

THE BOOK OF
PRAYER
— AND —
MEDITATION

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MEDITATION

VENERABLE LOUIS
of GRANADA, OP

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THE TRANSLITERATOR'S NOTE TO THE READER



THIS transliteration of the Venerable's most profound work is intended to provide the reader with the precise text of the original 1584 translation, simply transliterated into a form more readable to us, in order to maintain the exact *prosa oratio* with which the Venerable wrote. To this end, it was discerned necessary to leave intact the exact wording, prose, and even punctuation with which the Venerable and the original translator wrote. Some words remain herein which have fallen from use in our modern tongue, or whose meanings have changed through the centuries. These words must be discovered and discerned by the reader in order to attain to the full meaning of these meditations. I recommend the help of the Blessed Mother, through the intercession of Venerable Louis of Granada, Venerable Fulton Sheen, Venerable Matt Talbot, Saint Padre Pio, and your Guardian Angel, when seeking to discern these words.

It is also noteworthy that the Venerable recommends those new unto the service of Almighty God begin with the night meditations first, before proceeding to the morning meditations. Therefore, he refers to the second half of this book as the first part. I would also note that the advices and writings of the Venerable regarding prayer, and the Passion, which are found herein, are most necessary for the proper exercise of these meditations.

Many Saints spoke highly of Venerable Louis of Granada's writings, including St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louise de Marillac, St. Francis de Sales, St. Charles Borromeo, and St. Teresa of Avila. St. Rose of Lima said this was her favorite book and while protecting herself from the devil with this book, the devil became enraged and took it from her.¹¹

We must consider why the devil himself would have taken such a particular interest in this book, and why it so quickly seems to have fallen into obscurity. More importantly, we must consider why Almighty God might have allowed this book to remain (nearly) hidden through the centuries, until now.

Our given time runs short now. Edify your soul. Steel your soul with these daily meditations. Steel your soul against the world, the flesh, and the devils. Steel your soul now, against the False Prophet, and the coming of Antichrist. Time runneth short.

Sit nomen Domini † benedictum in saecula.

Esto Vir. Esto Sanctus.

Be here now.

S.M.M.

"It is granted to few to recognize the True Church amid the darkness of so many schisms and heresies. And to fewer still so to love the Truth which they have seen as to fly to its embrace."

-St. Robert Bellarmine

"Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you."

-Our Blessed Lord (Matt. 7.7.)

Transliteration completed at Hulbert, by Sean McAlister.

Anno Domini. M. M. XXIII.

¹ Found in the introduction of "A Sinner's Guide" by Venerable Louis of Granada. Introduction taken largely from the work of Fr. Alvaro Huerga, O.P., Regent of Studies, Convent of the Holy Cross, Granada, Spain.

*For the Glory of God and the Triumph of the
Immaculate Heart of Mary.*

THE TRANSLATOR'S DEDICATORY EPISTLE¹



THE holy scriptures affirm in divers places, that the nearer we approach towards the coming of the Antichrist, and the end of the world, the more perilous will the times be for all Christians.² And the peril hereof ariseth chiefly of the great envy and malice of Satan, who fearing the end of the world, knowing that then his tyrannous kingdom therein will have an end also therewith, extendeth the uttermost of his rage against all faithful Christians, and assaulteth them daily more and more with divers wily temptations and terrible persecutions, to procure them thereby to follow his most wicked rebellious example: that is, to break God's holy commandments, to contemn his divine ordinances, to neglect his service, and honor, and by pride and rebellion to lose the image of God, and embrace the image of Satan, and so to be utterly unapt to attain unto those everlasting heavenly mansions of felicity, and glory, for which man was created.

Wherefore to the intent that all Christians might be more circumspect, and strengthened, to resist faithfully against all Satan's

¹ To the right honorable, and worshipful, of the four principal houses of Couerte in London, professing the study of the Common Laws of our Realm, Richard Hopkins wishethe due consideration of the holy Mysteries of the Christian Religion.

² See Dan. 9:11–12; Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; 2 Thess. 2; 1 Tim. 4; 1 Tim. 4; 2 Tim. 3; 2 Ptr. 2–3; Jude 18; Apoc. 12:12–13.

wily deceitful temptations in this our dangerous age, approaching so near towards the coming of Antichrist, and the end of the world (as by many conjectural signs it seemeth), a holy Angel hath forewarned us hereof very precisely in the revelations of St. John, thundering out these words with a great voice: *Woe be to the land, and sea, because the Devil is descended unto you, having a great rage, for that he knoweth he hath but a short time.*³ And this great rage of his is the more to be feared in this our corrupt age, for that we read also in Saint John's revelations, that the Devil shall be let loose towards the end of the world for a final time.⁴ In other ages and times of our holy Christian forefathers, the devils exceeding great malice and mighty power hath been much restrained, and bound, through the great virtue of the Cross, and Passion of our Savior Jesus Christ, communicated then very plentifully unto the Christian people generally by their devout frequenting of the holy Sacraments of the Catholic Church, (which be holy vessels of grace) whereby our Christian forefathers have been greatly strengthened to resist faithfully against the most horrible temptations of Schism, Heresy, Infidelity, and Atheism, and to live generally very holy and austere Christian lives in the fear and service of almighty God, and in due reverent obedience to the Catholic Church. But now whereas in this our ungracious age such a number of horrible Sects, and Heresies, and such a general corruption with pride, disobedience, lying, detraction, gluttony, incontinence, infidelity, Atheism, and all kind of dissolute wickedness do abound and reign more and more in all parts of Christendom, woe be therefore to the Land, and sea (as the holy Angel hath forewarned us) because the Devil is now descended, and let loose towards the end of the world for a final time, having a great rage, for that he Knoweth he hath but a short time to continue his tyrannous kingdom in this world.

And the very cause of this so extraordinary letting loose of the devil now more and more towards the coming of Antichrist in the end of the world, Saint Paul seemeth to explain in this sense: that

³ Apoc. 12:12.

⁴ See Apoc. 20:3.

for so much as the wicked will not receive the true doctrine of the Catholic Church with charity, humility, obedience, and thankfulness, to the end they may be saved, therefore Almighty God letteth loose the devil now among them, by permitting him to sow in their proud inconstant willful minds many erroneous opinions, and Heresies, that they may believe in lying.⁵

And certainly, if we will advisedly consider the wily proceedings of the devil in sowing so manifold Sects and Heresies in this ungracious age, and the final end whereunto he directeth them, we may evidently perceive, that it is to cause all Christians now towards the coming of Antichrist to be first dissolute in their lives, and after doubtful in their faith, and then to contemn all the holy Sacraments, and other Mysteries of the Christian Religion, and afterwards having by degrees removed away out of their Churches all holy memories of our Savior Christ, and of his blessed Mother, Apostles, Martyrs, and other of his glorious Saints, and also out of their minds all fear of God, and of his dreadful judgements, then they be easily induced by him shortly after to become hard hearted, and unsensible to conceive any spiritual things, and also at the last to become Atheists, without any conscience, Religion, or belief that there is a God. And so Antichrist finding his way so open and ready prepared for him, may then come freely when he will, and cause himself to be received as a Messiah, and adored as God, finding the Christian people generally without any devotion and zeal to the service and honor of our Savior Jesus Christ, and without any belief that there is a God.

