessings, but of all blessings whatsoever. That the elements still wait upon us sinners, that things around us are so bright and beautiful, that pain has so many balms, that sorrow has so many alleviations, that the common course of daily providence is so kindly and so patient, that the weight, the frequency, and the bitterness of evils are so much lightened—is all owing to the Precious Blood. It is by this Blood that he has created over again his frustrated creation. It is out of this Blood that all graces come, whether those of Mary, or those of the angels, or those of men. It is this Blood which merits all good things for every one. The unhappy would be more unhappy, were it not for this Blood. The wicked would be more wicked, were it not for this Blood. The flames of hell would burn many times more furiously, if the shedding of this Blood had not allayed their fury. There is not a corner of God's creation, which is not more or less under the benignant control of the Precious Blood.

Our Heavenly Father, then, may well call his creatures to gather round these marvellous fountains, and adore his wisdom

and his love. Who could have dreamed of such an invention, an invention which grows more astonishing the more we penetrate its mystery? The angels wonder more than men, because they better understand it. Their superior intelligence ministers more abundant matter to their love. From the very first he invited the angels to adore it. He made their adoration a double exercise of humility—of humility toward himself, and of humility toward us their inferior fellow-creatures. It was the test to which he put their loyalty. He showed them his beloved Son, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, in his Sacred Humanity, united to a lower nature than their own, and in that lower nature crowned their King and Head, to be worshipped by them with absolute and unconditional adoration. The Son of a human mother was to be their Head, and that daughter of Eve to be herself their queen. He showed them in that Blood the source of all their graces. Each angel perhaps had thousands of beautiful graces. To many of them we on earth could give no name, if we beheld them. But they were all wonderful, all instinct with supernatural holiness and spiritual magnificence. Yet there was not a single grace in any angel which was not merited for him by the Blood of Jesus, and which had not also its type and counterpart in that Precious Blood. The Precious Blood—man's Blood—was as the dew of the whole kingdom of the angels. It would have redeemed them, had they needed to be redeemed or were allowed to be redeemed. But, as it was not so, it merited for them, and was the source of, all their grace. Well then may the angels claim to sing the song of the Lamb, to whose outpoured Human Life they also owed so much, though not because it was outpoured.

Nevertheless the Precious Blood belongs in an especial manner to men. Much more, therefore, does God invite them to come to its heavenly baths, and receive therein, not only the cleansing of their souls, but the power of a new and amazing life. Every doctrine in theology is a call to the Precious Blood. Every ceremony in the Church tells of it. Every sermon that is preached is an exhortation to the use of it. Every Sacrament is a communica-

tion of it. Every supernatural act is a growth of it. Every thing that is holy on the earth is either leaf, bud, blossom, or fruit of the Blood of Jesus. To its fountains, God calls the sinner, that he may be lightened of his burdens. There is no remission for him in any thing else. Only there is his lost sonship to be found. But the saints are no less called by God to these invigorating streams. It is out of the Precious Blood that men draw martyrdoms, vocations, celibacies, austerities, heroic charities, and all the magnificent graces of high sanctity. The secret nourishment of prayer is from those fountains. They purge the eye for sublime contemplations. They kindle the inward fires of self-sacrificing love. They bear a man safely, and even impetuously, over the seeming impossibilities of perseverance. It is by the Blood of Jesus that the soul becomes ever more and more radiant. It is the secret source of all mystical transformations of the soul into the likeness of its Crucified Spouse. It is the wine which "inebriates" the virgins of God. Out of it come raptures, and ecstasies; and by it the strength of faith grows even to the gift of miracles. It fills the mind with heavenly visions, and peoples the air with divine voices. All the new nature of the man, who is "renewed in Christ Jesus," comes from this Blood, whether it be his love of suffering, his delight in shame, his grace of prayer, his unworldly tastes, his strange humility, his shy concealment, his zeal for souls, his venturous audacity, or his obstinate perseverance. Sinner, saint, and common Christian, all in their own ways, require the Precious Blood each moment of their lives; and, as the manna in the mouths of the Israelites had the savor which each man wished it to have, so is it with the sweetness, the variety, and the fitness of the graces of the Precious Blood.