Now among all the wily deceitful devises of Satan for overthrowing of the Christian Religion, and so to prepare the way for Antichrist's coming, there is none (in my simple judgement) of greater force, and consequence, than his so earnest endeavor to procure all Christians utterly to contemn and forget all the holy Mysteries of the Christian faith. Which if he could possibly compass (as he laboureth very earnestly therein by divers crafty means in this our corrupt age) then undoubtedly all the whole Christian Religion, and even

⁵ See 2 Thess. 2:10–11.

our Savior Christ himself, and his blessed Mother, and all his holy Apostles, and Martyrs, and other of his glorious Saints would consequently in a short time after be generally contemned, neglected, and forgotten throughout all Christian countries.

And to write here freely my mind as I think, it would seem very marvelous unto me, (if I were not fully persuaded that the devil is now more and more let loose (as Saint John in his revelations hath forewarned us he should be for a short time towards the end of the world) how the devil could prevail so farforth among Christians, as to induce a whole new late Sect of Heretics that be called Puritans (professing in gay words to be more pure, more sincere, and better professors of Christ's gospel, than any other Christians either be, or have been in any age since the Apostle's time) to write of late so unchristianly by common consent even in English printed books, against observing in the Church the most ancient yearly solemn holy Feasts of Christmass, Easter, and Pentecost, and against all special meditations at any one solemn time of the year more than at others, either of Christ's nativity, or Resurrection, or of the Coming of the Holy Ghost, or of the hour of our death: because (say they) these meditations should be used continually every day in the year, and ought not to be appointed by the governors of the Church to be used at any one special time more than at others.⁶ Whereby every godly Christian reader may easily perceive, how the devil being now let loose laboreth very busily by these counterfeit pure gospellers under a wily deceitful colure of advancing continual meditation and memory of the holy Mysteries of the Christian Religion every day in the year, to have no manner of meditation or memory of them among Christians any day at all: that so by their subtle wicked doctrine a ready open way may be prepared in all Christian men's Churches, and minds, for Antichrist's coming.

But O the wonderful providence and care of our Savior Christ to preserve a continual knowledge, memory, and reverence, of his

⁶ In the puritans reply against D. Whitgifte, 120–122, 162; in R. Brownes book of reformation.

holy Mysteries among all faithful Christians in his Catholic Church, as hath very manifestly appeared in all ages since Christ's Ascension until this our corrupt age. And surely it is a matter worthy of great and devout admiration for any good Christian to consider, how the Apostles, and the ancient holy Catholic Bishops their successors being by our Savior Christ's own promise assuredly inspired, assisted, and directed by the Holy Ghost from time to time in government of the Catholic Church in all truth,⁷ have with such divine wisdom disposed the whole year into so many several holy Festival days, as that thereby have been represented, and preached unto all Christian people in all Christian Churches throughout Christendom a continual solemn instruction, memory, and reverence of the holy Mysteries of the Christian Religion. In so much as the common Christian people by those holy Festival days alone (albeit they wanted not also divers other holy instructions therein in Confessions, and Sermons), were in all ages sufficiently instructed in the holy Mysteries of their Christian belief: I mean, they were thereby made to understand so much of them, as (having withal a due religious respect to preserve a continual humble reverence in them to the dignity of such high holy Mysteries) was fully convenient for their weak capacities, and for the comforting and strengthening of their faith, and as they were bound of necessity to know.

As for example, by the ancient institution of the holy feasts of Advent: of our savior Christ's Nativity, and Circumcision: of his Adoration by the three Kings: and of the holy solemnity of Lent, at which time the Catholic Church teacheth all Christian people to imitate so near as they can our Savior's fasting of forty days in the desert, and representeth then also with sorrowful mourning penance, and compassion, all the whole order and history of our Savior Christ's most bitter Passion, and death, for the redemption of all mankind: And afterwards the Church solemnizeth with great Joy the holy Feasts of our Savior's Resurrection from death to life: of his Ascension into heaven: and of the Coming of the Holy Ghost.

⁷ See Matt. 28:20; John 14:16; John 16:13; 1 Tim. 3:15.

And then follow also the holy Feasts of the blessed Trinity, and of the most holy Sacrament, commonly called Corpus Christi day: And the holy Feasts of the blessed Mother of our Savior: And of Saint John the Baptist his precursor: And then the holy Feasts of Saint Peter, Saint Paul, and of other of our Savior's holy Apostles, and most famous Martyrs, and Confessors: And also the holy Feasts of Saint Michael the Archangel, and of all the glorious Saints in heaven: And with all a solemn day of devout memory, and general prayers, and almsdeeds, for all faithful Christian Souls departed out of this transitory life, and as yet remaining in the fire of Purgatory, to make satisfaction there for all pains due and prescribed for their sins in the merciful just balance of the divine Majesty. All which holy Festival days being so divinely and orderly disposed into so many several parts of the year, and adorned with the holy reverent Ceremonies appointed to be used in all Christian Churches throughout all Christendom, with great solemnity and reverence upon those Holy days, have yearly from time to time in every age since the Ascension of our Savior Christ into heaven very lively and continually preached, represented, and explained unto the common simple Christian people all the holy Mysteries of the Christian Religion, which they had professed at their Baptism, and were taught in the Apostles' Creed to believe. And the reverent solemnity in every year of these holy Festival days induced them unto a continual memory, admiration, love, and reverence of those holy Mysteries, and greatly strengthened their faith in them, and caused them to have a wonderful fervent piety, devotion, and zeal towards the honor and service of Almighty God, whereby they lived very virtuous lives like the children of light, (as the holy scripture termeth them,)⁸ and died generally as holy faithful Christians in the obedience, love, and favor of his divine Majesty.

But alas these golden times be past, and ended, and the devil being let lose now more and more towards the coming of Antichrist, and the end of the world, we find by palpable experience, that since the time that such a free licentious liberty hath been permitted unto

⁸ See Luke 16:8; John 12:36; Eph. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:5.

every leud babbling Minister to rail against all the holy ancient divine ordinances, used and allowed generally so many ages in all Christian Churches, and to term them in blasphemous manner Antichristian inventions, and to preach openly in pulpits, and publish in printed books whatsoever new heretical opinions the enemy of mankind suggesteth into their fantastical heads, the faith of Christians is thereby generally become so weak, and inconstant, and in very many or most persons so wholly undermined, and utterly overthrown, and their hope is so transformed into presumption, and their charity is waxen so cold, and so little piety, love, devotion, reverence, and zeal remain in them towards the service of Almighty God, and so much Pride, gluttony, incontinence, lying, detraction, disobedience, with most horrible contention, Schism, Heresy, Infidelity, Atheism, and all kind of iniquity do generally abound more and more throughout Christendom, that we have good cause to fear, least that terrible time approacheth now very near at hand, which our Savior forewarned us in the gospel, to wit: that at his coming to judge he should hardly find faith in the earth.⁹

Wherefore we have now very great need of extraordinary spiritual help to strengthen our weak minds, to withstand so many deceitful temptations of the enemy of mankind in this so corrupt and dangerous age. And for this purpose I have translated out of the Spanish tongue divers books of a very holy and famous learned religious father, called Lewis de Granada, whose devout manner of writing hath (in my simple judgement) a singular rare grace to pierce the hard heart of a dissolute sinner, and to move and dispose his mind to the abhorring of sin, to the contempt of the world, and to the fear, love, and service of almighty God. And I understand that his books have wrought wonderful much good, not only in Spain, and Portugal, but also in Italy, France, and Germany. And I think there be few countries in Christendom but have his Spanish works translated into their tongues. And it is now about fourteen years ago, since the time that Master Doctor Harding (a man for his great virtue,

⁹ See Luke 18:8.

learning, wisdom, Zeal, and sincerity in writing against Heresies, of very godly and famous memory) persuaded me earnestly to translate some of those Spanish books into our English tongue: affirming, that more spiritual profit would undoubtedly ensue thereby to the gaining of Christian souls in our country from Schism, and Heresy, and from all sin, and iniquity, than by books that treat of controversies in Religion: which (as experience hath now plainly tried) do nothing so well dispose the common peoples minds to the fear, love, and service of almighty God, as books treating of devotion, and how to lead a virtuous life do. The due consideration whereof hath so provoked, or rather pricked me in conscience, that I have resolved to publish (God willing) in print all my translations, in case I shall perceive that such as be godly, wise, and learned, shall like of them. And first (as it were for an assay) I have here printed his devout Meditations of the principal holy Mysteries of the Christian Religion, which book I find greatly commended by divers godly learned men.

It may be, that some readers of this book being not greatly acquainted with the holy exercise of a spiritual life, will imagine that the Author dealeth to austerely in some of these meditations: as namely in his Meditation of sins: of the hour of death: of our dreadful account at the terrible day of Judgement: and of the most horrible pains of hell. And perhaps some politique wise men will say, that for so much as the common people in our country have been for the most part of our corrupt age altogether accustomed with hearing and reading of divers other contrary new erroneous doctrines, tending directly to a careless dissolute life, they be therefore now waxen so carnal and negligent of the salvation of their souls, that these Meditations be to full of threatening, and terror, for such nice and loose consciences. For answer to this objection, it is to be noted, that the Author being (as I am informed) not only a great learned and religious devout old father, but also of great wisdom, gravity, judgement, discretion, and of long experience, as well in preaching, and hearing of Confessions, as in divers governments in his religious order, and perceiving very evidently that far more Christian souls be

lost in this our corrupt age with overmuch presumptuous confidence, and security of their salvation, than with overmuch fear of losing the same, hath therefore framed his manner of writing in these meditations chiefly against the infinite number of presumptuous and careless dissolute Christians, that presume most certainly, and assuredly to be saved, and yet do live very dissolutely all their whole life time, without all care of keeping God's Commandments, and without all fear of their account at the dreadful day of judgement, notwithstanding that our Savior Christ himself who shall be then our Judge, hath by plain and express words forewarned us in the gospel of saint Matthew, that *If we will enter into the Kingdom of heaven, we must Keep his commandments*.¹⁰ which every Christian may be able to keep, being assisted, strengthened, and holpen therein with the grace of God, which is never denied to any that prayeth duly for it:¹¹ and also that we must at the day of judgement give an account of every idle word.¹²

And verily, if we peruse diligently the holy Scriptures, we shall find that not only Enoch in the law of Nature,¹³ and afterwards all the Prophets, but also Saint John Baptist, and our Savior Christ himself used the same manner of preaching that this religious godly father doth here. And they thought it to be the very best and readiest way for conversion of sinners from their sinful dissolute lives, to show plainly unto them the damnable state they live in, and to put them in mind of the severe justice of almighty God at the terrible day of judgement against all such as endeavor not to keep his commandments. And Saint Peter protesteth (as it appeareth in the Acts of the Apostles) that our Savior Christ commanded likewise him, and the rest of the Apostles, to preach and testify this point especially, that Christ is appointed to be the Judge both of the quick, and the dead.¹⁴ And therefore in another place he requireth all Christians to

¹⁰ See Matt. 19:17.

¹¹ See 1 Cor. 3:9; 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:9; Phil. 2:13.

¹² See Matt. 12:36; 2 Cor. 5:10.

¹³ See Jude 14–15.

¹⁴ See Acts 10:42.

live in fear during the time of their conversation upon the earth.¹⁵ And Saint Paul maketh also the like solemn protestation of the terrible day of judgement, and what a straight account every one of us must make at that dreadful time, and exhorted the Corinthians with the knowledge and consideration thereof to persuade all men to live in the fear of God.¹⁶ And disputing also before the President Felix of the Christian religion, and namely of the dreadful day of Judgement, he uttered such wonderful terrible things thereof, that as the holy scripture mentioneth, he made the very President himself (though he were an infidel) even to tremble and quake for fear, with the only hearing of them.¹⁷ And Saint John likewise in his Revelations affirmeth, that he saw an Angel preaching the everlasting gospel unto all Nations, tribes, tongues, and people, (meaning thereby, that he preached as well to the good, as to the wicked, without any exception therein of the faithful Christians,) saying: *Fear our Lord, and give honor unto him, because the hour of his judgement is come.*¹⁸ And I am persuaded that all godly wise and grave men will easily agree in this opinion with me, that this manner of preaching of the terror of the day of Judgement, and of the most horrible pains of hell, is much more needful now in this our corrupt age in England, and Scotland, than in Italy, Spain, or other Catholic countries, since so great numbers of them are infected with so many heretical licentious doctrines, that have caused them to put quite away out of their minds all fear of God, and of his terrible judgements, and to presume most certainly and assuredly to be saved by their only faith, and so are generally become utterly careless of endeavoring to work their salvation with fear, and trembling,¹⁹ and do live as carnally, and dissolutely, both to the flesh, and the world, as any barbarous Pagans, and Atheists: In so much as all godly ancient wise men do greatly lament to see by experience the terrible prophesy of David to be generally verified

¹⁵ See 1 Ptr. 1:17.

¹⁶ See 2 Cor. 5:10–11.

¹⁷ See Acts 24:25.

¹⁸ Apoc. 14:7.

¹⁹ See Phil. 2:12; 1 Cor. 4:4; 2 Ptr. 1:10.

at this day throughout our Realm: which is, that the judgements of almighty God be taken quite away from the face of the ungodly.²⁰ And if these and such like godly Meditations and Considerations of the terrible threatenings and judgements of almighty God against the wicked, be not a fit remedy for their conversion from their careless dissolute lives, what other remedy then can possibly be devised for them?

Howbeit I have very great hope, that with the grace of God these godly Meditations will work much good effect for the conversion of many of them. For undoubtedly that man is very willful, and obstinate in his wickedness, that reading advisedly all these godly Meditations is not moved inwardly in his heart in some part of them to the fear, love, and service of almighty God, and to the abhorring of all sin, and amendment of his life. And such readers as shall be inwardly moved and called thereunto by almighty God, I conjure them in his holy name, and in regard of their own salvation, not to make sad the Holy Ghost, in hardening their hearts, and resisting ungratefully and willfully against his divine inspirations, when it shall please his infinite goodness, and mercy, with such singular love to knock and call at the door of their hearts, but in any wise to open it out of hand, and receive him most humbly into their hearts, with such loving hearty entertainment, submission, thankfulness, service, and honor, as duty requireth they should do unto their most high sovereign lord, and Creator, that hath such a special loving care of their salvation.²¹

Now this book of Meditations, and whatsoever else I have translated, and shall God willing hereafter publish in print, I do most humbly offer unto the service of almighty God for the benefit of our country. And for so much as I am very wary and assured that this book containeth not any thing whereby I may justly incur any penalty prescribed by any laws of our Realm, I am the bolder humbly to recommend it by this my dedicatory Epistle unto your Honors, and

²⁰ See Ps. 9:26.