All men remember their past lives by certain dates or epochs. Some men date by sorrows, some by joys, and some by moral changes or intellectual revolutions. Some divide their lives according to the different localities which they have inhabited, and some by the successive occupations in which they have been engaged. The lives of some are mapped out by illnesses, while the tranquillity of an equable prosperity can only distinguish itself

by the lapse of years and the eras of boyhood, youth, and age. But the real dates in a man's life are the days and hours in which it came to him to have some new idea of God. To all men perhaps, but certainly to the thoughtful and the good, all life is a continual growing revelation of God. We may know no more theology this year than we did last year, but we undoubtedly know many fresh things about God. Time itself discloses him. The operations of grace illuminate him. Old truths grow: obscure truths brighten. New truths are incessantly dawning. But a new idea of God is like a new birth. What a spiritual revolution it was in the soul of St. Peter, when the Eternal Father, intensely loving that eager, ardent follower of his Son, one day secretly revealed to him the divinity of his beloved Master! It matters not whether it were in a dream by night, or in an audible voice at prayer, or in the last noiseless step of a long-pondered train of thought. Whenever and however it came, it was a divine revelation out of which flowed that new life of his, which is the strength of the Church to this day. So in its measure and degree is every new idea of God to every one of us. The Precious Blood brings us many such ideas. One of them is the fresh picture which it presents to us of his intense yearning love of souls. If we were to form our idea of God from theology, it would be full of grandeur. We should have a perception of him as vivid as it would be sublime. But if, not hitherto having known the Bible, we were to turn to the Old Testament, and see God loving, favoring, magnifying, his own historic people, and hear him passionately pleading for their love, he would seem like a new God to us, because we should receive such a new idea of him. Indeed, it would be such an idea of him as would require both time and management before it would harmonize with the idea of him implanted in us by theology. Even our own sinfulness gives us in one sense a broader idea of God than innocence could have given. So, if we think of the almost piteous entreaties with which he invites all the wide heathen world to the Precious Blood, whether by the voice of his Church, or by the bleeding feet and wasting lives of his missionaries, or by secret pleadings down in each heathen heart,

grace-solicited at every hour, we get a new idea of God, and a more complete conviction that his invitation of his creatures to the Precious Blood is indeed the genuine expression of his creative love.

There is no narrowness in divine things. There is no narrowness in the Precious Blood. It is a divine invention which partakes of the universality and immensity of God. The tribes that inhabit the different lands of the earth are distinguished by different characteristics. One nation differs so much from another, as to be often unable to judge of the moral character of the other's actions. What, for instance, would be pride in the inhabitant of one country would only be patriotism in the inhabitant of another; or what would be falsehood in one country is only the characteristic way of putting things in another. It is not that the immutable principles of morality can be changed by national character or by climate; but that outward actions signify such different inward habits in various countries, that a foreigner is no judge of them. Thus a foreign history of any people is for the most part little better than a hypothesis, and is not unfrequently a misapprehension from first to last. But the Precious Blood is meant for all nations. As all stand in equal need of it, so all find it just what they want. It is to each people the grace which shall correct that particular form of human corruption which is prominent in their natural character. The Oriental and the Western must both come to its healing streams; and in it all national distinctions are done away. In that laver of Salvation there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond, or free: all are one in the redeeming Blood of Jesus.

As it is with the countries of the world, so is it with the ages of the world. Each age has its own distinctive spirit. It has its own proper virtues, and its own proper vices. It has its own sciences, inventions, literature, policy, and development. Each age thinks itself peculiar, which it is; and imagines it is better than other ages, which it is not. It is probably neither better nor worse. In substantial matters the ages are pretty much on a level with each other. But each has its own way, and requires to be dealt with in

that way. This is the reason why the Church seems to act differently in different ages. There is a sense in which the Church goes along with the world. It is the same sense in which the shepherd leaves the sheep which have not strayed, and goes off in search of the one that has strayed. Each age is a stray sheep from God; and the Church has to seek it and fetch it back to him, so far as it is allowed to do so. We must not make light of the differences of the ages. Each age needs persuading in a manner of its own. It finds its own difficulties in religion. It has its own peculiar temptations and follies. God's work is never done in any one age. It has to be begun again in every age. Old controversies become useless, because they cease to be convincing. Old methods are found unsuitable, because things have changed. It is on this account that theology puts on new aspects, that religious orders first succeed and then fail, that devotion has fashions and vicissitudes, that art and ritual undergo changes, that discipline is modified, and that the Church puts herself in different relations to the governments of the world. But the Precious Blood adapts itself with changeful uniformity to every age. It is always old and always new. It is the one salvation. It is coextensive with any civilization. No science innovates upon it. The world never exhausts its abundance or outgrows its necessity.