²¹ Eph. 4:30; Ps. 94:8; Heb. 4:7; Acts 7:51; Rom. 10:21; 1 Cor. 2:16; Matt. 23:37; Apoc. 3:20; Ps. 80:11.

worships: partly for that I have spent some part of my time in the study of our Common Laws in the Middle Temple among you, and am very much bound unto divers of you: But chiefly for that I know right well the great capacity and dexterity of your spirits, the gravity of your judgements, and your wisdoms, experiences, authority, and example, to be of such principal estimation, and worthy respect in our Realm, that in case ye do zealously employ your endeavors to the due reverent consideration of the holy Mysteries of the Christian Religion, (as I doubt not but very many among you do,) your holy example will generally allure a great number throughout our whole Realm from all contentious disputing, and jarring about these late new controversies in Religion, to embrace firmly and zealously the ancient Catholic belief, and to imitate the virtuous lives of our holy Christian forefathers, who had much more abundance of the grace and light of the Gospel of our Savior Christ, than we have in this our ungracious corrupt age, as very manifestly appeareth by their so manifold good Christian fruits left by them unto us, to the glory of our Savior Christ, and of his dear spouse the Catholic Church, and to the continual great admiration, confusion, envy, and despite, of Lucifer, and of all his rebellious wicked spirits, and of all Jews, Turks, Heretics, and other Infidels his adherents.

And (requesting here humbly pardon, and license, to treat in a familiar manner with the younger sort) I desire your Honors and worships continually to remember what great inclination ye have unto virtue more than others of obscure parentage, and base estate, in regard of your nobleness, and magnanimity, which ever inviteth you to imitate the noble virtuous steps of your noble Christian ancestors, and to set upon high and noble virtuous enterprises, and to do all your works nobly, and excellently, that ye take in hand. As also to consider, that a virtuous life is the greatest and most noble ornament of nobility. And that for this end chiefly almighty God bestoweth upon noble personages here in earth, principality, rule, government, and honor, that they should give virtuous and godly example unto all others that be under their rule, and government. And by experience

we find that ordinarily no bishop or other preacher is able with such facility to plant virtue among the common people, and cause them sincerely to love, honor, and embrace it, as Noblemen, gentlemen, Magistrates, and Governors are able to do, in case they themselves do give good apparent example of virtue, religion, and devotion, and be zealous also in procuring all others to do the like. And therefore I beseech you to determine with an honorable constant resolution to employ your time in the most noble exercises of virtue, and to fear, love, serve, and honor almighty God, who is your most noble, high, sovereign Lord, and Creator: and not to suffer either your study or practice of the laws, or other your worldly offices, and affairs to be so great an impediment unto your spiritual exercises, but that you may have ever one window open towards the heavenly Jerusalem, as Daniel had in his chamber in Babylon, praying there three times in the day towards the earthly Jerusalem.²² And in case your worldly impediments be over great, then wisdom requireth that for salvation of your souls you do cast them away from you. And imitate herein the worldly foresight of wise Merchants when they be in danger of drowning in a stormy tempest upon the sea, who use at such times for salvation of their lives to cast into the sea their rich merchandise, and all their troublesome encumbrances, thereby to cause their ship to sail more safely. And I do also humbly beseech all good Christian readers that shall like well of these spiritual exercises to remember me in their devout prayers, that I prove not like unto those foolish carpenters that made Noes ark, who made it to save others from drowning in the general flood, and yet were drowned themselves.

Thus with all due humble submission of myself, and my travails herein to your honors, and worships, I humbly crave pardon for passing here somewhat the bounds of my profession, and treating as a divine of spiritual matters, according as since my departure from the Middle Temple by some study, and reading of divers spiritual books, and continual conversation these fifteen years with many virtuous and Learned Catholic Priests in these parts I have been instructed.

²² See Dan. 6:10.

And I most humbly beseech almighty God that these Godly Meditations may work so good effect in all your minds, as I have often times very earnestly requested of his divine Majesty. From Paris, upon the holy festival day of Pentecost. In the year of our Lord. 1582.

AN ADVERTISEMENT BY THE TRANSLATOR TO THE LEARNED READER



FORSOMUCH as the Author of this book hath published at divers times several editions thereof in the Spanish tongue, and in the later editions hath from time to time very much and often corrected, altered, and augmented the same, not only in manifold words, and sentences, but also in divers chapters, otherwise than in the former editions, that were printed either in Toledo, Salamanca, Lisbon, Antwerp, or in any other place before the year of our Lord. 1567. I think it very convenient to give notice of it to the Reader: and withal that in my Translation I do follow the edition in the Spanish tongue, printed at Antwerp by Christopher Plantine, in the year of our Lord. 1572. For I perceive that the French Translation differeth in divers places from this best corrected edition of Plantins: and so do likewise all the Translations that I have seen in the Italian tongue, printed in divers years at Rome, Naples, and Venice, by Michael Tramezzino, Horatio Salviani, Jovanni Baptista Guerra, and Gabriel Jolito: until that now of late all the Authors works have been newly Translated into the Italian tongue, and printed at Venice, by Geor- gio Angelieri, in the year of our Lord. 1581.

AN EXHORTATION MADE BY THE BISHOP OF CUENCA¹



IT is the doctrine of the holy fathers, that there be three things very necessary and of inestimable importance to the just man to preserve him in his Justice: to wit, Prayer, Reading and doing of good works. In these three things ought the just man to exercise himself every day, and divide his time so discreetly, and so like a good Christian, that he be ever found occupied in some of them. Prayer illuminateth, purgeth, comforteth, rejoiceth, obtaineth fervor, causeth all travail to seem sweet, and light, breedeth devotion, engendereth confidence, (in case our own spirit does not reprove us:) Prayer bannisheth away sloth, frayeth the enemy, and overcometh temptation. And therefore a certain wise man said: *Non te pigeat orare, si vis a vitiis liberari*. Be not slack to pray, if thou wilt be delivered from vices.

Prayer is very necessary towards the obtaining of the grace of God, without which the spiritual life will utterly decay, and perish. And therefore prayer is preferred before reading. Tertullian speaking of prayer saith: That thing is always to be used, which is always good: And he addeth furthermore, and saith: If prayer be necessary

¹ An exhortation to the Christian Reader, made by the Right Reverend Father in God, Bernard de Fresneda, Bishop of Cuenca, one of the privy Council of Estate to the mighty King Philip of Spain, etc. And his Ghostly Father, to read this book with good attention, and with a desire to profit, and proceed forwards in godliness.

in all places, and at all times, then is continency necessary also unto prayer: for so much as prayer proceedeth of continency wherefore if thy continency hath cause to be ashamed, then shall thy prayer likewise be ashamed. The spirit carryeth our prayer unto God: and if the spirit find itself faulty, then our prayer ascendeth with shame unto him. Again, Cassiodorus saith, that perseverance in prayer availeth much to obtain firmness of heart. By means of continual prayer the devils and their deceitful snares are overcome, and by the same the just man weakeneth their forces, and vexations. By means of prayer he maketh them become weak, cowardly, and easy to be conquered: and by the same he maketh himself also become strong, and a conqueror over them. If thou pray with perseverance thou shalt obtain sweetness, and withal a more fervent desire to pray. And then do we pray in truth, when we have none other thing in our mind, but do apply all our intention unto heavenly things and have our heart wholly enflamed with the fire of the Holy Ghost.

1. There be three effects of prayer. The first effect is common unto all works done in charity: which is, to be meritorious. And for this effect actual attention is not of necessity required in prayer, but it is sufficient to have an habitual attention, as in all other meritorious acts.
2. The second effect, is proper unto prayer alone, which is to obtain of almighty God the thing we desire. And for this effect it is sufficient also to have the first intention, which is the thing that God respecteth in our works. For if this first intention fail, we shall not obtain the thing we require: because almighty God will not hear his prayer, that seeketh not the thing he asketh of him in such sort as he ought, and for such end as he ought.
3. The third effect of prayer, is a spiritual refection of the soul. And for this effect it is necessarily required to have an attention in prayer: and not only such an attention as is attent to the material words, or as the second attention, that market the

sense and meaning of the words, but much more that attention, that market and is attent to the end of prayer, which is almighty God, and unto the thing for which we pray.²

The reading of holy books containing fruitful and profitable matters, not only lighteneth our ignorance, but it also dischargeth our duty in well spending our time therein: it correcteth our faults, teacheth good and holy manners, discovereth vices, exhorteth unto virtues, stirreth up fervor, causeth a fear of God, recollecteth the mind, recreateth and comforteth the heavy, sorrowful, and discomforted soul. Undoubtedly it procureth great profit and fruit to read books of holy matters: of such matters I mean, as do recollect the soul that is distracted, and wandering abroad among so many divers and sundry things. Reading teacheth and sheweth us the way how to lead a good life: Examples do induce and provoke us to imitate and follow the same: And prayer obtaineth us grace to accomplish it fully, and perfectly. Reading (say the holy fathers) is good: Prayer unto God is better: but the doing of good works for God's sake is above all. Out of holy reading the good devout persons do gather how to meditate upon God: And out of godly meditation proceedeth an earnest affection and a very prompt and ready elevation of the spirit unto God, out of which issueth that inward prayer, that pierceth the heavens, passeth above the highest places, and hath a desire to unit itself unto almighty God, in whom are all good things that may be desired.

But because our weakness is not able to continue and persevere always in prayer, and reading, it is therefore very profitable, yea and necessary to work also, and to do some thing that is good, and profitable: which cannot choose but so it will be, in case prayer go before the work: and yet shall be much better, if prayer do accompany it: but best of all if the work do also end in prayer, and then is the work most perfect. To do some kind of work with our own hands, besides that it is very profitable and wholesome for the body, it helpeth our spirit also, our neighbor is thereby edified, and our senses are comforted,

² See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 83, a. 13.

and refreshed. And in case thou find thyself slothful, heavy, and unwilling to work, and labor with thy hands, yet persevere therein, and thou shalt overcome it. O that we might once come to have such a perseverance, and constancy, as the Saints had, who prayed without intermission. And yet notwithstanding their continence in prayer, good Lord, it is marvelous to consider, how studious and continual they were in reading, how fervent and laborious in bodily exercises, and in doing of good works: insomuch as no kind of labors, pains, nor trials, could ever overcome them. Now what other thing is the life of the Saints unto us, but only a holy reading, which we ought to imitate without ceasing. That man that shall enforce himself to take pains and labors for God's sake, shall obtain the greater grace of his divine goodness, and shall out of hand feel the profit and commodity of his travail. An evil custom is overcome by a good: the which good custom if it be converted as it were into nature, it waxeth so strong, that it turneth the things that were hard, and difficult, and causeth them to become easy, and light. And all this (as Saint Paul saith) cometh to the just man by means of continual prayer. And therefore he saith, *Sine intermissione orate*: pray ye without intermission.³ Saint Paul knew right well, that whilst we walk here in this life, we are compassed all about with enemies, temptations, tribulations, and with infinite deceitful ginnes, with wars without, and fears within,⁴ and therefore he adviseth us to pray without intermission. For whereas almighty God permiteth so many vexations and troubles to come for the sins of the world, his intent thereby is to stir up his elect, and to awake them, that they should lift up their spirit unto heavenly things. For he that prayeth not, fighteth not, and he that fighteth not manfully, and maketh resistance, is forthwith overcome, and looseth his crown, and reward.⁵ And if thou demand of me who is able to pray and fight continually: I say, that everyone can do it, that in truth and humility of heart calleth upon almighty God for succour, and putteth

³ 1 Thess. 5:17.

⁴ 2 Cor. 7:5.

⁵ See 2 Tim. 2.

his full trust in him in very deed. For (as the prophet David saith) Our Lord is mighty unto them, that call upon him, if so be they call upon him in truth.⁶ And if thou canst not pray continually with thy mouth, yet pray with thy spirit, and with a godly intention. For it is a very continual sacrifice unto almighty God in the soul of our heart to have a desire to do good works, and to serve him with all our hearts. And truly that man doth always pray, that doth always good works. And whosoever is heartily sorry for his offences he that committed, and fighteth, mourneth, and longeth for the good things that are to come, prayeth always, and saith with the prophet David. O Lord before thee is all my desire, and my mourning is not hid from thee.⁷

These three points now good Christian Reader, which serve (as we have declared) to preserve the righteous man in his righteousness, are so well taught, and so wonderfully set forth in these notable books of the Reverend religious Learned Father, F. Lewis de Granada, that he must needs be very hard hearted, who reading them with attention, devotion, and with a Christian desire to take profit by them, doth not marvelously enrich himself with these three treasures: to wit, with prayer, reading, and doing of good works. Wherefore whosoever is desirous to profit in these three things, hath here very Catholic, sound, and profitable doctrine, and in all points agreeable with the universal doctrine of the holy ancient Fathers, and of the divine Scriptures. In these singular devout holy books he shall not find any thing that may either offend him, or bring him into any error, or scruple. Here shall he find many things that may edify, delight, teach, and provoke him to the love of God, and withal to the abhorring of sin, and contempt of the world. From receiving which fruits no man is here excluded: forso much as the Author hath with a rare wisdom in such wise tempered doctrine, and accommodated himself unto all states, and conditions of the persons, that neither the very high and learned have any cause to leave it, as over base for them: nor the very low and unlearned to refuse it, as over high for their capacities. For

⁶ See Ps. 144:18.

⁷ Ps. 37:10.

here is made a convenient provision of competent meats both for the one sort, and for the other. And because the Author understood right well how far the mouths of men nowadays are out of taste, and how much they are more affectionate unto the fleshpots of Egypt, than to the bread of Angels, I mean hereby, rather to the reading of profane books, by reason of the pleasant style wherewith they think they are written, than to the books of spiritual doctrine, which are commonly written with more simplicity, he hath therefore dressed this meat in such wise, and hath written this doctrine in such a sweet and pleasant style, that it may provoke an appetite unto this book, even in such persons as do otherwise loathe good and wholesome food: besides, that the very matters themselves are exceedingly well chosen, and of great profit. And because it were the part of rude and rustical persons to give thanks to the bees that make the honeycombs, and not unto almighty God who created the flowers from whence the bees gather the honey, which they work in their hives: I exhort all persons to give thanks to the devout and Learned Author of these works, for these so sweet and savory honeycombs which he hath here given us, in such sort that they omit not to proceed further, and to give thanks to almighty God also, who hath sent the flowers, wherewith this honey is made. And withal I make humble request unto all men, that I may be partaker of the prayers they shall make by means of the good disposition, which (I trust) with the grace of God the reading of these holy and excellent devout works shall cause in all godly and devout Christian Readers.