But why should we heap together these generalities? Are they any thing more than so much pious rhetoric? Let us draw nearer to the mystery and see. What strikes us at the first thought of the Precious Blood? It is that we have to worship it with the highest worship. It is not a relic at which we should look with wonder and love, and which we should kiss with reverence, as having once been a temple of the Holy Ghost, and an instrument chosen by God for the working of miracles, or as flesh and bone penetrated with that celestial virtue of the Blessed Sacrament which will raise it up at the last day in a glorious resurrection. It is something unspeakably more than this. We should have to adore it with the highest adoration. In some local heaven or other, in some part of space far off or near, God at this hour is unveiling his blissful majesty before the angels and the saints. It is in a local

court of inconceivable magnificence. The Human Body and Soul of Jesus are there, and are its light and glory, the surpassing sun of that heavenly Jerusalem. Mary, his Mother, is throned there like a lovely moon in the mid-glory of the sunset, beautified rather than extinguished by the effulgence round her. Millions of lordly angels are abasing their vast grandeur before the ecstatic terror of that unclothed Vision of the Eternal. Thrills of entrancing fear run through the crowds of glorified saints who throng the spaces of that marvellous shrine. Mary herself upon her throne is shaken by an ecstasy of fear before the mightiness of God, even as a reed is shaken by the wind. The Sacred Heart of Jesus beats with rapturous awe, and is glorified by the very blessedness of its abjection, before the immensity of those Divine Fires, burning visibly in their overwhelming splendors. If we could enter there as we are now, we should surely die. We are not strengthened yet to bear the depth of that prostrate humiliation, which is needed there, and which is the inseparable joy of heaven. Our lives would be shattered by the throbs of awe which must beat like vehement pulses in our souls. But we know the limits of our nature. We know, at least in theory, the abjection which befits the creature in the immediate presence of its Creator. We can conceive the highest adoration of a sinless immortal soul as a worship which it could not pay to any creature, however exalted, however near to God. We can picture ourselves to ourselves, prostrate on the clouds of heaven, blinded with excess of light, every faculty of the mind jubilantly amazed by the immensity of the Divine Perfections, every affection of the heart drowned in some forever new abyss of the unfathomable sweetness of God. We know that we should lie in sacred fear and glad astonishment before the throne of Mary, if we saw it gleaming in its royalty. Yet we know also that this deep reverence would be something of quite a different kind from our abjection before the tremendous majesty of God. But, if we saw one drop of the Precious Blood, hanging like the least pearl of dew upon a blade of grass on Calvary, or as a dull disfigured splash in the dust of the gateway of Jerusalem, we

should have to adore it with the selfsame adoration as the uncovered splendors of the Eternal.

It is no use repeating this a thousand times; yet we should have to repeat it a thousand thousand times, for years and years, before we should get the vastness of this piercing truth into our souls. We should worship one drop of the Precious Blood with the same worship as that wherewith we worship God. Let us kneel down, and hide our faces before God, and say nothing, but let the immensity of this faith sink down into our souls.

If the Easter Resurrection left any red stains upon the stones, or roots, or earth of Gethsemane, they are no longer to be found beneath the luxuriant vegetation of the Franciscan garden there. Neither indeed if they had been left, when Easter passed, could we have worshipped them with divine worship; for they had already ceased to be the Precious Blood. Whatever Jesus did not reunite to himself in the Resurrection remained disunited from the Person of the Word forever, and therefore, however venerable, had no claim to adoration. But, had we been in Jerusalem on the Friday and the Saturday, we should have found objects, or rather the multiplied presence of an object, of dreadest worship everywhere. The pavement of the streets, the accoutrements of the Roman legionaries, the floors of their barracks, the steps of Pilate's judgment-hall, the pillar of the scourging, the ascent of Calvary, the wood of the Cross, many shoes and sandals of the multitude, many garments either worn or in the clothes-presses, ropes, tools, scourges, and many other things, were stained with Precious Blood; and everywhere the angels were adoring it. Had we been there, and had been wise with the holy wisdom of our present faith, we must have adored it also. But what a picture of the world it gives us! What an awful taking of a place in his own creation on the part of the Incomprehensible Creator! What a view of God it gives us! What an idea of sin! What a disclosure of the magnificence of our salvation! The Blood of God, the human Blood of the Uncreated, the Blood of the Unbeginning drawn three-and-thirty years ago from the veins of a Jewish maiden, and she, the unproclaimed queen of creation, hidden in that very city