Bernard de Fresneda
Bishop of Cuenca.

THE EPISTLE OF THE AUTHOR¹



I CANNOT find any other place, whither I may better direct this my small present then to your Reverend hands. For (setting apart divers and sundry reasons of great importance, that bind me so to do) certainly the wonderful change of life, which your Reverences have made, and the holy example which you have given to the world in this our corrupt age, are sufficient causes to move all such as do any thing desire the glory of Christ, to serve you in this your spiritual journey, that have in such wise amplified his glory.² I might well speak of this matter more largely in this place, and surely without lying, or flattery, and to speak herein, were not to employ the time in the praises of men, but in the praise of almighty God. Forsomuch as it is manifest, that this your wonderful change of life, hath not proceeded of flesh, and blood, but of the right hand of the highest. But because it behooveth all men of our cote, and profession, to be free not only from all flattery, but also even from all suspicion of the same: I will therefore content myself at this present, only with giving thanks to our lord for this notable virtuous act of yours: and I will confess, that we have seen that wonder in our days, which the holy ancient father St. Jerome declareth to have chanced in his time. He writeth it in a certain Epistle to Ruffinus in these words.

¹ To the very reverend and right honorable personages: Don Antonio De Cordova: and Father Lorenco De Figueroa.

² Note reader, that these to whom the author directeth this book are two noble personages, of the most noble and ancient houses of Spain: which have forsaken all their worldly possessions, and entered into religion.

Bonosus thy friend and mine, is now gone up by that mystical ladder, which the Patriarch Jacob saw: and according to the mystery of Moses he hath now sacrificed the brazen serpent in the desert. Where at this present he soweth with tears, that hereafter he may reap with joy. Let the truth of this worthy act put to silence all the lying wonders which the Greeks and Latins have written in their histories. Behold here a young man brought up in our company, and instructed in all good arts, and learning, who had no want neither of lands, nor riches, nor honor, nor dignity, among his equals, who forsaking his mother, and his sisters, and above all, his most dearly beloved brother, went to live in an Island, which is very solitary, and fearful, and environed with divers seas, there to dwell like a new inhabitant of paradise. And being alone in this place (howbeit not alone, forsomuch as he is in the company of Christ,) he seeth now the glory of almighty God, which the Apostles themselves never saw, but when they were alone in the mount.

Thus far be St. Jeromes words. This holy example of Bonosus is truly a thing wherein almighty God is to be praised, as in a singular work of his grace. And surely no less is he to be praised in your Reverend and most honorable personages, who having much more to forsake in the world, than Bonosus had, and being now in the very flowers of your youth, have forsaken the world, and all the vain pomp, and pride thereof: and withal your great lands, and possessions, the dignity of your high noble estates, and the hope of so great honorable promotions, that were due unto your nobility and virtue, and to the renowned deserts of your very ancient and most noble families. And all this you have done to embrace even the poverty, nakedness, and obedience of Christ. You have not done like that young man in the gospel, who remembering how great possessions he had, refused to follow the way of perfection, which our Savior Christ taught him.³ But ye have done like that wise and prudent merchant, who after he

³ See Matt. 19.

had found the precious pearl, sold all he had in the world to buy the same.⁴ And if unto this wonderful change of yours, we join also the notable virtuous change of life which the most noble and renowned Duke of Gandia hath made in our days,⁵ and the marvelous changes of sundry other right honorable personages which might here be rehearsed, it will very evidently appear, that there is more sweetness in the way of Christ, than the world thinketh there is: sithence even those, that have had so long and so great experience both of the one kind of life, and of the other, do very heartily and willingly renounce all that ever the world giveth and promiseth unto them, for the least crumb that falleth from Christ's table: saying with the spouse in the Canticles. *If a man give all his substance for charity, he will contemn it as nothing.*⁶

Forsomuch therefore, as very reason would, that every one should serve them, that serve our most merciful and loving lord, it seemeth unto me, that it is my bounden duty also, to do you some service in this your spiritual journey, at the least with this little volume: which treateth of prayer and meditation, and that the holy and devout exercises of your Reverences may be holpen somewhat by the same: the which (I trust in our lord) shall be always furthered, and proceed prosperously, both with it, and without it. And although this be a debt which I owe unto you: yet do I for this debt crave of you a grace, and this is, that your Reverences will most humbly beseech our lord, that it may please him of his infinite mercy, and goodness, to grant his favor and assistance to this book: that the profit of them that shall read it, may be answerable to the pains of him that made it, and to the good heart wherewith he offereth it unto them.

⁴ See Matt. 13.

⁵ This Duke of Gandia forsook his great Dukedom in Spain, and became a religious man of the holy Society of Jesus: commonly called Jesuits.

⁶ Cant. 8:7.

THE PROLOGUE AND ARGUMENT OF THIS BOOK



PRAYER (to define it properly) is a petition we make unto almighty God, for such things as are appertaining to our salvation. Howbeit prayer is also taken in another more large sense: to wit, for every lifting up of our heart unto God. And according to this definition, both Meditation, and Contemplation, and every other good thought may be also called prayer. And in this sense we do now use this word, because the principal matter of this book, is of Meditation, and Consideration of things appertaining to Almighty God, and of the principal mysteries of the Catholic faith.

The very thing that moved me to treat of this matter, was for that I understood that one of the principal causes of all the evils that be in the world, is the want of consideration: According as the Prophet Jeremias signified, when he said. *All the earth is destroyed with desolation, because there is none that thinketh with attention upon the things appertaining unto God.*¹ Whereby it appeareth, that the very cause of our evils is not so much the want of faith, as the want of due consideration of the mysteries of our faith. For truly if there were no want in this behalf, the mysteries of our faith be of so great virtue, and efficacy, that if the very least mystery of them were considered with attention, and devotion, even the same would be a great bridle, and redress of our life. For who would ever go about to commit any sin, if

¹ See Jer. 12:11.

he considered that almighty God died for sin? And that he punisheth sin, with perpetual banishment out of the kingdom of heaven, and with everlasting pains, and torments in the horrible fire of hell?

Whereby ye may see, that although the mysteries of our faith be of very great force to incline our hearts unto goodness: yet because there be very many Christians that have no due consideration of the things they believe, therefore they work not such effect in their hearts, as such mysteries being well weighed, considered, were able to work. For like as the physicians affirm, that if we will have a medicine to help a sick man, it is necessary it be first wrought and digested in the stomach with natural heat, (because otherwise it shall not be any profit to him at all:) even so also, if we will have the mysteries of our faith to be profitable and healthful unto our souls it is requisite they be first wrought and digested in our hearts, with the heat of devotion, and meditation: because otherwise they shall profit us very little. And for want hereof, we see that many Christians, which are very whole and sound in matters of faith, be yet in their lives very licentious, and dissolute. And the reason is, because they do not consider, and weigh the holy mysteries which they believe: and so they keep their faith, as it were fast locked in a corner of a chest, or as a sword in the scabbard, or as a medicine in the apothecaries shop, and use not the benefit thereof for such purposes as it serveth. They believe generally, and as it were in a fardel, or gross sum, all such things as the Catholic Church believeth. They believe that there shall be a judgement, that there shall be pains for the wicked, and glory for the good: but how many Christians shall ye find, that do consider after what sort this judgement, these pains, and this glory shall be, with other the like circumstances?