in the depths of an immeasurable sorrow! Millions of angels intently adoring down upon the low-lying surface of the ground, as if heaven were there, below rather than above, as indeed it was, and at each spot adoring with such singular concentration, as if the Divine Life had been broken up, and there were many Gods instead of One! Meanwhile men, the very part of creation which this Precious Blood most specially concerned, were passing through the streets, and over the ruddy spots, treading on adorable things and yet never heeding, with angels beneath their sandals and yet never knowing it, compassed thickly round with mysteries the sudden revelation of which would have struck them dead, and yet with the most utter, unsuspecting ignorance. It is hard to bring such a state of things home to ourselves; and yet it is but a type to us of what we are all of us always doing with the invisible presence of God among ourselves. God is within us and without us, above, below, and around us. Wheresoever we set our feet, God is there, even if we be going to do evil. If we reach forth our hands, God is in our hand; he is in the air through which our hand passes; and where our hand touches, there is God also. He is there in three different ways, by his essence, by his presence, and by his power; and in each of those three ways his presence is more real than the hardness of the rocks, or the wetness of water, or the firmness of the earth. Yet we go our ways as we please, sinning, boasting, and committing follies, not simply in a consecrated sanctuary, but in the living God. This mystery was made manifest, by the most wonderful of revelations, in the Precious Blood, when it was scattered about Jerusalem.

But we need not go to Jerusalem, we need not have lived eighteen hundred years ago, to find the Precious Blood and worship it. Here is part of that awfulness of our holy faith, which makes us so thrill with love that it is sometimes as if we could not bear the fire which is burning in our hearts. We actually worship it every day in the chalice at Mass. When the chalice is uplifted over the altar, the Blood of Jesus is there, whole and entire, glorified and full of the pulses of his true human life. The Blood that once lay in the cave at Olivet, that curdled in the thongs and

knots of the scourges, that matted his hair and soaked his garments, that stained the crown of thorns and bedewed the Cross, the Blood that he drank himself in his own communion on the Thursday night, the Blood that lay all Friday night in seemingly careless prodigality upon the pavement of the treacherous city—that same Blood is living in the chalice, united to the Person of the Eternal Word, to be worshipped with the uttermost prostration of our bodies and our souls. When the beams of the morning sun come in at the windows of the church, and fall for a moment into the uncovered chalice, and glance there as if among precious stones with a restless, timid gleaming, and the priest sees it, and the light seems to vibrate into his own heart, quickening his faith and love, it is the Blood of God which is there, the very living Blood whose first fountains were in the Immaculate Heart of Mary. When the Blessed Sacrament is laid upon your tongue—that moment and that act which the great angels of God look down upon with such surpassing awe—the Blood of Jesus is throbbing there in all its abounding life of glory. It sheathes in the sacramental mystery that exceeding radiance which is lighting all heaven at that moment with a magnificence of splendor which exceeds the glowing of a million suns. You do not feel the strong pulses of his immortal life. If you did, you could hardly live yourself. Sacred terror would undo your life. But in that adorable Host is the whole of the Precious Blood, the Blood of Gethsemane, Jerusalem, and Calvary, the Blood of the Passion, of the Resurrection, and of the Ascension, the Blood shed and reassumed. As Mary bore that Precious Blood within herself of old, so do you bear it now. It is in his Heart and veins, within the temple of his Body, as it was when he lay those nine months in her ever-blessed womb. We believe all this; nay, we so believe it that we know it rather than believe it; and yet our love is so faint and fitful. Our very fires are frost in comparison with such a faith as this.

The whole of the Precious Blood is in the Chalice and in the Host. It is not part: it is the whole. We may well tremble to think what sanctuaries we are when the Blessed Sacrament is within us.