Now this is the cause, why the holy Scripture so earnestly commendeth unto us the continual consideration, and meditation of the law of God, and of the mysteries thereof: which is indeed the study of true wisdom. Consider I pray you, how instantly Moses that great prophet, and friend of God commendeth this unto us: saying: *Print these my words in your hearts, and carry them bound as it were for a sign*

*in your hands, and teach them to your children, that they may think upon them. When thou shalt be sitting in thy house, or traveling in the way, when thou shalt lie down to sleep, or rise up in the morning, think and meditate upon them, and write them on the thresholds, and gates of thy house, that thou mayst always have them before thine eyes.*² With what more effectual words could he commend unto us the continual meditation, and consideration of heavenly things, than with these? And no less doth Salomon commend the same holy exercise unto us in his Proverbs: where he exhorteth us, to carry the law of God always as it were a chain of gold about our necks, and at night to go to bed with it, and in the morning so soon as we awake, to begin immediately to exercise ourselves in the same.³ Blessed is that man, that is so occupied. And so doth Ecclesiasticus term him, when he saith: *Blessed is the man, that dwelleth in the house of wisdom, and meditateth upon the law and the commandments of God, and exerciseth himself in justice, and reasoneth of holy things by his understanding. Blessed is he that considereth her ways in his heart, and understandeth her secrets. He shall look in at her windows, and hearken at her doors. He shall abide beside her house, and fasten a stake in her walls. He shall pitch his tent beside her.*⁴

Now what other thing may we infer of all this, but that the holy Ghost intended by all these metaphors to express unto us the continual exercise, and consideration, wherewith the just man is always occupied, in searching the works, and wonders of almighty God. And for this very cause, among the praises of the just man, this is put for one of the most principal: that his exercise is to meditate upon the law of our lord day, and night:⁵ and that he is always conversant in the secrecy of parables:⁶ giving us hereby to understand, that all his trade and conversation must be in searching, and meditating upon the secrets, and wonderful works of almighty God. And even for this very cause also, were those mystical beasts of Ezechiel represented

² See Deut. 6:6–9.

³ See Prov. 1:3.

⁴ See Ecclus. 14:22–25.

⁵ See Ps. 1.

⁶ See Ecclus. 39.

unto us with so many eyes: to signify unto us, that the just man standeth in greater need of the continual consideration, and fight of spiritual things, than of a number of other exercises.⁷

By this therefore we see plainly, what great need we have of this holy exercise: and consequently how blindly and foully they are deceived, that either despise or make little accompt of the holy exercise of prayer, and meditation: not considering that this is openly to gainsay, and contemn that thing, which the holy Ghost hath with so great instancy commended unto us. I wish that such persons would read those five books of consideration, which St. Bernard wrote unto Eugenius the Pope. And there shall they perceive, of how great importance this holy exercise is, towards the obtaining of all virtues.

Now for this cause many Catholic and religious persons, understanding what great and inestimable fruit ensueth of this godly meditation, have gone about to exercise themselves ordinarily therein, and have appointed every day certain special times and hours for the same. Howbeit of ten times they wax cold, and give over this holy exercise, by reason of two difficulties they find in it. The one is the want of matter, and of considerations, wherein they may occupy their cogitation at that time. And the other is the want of service, and devotion, which is very requisite to accompany this holy exercise, in case we mind to have any fruit and commodity thereby. Instead whereof they find many times great dryness of heart, and withal a great combat of divers and sundry thoughts. For remedy of which two inconveniences, I have ordained this present book, which is divided into two principal parts.

The first part, for remedy of the first inconvenience, treateth of the matter of prayer, or meditation: wherein are contained fourteen meditations, serving for all the seven days of the week, both in the mornings, and evenings. And these meditations do contain the principal places and mysteries of our faith, and especially the consideration of those mysteries, that are of most force, and power, to bridle our hearts, and to incline them to the love, and fear of God, and to

⁷ See Ezech. 1.

the abhorring of sin. In like manner there are set out the five parts of this exercise, which be, Preparation: reading: meditation: thanksgiving: and petition: which is done to this end, that a man may have great variety of matters, wherein to occupy his heart, wherewith to procure and stir up the taste of devotion, and withal wherewith to illuminate and instruct his understanding with divers considerations, and instructions: Besides this, there is also treated therein, of six kinds of things that are to be considered in every one of the points of the Passion of our Savior: that both they, and all the rest, may minister unto us more plentiful matter for meditation. These three things are set forth in the first part of this work, for remedy of the first inconvenience.

The second part, for remedy of the second inconvenience, treateth of those things, that do help us unto devotion, and likewise of those, that do hinder us from the same. It treateth also of the most common temptations, that are wont to molest devout persons. Moreover, there are given certain advices to be a direction unto us that we err not in this way. These four articles are set out in the second part of this book.

After these I have added the third part, in which is treated of the virtue of prayer, and of her two companions, Fasting and Almsdeeds: to the intent, that when a man seeth that in all the book there is treated of prayer, and of the pains he ought to take for the same: he may understand, how well his labor is employed, which is bestowed in obtaining of a thing of so great and wonderful profit.

Peradventure the Christian reader will be offended with the length of the meditations, which we have here set forth for the seven days of the week. Howbeit for this I have many answers. The first is, considering that in these meditations is treated of the principal places and mysteries of our faith, (the consideration whereof is of so great importance, for the due ordering and reforming of our life) it behooveth me therefore to enlarge my style (in these matters especially) by reason of the great fruit, and commodity, that may ensue unto us by the same. For in this book our meaning is not only to give

matter of meditation, but much more to shew the end of meditation, which is fear of God, and amendment of our life. For the procuring whereof, one of the things that most helpeth us, is the profound and long consideration of the mysteries, that are treated in these meditations. For certainly these fourteen meditations, be as it were so many Sermons, in which is laid as it were a certain battery to man's heart, to cause it to yield, (so much as is possible,) and to surrender itself up into the hands of his rightful and true sovereign Lord.

This was the chiefest cause that moved me to make the meditations so long. Besides this, I see not why the guest that is invited, should complain that the table is too full furnished with many dishes, sith we bind him not (as by way of constraint) to make an end of them all, but only among so many sundry things to make his choice of that, which serveth best for his purpose. Moreover, (that there might be the less occasion of complaint) I have put the sum of each meditation at the beginning thereof, to the intent that such as mind not to pass any further, might there have such things briefly abridged, as be necessary for the time, they intend to bestow in this holy exercise.



THE FIRST PART, WHICH
TREATETH OF THE MATTER
OF CONSIDERATION

The First Chapter

WHEREIN IS TREATED OF THE GREAT PROFIT, AND NECESSITY OF CONSIDERATION



FOR so much as in the exercise of consideration, it can not be, but that some labor and pains must needs be taken, as well by reason of the employing and occupying of the time, which it requireth of us every day: As also in regard of the quieting, and close recollecting of the heart, (which is a thing very requisite for the same,) I think it therefore very necessary before all other things to declare here what great fruits, and commodities, do ensue of this exercise; to the intent that the heart of man, which without great promises and allurements is not moved to take great pains, may by this mean be the more moved, and provoked, to the love of this holy exercise and to bestow greater pains, and labor therein.