Let us think again of the innumerable stars. Let us multiply their actual millions by millions of imaginary millions more. Let us suppose them all to be densely inhabited for countless ages by races of fallen beings. We have no figures to show the numbers of the individual souls, still less to represent the multiplied acts of sin of all those single souls or spirits. But we know this, that one drop of the thousands of drops of the Precious Blood in the glorified Body of Jesus would have been more than sufficient to cleanse all those countless fallen creations, and to absolve every separate sinner from every one of his multitudinous sins. Nay, that one drop would have given out all those worlds of redeeming grace, and yet no tittle of its treasures would be spent. The worth of one drop of the Precious Blood is simply infinite; consequently, no imaginary arithmetic of possible creations will convey any adequate idea of its overwhelming magnificence. Alas! the very copiousness of our redemption makes our view of it less clear. The very crowding of God's love causes it to have something indistinguishable about it. Who does not see that it will take us an eternity to learn Jesus, or rather that we shall never learn him, but that the endless work of learning him will be the gladness of our eternity?

But this is not all the mystery. It was no necessity which drove God to the redemption of the world by the Precious Blood. He might have redeemed it in unnumbered other ways. There is no limit to his power, no exhaustion of his wisdom. He might have reconciled the forgiveness of sin with his stainless sanctity by many inventions of which neither we nor the angels can so much as dream. There are vastnesses in him who is incomprehensible, of the existence of which we have no suspicion. He could have saved us without Jesus, according to the absoluteness of his power. All salvation must be dear: yet who can dream of a salvation which should seem at once so worthy of God and so endearing to man as our present salvation through Jesus Christ? Even then our dearest Lord need not have shed his Blood. There was no compulsion in the Blood-shedding. One tear of his, one momentary sigh, one uplifted look to his Father's throne, would have been

sufficient, if the Three Divine Persons had so pleased. The shedding of his Blood was part of the freedom of his love. It was, in some mysterious reality, the way of redemption most worthy of his blessed majesty, and also the way most likely to provoke the love of men. How often has God taken the ways of our hearts as the measure of his own ways! How often does he let his glory and our love seem to be different things, and then leave himself and go after us!

The Precious Blood is invisible. Yet nothing in creation is half so potent. It is everywhere, practically everywhere, although it is not omnipresent. It becomes visible in the fruits of grace. It will become more visible in the splendors of glory. But it will itself be visible in heaven in our Lord's glorified Body as in crystalline vases of incomparable refulgence. It belongs to him, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, although its work is the work of the whole Trinity. In its efficacy and operation it is the most complete and most wonderful of all revelations of the Divine Perfections. The power, the wisdom, the goodness, the justice, the sanctity, of God, are most pre-eminently illustrated by the working of this Precious Blood.

These are the first thoughts which strike us about the Precious Blood. They are the ordinary considerations which our faith has made familiar to us. We shall have to return to them again in a different connection; and upon some of them we must enlarge in another place. A minuter acquaintance with Christian doctrine teaches us much more. Some little of this much must be introduced here for the sake of clearness and in order that we may better understand what has to follow.

The Precious Blood was assumed directly to our Blessed Lord's Divine Person from his Immaculate Mother. It was not taken merely to his Body, so that his Body was directly assumed to the Person of the Word, and his Blood only indirectly or mediately as part of his Body. The Blood, which was the predetermined price of our redemption, rested directly and immediately on the Divine Person, and thus entered into the very highest and most unspeakable degree of the Hypostatic Union—if we may speak of

degrees in such an adorably simple mystery. It was not merely a concomitant of the Flesh, an inseparable accident of the Body. The Blood itself, as Blood, was assumed directly by the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. It came also from Mary's blood. Mary's blood was the material out of which the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Most Holy Trinity, the artificer of the Sacred Humanity, fashioned the Blood of Jesus. Here we see how needful to the joy and gladness of our devotion is the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Who could bear to think that the matter of the Precious Blood had ever been itself corrupted with the taint of sin, that it had once been part of the devil's kingdom, that what was to supply the free price of our redemption was once enslaved to God's darkest, foulest enemy? Is it not indeed an endless daily jubilee to us, that the Church has laid upon us as an article of our faith that sweet truth which the instincts of our devotion had so long made a real part of our belief?

Moreover, there is some portion of the Precious Blood which once was Mary's own blood, and which remains still in our Blessed Lord, incredibly exalted by its union with his Divine Person, yet still the same. This portion of himself, it is piously believed, has not been allowed to undergo the usual changes of human substance. At this moment in heaven he retains something which once was his Mother's, and which is possibly visible, as such, to the saints and angels. He vouchsafed at Mass to show to St. Ignatius the very part of the Host which had once belonged to the substance of Mary. It may have a distinct and singular beauty in heaven, where by his compassion it may one day be our blessed lot to see it and adore it. But, with the exception of this portion of it, the Precious Blood was a growing thing. It increased daily, as he increased in size and age. It was nourished from his Mother's breast. It was fed from the earthly food which he condescended to take. During his three-and-thirty years it received thousands of increments and augmentations. But each one of those augmentations was assumed directly to his Divine Person. It was not merely diluted by that which had existed before. It did not share in the Hypostatic Union in any lower degree. The last

drop of Blood made in him by the laws of human life, perhaps while he was hanging on the Cross, was equally exalted, equally divine, equally adorable, with the first priceless drops which he drew from his Blessed Mother.

Our dearest Lord was full and true man. He was flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone; and his incomparable Soul, although it was incomparable, was simply and veritably a human soul. Every thing in his human substance was so exalted by its union with his Divine Person as to be adorable. Yet it was only his Blood which was to redeem the world; and it was only his Blood *as shed* which was to do so, and it was only his Blood as shed *in death* which could be the price of our redemption. The Blood shed at the Circumcision was adorable. The Blood shed in Gethsemane was adorable. If it be true, as some contemplatives have seen in vision, that he sweated Blood at various times in his Infancy because of his sight of sin and of his Father's anger, that Blood also was adorable. But it was the Blood shed upon the Cross, or at least the Blood shed in the process of dying, which was the ransom of our sins. Throughout the whole of the triduo of the Passion, all his Blood, wherever it had been shed and wherever it was sprinkled, remained assumed to his Divinity, in union with his Divine Person, just as his soulless Body did, and therefore was to be worshipped with divine worship, with the same adoration as the living and eternal God. At the Resurrection, when his Precious Blood had been collected by the ministry of the angels, and he united it once more to his Body as he rose, some of it remained unassumed. This perhaps was for the consolation of his Mother, or for the enriching of the Church with the most inestimable of relics. This was the case with the Blood on the veil of Veronica, on the holy Winding-Sheet, on some portions of the Cross, and on the Thorns and Nails. But this Blood, which was not reassumed at the Resurrection, instantly lost its union with his Divine Person, ceased to be what is strictly called the Precious Blood, lost its right to absolute adoration, and became only an intensely holy relic, to be venerated with a very high worship, but not to be worshipped as divine or adored as the

Blood of God. It was no longer part of himself. But the Blood in the chalice is the Blood of the living Jesus in heaven. It is the Blood shed in the Passion, reassumed at the Resurrection, borne up to heaven in the Ascension, placed at the Right Hand of the Father there in its consummate glory and beautified immortality. Thus it is the very Blood of God; and it is the whole of it, containing that portion which he had originally assumed from Mary.

Miraculous Blood is not the Precious Blood. Neither is it like the unassumed Blood of the Passion. For that had once been Precious Blood, and had only ceased to be so through the special will of our Lord, whereby he willed not to reassume it at the Resurrection. The Host has miraculously bled at Mass, to reassure men's faith or to cause a reformation in their lives. It has bled in the hands of Jews and heretics, as if resenting sacrilege, and striking awe into their souls, like the deep fear which fell upon Jerusalem at the Passion. Crucifixes have sweated Blood to convert sinners, or to portend some public calamities, or to show forth symbolically the ceaseless sympathy of our Blessed Lord with his suffering Church. But this is not Precious Blood, nor has it ever been Precious Blood. It has never lived in our Lord. It is greatly to be venerated, inasmuch as it is a miraculous production of God; and it appeals especially to the reverence of the faithful, because of its being appointed to represent in figure the Precious Blood. If the angel, who passed at midnight over Egypt to slay the first-born, revered the blood of the Paschal lamb sprinkled on the door-posts of the Israelites, simply because it was a type of the Blood of Jesus, much more should we reverence the miraculous Blood which issues from the Host or from the Crucifix, as a higher and a holier thing than the symbolic blood of animals. Nevertheless it is not Precious Blood, nor is it to be adored with divine worship.

Perhaps this is enough to say of the doctrine of the Precious Blood. There are many other interesting questions connected with it. But they are hard to understand; and, although no minutest detail of scholastic theology is other than fresh fuel to our love of God, yet it would not suit either the brevity or the plain-

ness of this Treatise to enter upon them here. How shall we ever raise our love up to the height of the doctrine which we have put forth already? The Precious Blood is God's daily gift, nay, rather we might call it his incessant gift to us. For, if grace is coming to us incessantly, save when we sleep, it comes to us in view of the Precious Blood, and because of it. But who can estimate the wonderfulness of such a gift? It is the Blood of God. It is not the giving to us of new hearts, or of immensely increased powers, or of the ability to work miracles and raise the dead. It is not the bestowing upon us of angelic natures. It is something of far greater price than all this would be. It is the Blood of God. It is the created life of the Uncreated. It is a human fountain opened as it were in the very centre of the Divine Nature. It is a finite thing, with a known origin and an ascertained date, of a price as infinite as the Divine Person who has assumed it. To us creatures the adorable majesty of the Undivided Trinity is an inexhaustible treasure-house of gifts. They are poured out upon us in the most lavish prodigality, and with the most affecting display of love. They are beautiful beyond compare; and they are endlessly diversified, yet endlessly adapted to the singularities of each heart and soul. Yet what gift do the Divine Persons give us, which has more of their own sweetness in it, than the Precious Blood? It has in it that yearning and tenderness which belong to the power of the Father, that magnificent prodigality which marks the wisdom of the Son, and that refreshing fire which characterizes the love of the Holy Ghost.

It is also a revelation to us of the character of God. Nothing on earth tells us so much of him, or tells it so plainly and so endearingly. How adorable must be the exactness of his justice, how unattainable the standard of his sanctity, how absorbing the blissful gulfs of his uncreated purity, if the Precious Blood is to be the sole fitting ransom for the sins of men, the one divinely-chosen satisfaction to his outraged Majesty! Yet what a strange wisdom in such an astonishing invention, what an unintelligible condescension, what a mysterious fondness of creative love! The more we meditate upon the Precious Blood, the more strange does it appear as a device of infinite love. While we are really getting

to understand it more, our understanding of it appears to grow less. When we see a divine work at a distance, its dimensions do not seem so colossal as we find them to be in reality when we come nearer. The Precious Blood is such a wonderful revelation of God that it partakes in a measure of his incomprehensibility. But it is also a marvellous revelation of the enormity of sin. Next to a practical knowledge of God, there is nothing which it more concerns us to know and to realize than the exceeding sinfulness of sin. The deeper that knowledge is, the higher will be the fabric of our holiness. Hence a true understanding of the overwhelming guilt and shame of sin is one of God's greatest gifts. But in reality this revelation of the sinfulness of sin is only another kind of revelation of God. It is by the height of his perfections that we measure the depths of sin. Its opposition to his unspeakable holiness, the amount of its outrage against his glorious justice, and the intensity of his hatred of it, are manifested by the infinity of the sacrifice which he has required. If we try to picture to ourselves what we should have thought of God and sin if Jesus had not shed his Blood, we shall see what a fountain of heavenly science, what an effulgence of supernatural revelation, the Precious Blood has been to us.

No doubt it was partly this power of revelation which made our dearest Lord so impatient to shed his Blood. He longed to make his Father known, and so to increase his Father's glory. He knew that we must know God in order to love him, and then that our love of him would in its turn increase our knowledge of him. He yearned also with an unutterable love of us; and this also entered into his Heart as another reason for his affectionate impatience. At all events, he has been pleased to reveal himself to us as impatient to shed his Blood. If habits of meditation and a study of the Gospels have transferred to our souls a true portrait of Jesus as he was on earth, this impatience will seem a very striking mystery. There was ordinarily about our Blessed Lord an atmosphere of quite unearthly calmness. His human will seemed almost without human activity. It lay still in the lap of the will of God. It was revealed to Mary of Agreda that he never exercised

choice, except in the choosing of suffering. This one disclosure is enough to give us a complete picture of his inward life. Yet there was an eagerness, a semblance of precipitation, a stimulating desire for the shedding of his Blood, which stand alone and apart in the narrative of his Thirty-three Years. With desire had he desired to communicate with his chosen few in the Blessed Sacrifice of the Mass, wherein his Blood is mystically shed. He shed it in that awful, miraculous reality before he shed it upon Calvary, as if he could not brook the slowness of human cruelty, which did not lay hands upon him so swiftly as his love desired. He was straitened in himself by his impatience for his baptism of Blood; and he bedewed the ground at Gethsemane with those priceless drops, as if he could not even wait one night for the violence of Calvary. It seemed as if the relief and satisfaction, which it was to him to shed his Blood, were almost an alleviation of the bitterness of his Passion. This impatience is in itself a revelation to us of the yearnings of his Sacred Heart.

The prodigality, also, with which he shed his Blood, stands alone and apart in his life. He was sparing of his words. He spake seldom, and he spake briefly. The shortness of his Ministry is almost a difficulty to our minds. It was the instinct of his holiness to hide itself. This was one of the communications of his Divine Nature to his Human. Even his miracles were comparatively few; and he said that his saints after him should work greater miracles than his. Yet in the shedding of his Blood he was spendthrift, prodigal, wasteful. As his impatience to shed it represents to us the adorable impetuosity of the Most Holy Trinity to communicate himself to his creatures, so his prodigality in shedding it shadows forth the exuberant magnificence and liberality of God. During the triduo of his Passion he shed it in all manner of places and in all manner of ways; and he continued to shed it even after he was dead, as if he could not rest until the last drop had been poured out for the creatures whom he so incomprehensibly loved. Yet, while he thus carelessly, or rather purposely, parted with it, how he must have loved his Precious Blood! What loves are there on earth to be compared with the

love of his Divine Nature for his Human Nature, or the love of his ever-blessed Soul for his Body? Moreover, he must have loved his Blood with a peculiar love, because it was the specially appointed ransom of the world. His love of his dearest Mother is the only love which approaches to his love of the Precious Blood; and, rightly considered, is not one love enclosed within the other?

He has continued the same prodigality of his Blood in the Church to this day. He foresaw then that he should do so; and it was part of his love of that fountain of our redemption, that he beheld with exquisite delight its ceaseless and abundant flowing through the ages which were yet to come. There is something almost indiscriminate in the generosity of the Precious Blood. It is poured in oceans over the world, bathing more souls than it seems to have been meant for, only that in truth it was meant for all. It appears not to regard the probabilities of its being used, or appreciated, or welcomed. It goes in floods through the seven mighty channels of the Sacraments. It breaks their bounds, as if they could not contain the impetuosity of its torrents. It lies like a superincumbent ocean of sanctifying grace over the Church. It runs over in profuse excess, and irrigates even the deserts which lie outside the Church. It goes to sinners as well as saints. Nay, it even looks as if it had a propension and attraction to sinners more than to other men. It is falling forever like a copious fiery rain upon the lukewarm. It rests on the souls of hardened apostates, as if it hoped to sink in in time. Its miraculous action in the Church is literally incessant. In the Sacraments, in separate graces, in hourly conversions, in multiplied death-beds, in releases from purgatory every moment, in countless augmentations of grace in countless souls, in far-off indistinguishable preludes and drawings toward the faith, this most dear Blood of Jesus is the manifold life of the world. Every pulse which beats in it is an intense jubilee to him. It is forever setting him on fire with fresh love of us his creatures. It is forever filling him with a new and incredible gladness, which we cannot think of without amazement and adoration. Oh that he would give us one spark of that immense love of his Precious Blood which he himself is feeling so blissfully this hour in heaven!

Such is the mystery of the Precious Blood. It makes the poor fallen earth more beautiful than the Paradise of old. Its streams are winding their way everywhere all over the earth. The rivers of Eden are not to be compared to them for fruitfulness. Poets have loved the music of the mountain stream, as it tinkled down the hills amidst the stones or murmured under leafy shades. Scripture speaks of the Voice of God as the voice of many waters. So is it with the Precious Blood. It has a voice which God hears, speaking better things than the blood of Abel, more than restoring to him again the lost music of his primeval creation. In our ears also does it murmur sweetly, evermore and evermore, in sorrows, in absolutions, in communions, in sermons, and in all holy joys. It will never leave us now. For at last, when it has led us to the brink of heaven, and when, in the boundless far-flashing magnificence, the steadfast splendors and unfathomable depths of the Uncreated joy of God lie out before us, ocean-like and infinite, that Blood will still flow around us, and sing to us beyond angelic skill, with a voice like that of Jesus, which when once heard is never to be forgotten, that word of him whose Heart's Blood it is, Well done, thou good and faithful servant! enter thou into the joy of thy Lord! What is the life in heaven, but an everlasting Te Deum before the Face of God? But there also, as now in our Te Deum upon earth, we shall have a special joy, a special moving of our love, when we call ourselves "redeemed with Precious Blood"; and, as we do now in church, so there in the innermost courts of our Father's House, we shall only say the words upon our knees, with a separate gladness, and a separate depth of adoration.