Now the greatest commendation we can give to this virtue is this, that it is a great helper and furtherer of all other virtues. I mean not in supplying the proper office of them, but in helping them in their exercise. In so much that like as devotion is a general stirrer and provoker unto all virtues (as St. Thomas affirmeth:)¹ And as the hearing of a Sermon, (if it be heard with such attention and devotion, as it ought to be) is also an exercise that moveth us, not to any one

¹ See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 82, a. 1.

virtue alone, but to all virtues, (for so much as each good instruction is directed to this end:) even so likewise is Consideration a great help and furtherance not only to any one virtue alone, but unto all kind of virtues. For there is no more difference between a Sermon, and Consideration, then is between the reading of a lesson, and the repetition of the same reading, or between the meat that is set before us in a dish, and the same meat when it is digested, and concocted in the stomach. Now this is one of the greatest, and most assured praises we can give to this virtue. For by this means it putteth not away the labors of other virtues, but rather maketh provision how to help and further them in their labors, yea and stirreth and provoketh them thereunto. This is the thing, which by the grace of God we intend now to prove very manifestly in this place.

For the better understanding whereof, it is to be known that among virtues some be common both to the Christian, and to the pagan philosopher: (as those four that be called Cardinal virtues, To wit, PRUDENCE, JUSTICE, FORTITUDE, AND TEMPERANCE. Of which virtues the philosophers understood, and wrote very much.) Other virtues there be, that are proper and peculiar unto a Christian only, in that he is a Christian: whereof the pagan philosophers neither knew, nor wrote any thing at all: or if they did, it was surely very little. These are principally those three most noble virtues called *Theological virtues*: To wit. FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY. Which have for their object almighty God himself: and their proper office is, to dispose and direct a man towards him. These Theological virtues have the empire, and sovereignty over all other inferior virtues, and therefore they move and provoke them to do their operations, whensoever the same is expedient for their service. After these, there follow other very principal, and excellent virtues, (which be very near of affinity unto them.) As the virtue called Religion: whose object is the service and honor of God: The virtue called Devotion: which is the act and exercise of the same religion: and the office of it is to make us very prompt, and ready, to do all such things as appertain unto his service. The fear of God, which refraineth, and bridleth us from sin.

Humility which is also after a sort (as Saint Thomas saith) the root and foundation of all virtues.² And penance, which is the gate of our salvation, whereunto appertaineth the sorrow and grief for our life past, and withal a firm purpose, and determination, to amend our life in time to come. Of all these virtues the pagan philosophers understood very little, or nothing at all, notwithstanding that these be the virtues that have the sovereignty, and principality, over all others, yea they be the roots and fountains of all our weal. First, because (for the most part) they be spiritual virtues, that have the accomplishment of their perfection in the inward part of our soul, (where all the beauty of the daughter of the king standeth:)³ And secondly, because all these virtues (faith excepted) be affective virtues, and consequently they be unto us great motions, and provocations, to do good works. Wherein the providence of the grace of God wonderfully appeareth. For like as nature hath provided for us natural affections, and desires, that should be as it were certain spurs to provoke us to do all such things as are requisite for our natural life: even so likewise hath the grace of God provided for us other supernatural affections, that might be also spurs and provocations unto us, to do all such things as are behooveful for our spiritual life. And such be these virtues before mentioned: to wit, LOVE, SORROW, FEAR, HOPE, with the rest, without which virtues the spiritual life were like a barge without ores, or like a ship without sails. Forsomuch as without these virtues we should not have any thing to move and provoke us to do good works. And yet hereof we have greater need in this life, than in the other. For (considering that the way of virtue is so sharp, and full of difficulty) what should become of us, if we had not these spurs and provocations of love, of fear, and of hope, to spur and prick us forwards to labor and travail in the same? For this cause therefore are these virtues so much commended. For besides that they are such principal virtues, (as we have declared,) they be also very great provocations, and motions, to move us to do good works.

² See St. Thomas, II-II, q. 161, a. 5, ad 2.

³ See Ps. 44:14.

This foundation being now laid, I say that the greatest praise we give to the virtue of consideration, is that the same is a great minister and helper unto all these virtues, as well of the one sort, as of the other, according as we will now declare. Where also it shall appear, that the commendation we give to this virtue, is not so much in respect of the virtue itself, as for the service, and commodity, it bringeth to other virtues.

§. I. How Consideration Helpeth Faith.

Now therefore to take our first beginning of faith: it is manifest that faith is the first beginning, and foundation of all the Christian life. For faith maketh us to believe, that almighty God is our creator, our governor, our redeemer, our sanctifier, our glorifier, to be short, our beginning, and our last end.⁴ Faith is that which teacheth us, that there is another life after this, and that there shall be a general judgement of all our works: and that we shall receive either everlasting glory for the good, or else everlasting pain for the evil. And it is clear, that the faith and belief men have in these things bridleth their hearts, and cause them to stand in awe, and to live in the fear of God. For if faith were not among us as a mean to bridle and direct us herein, what (trow ye) would become of the life of man? And therefore the Prophet said: *That the just man liveth by faith:*⁵ not that faith alone is sufficient to give us life: but because faith (by means of the representation and consideration of those things that it teacheth us) provoketh us to refrain from sin, and wickedness, and to follow virtue, and goodness. And this is the cause why the Apostle willeth us to take faith as a shield against all the fiery darts of the enemy.⁶ For certainly, there is no better shield against the darts of sin, than to call those things to mind, that faith hath revealed unto us against the same.

⁴ See Heb. 11:6.

⁵ Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38.

⁶ See Eph. 6:16.

Wherefore that this faith may work this effect in us, it is very requisite that we do some times ponder and consider in our minds with good attention and devotion such things as our faith teacheth us. For if we do not so, it seemeth that our faith shall be unto us, as it were a letter closed up, and sealed: in which although there come notable important news of very great sorrow, or joy: yet it moveth us not at all, neither to the one, nor to the other, no more than if we had received no letter at all. And the reason is, because we have not opened the letter, nor considered what things are contained in it. Now what thing could be said more aptly, or more to the purpose, touching the faith of the wicked and dissolute Christians? For surely there can not be things of great terror, and joy, than those are, which our faith declareth unto us. But the wicked Christians because they do never open this letter, to see what things be contained in it, (I mean hereby, because they do never think and meditate upon these mysteries of our Christian faith, or if they think upon them, they pass them over very lightly, and in great haste,) they cause not in them this manner of motion, and alteration, to wit, of joy, or of fear. Wherefore it behooveth us some times to open this letter of our faith, I mean, the mysteries thereof, and to read the same very leisurely, and to consider with good attention, what things are taught us in the same: the which is done by means of the exercise of consideration. For it is consideration that openeth that which is locked, and unfoldeth that which is folded together, and maketh that clear unto us, which is otherwise dark, and obscure. And so by illuminating our understanding with the greatness of the mysteries of our faith, it inclineth our will, (so farforth as appertaineth to the office of consideration) to conform our life to the same. This office of consideration almighty God figured very notably in the law, when among the conditions that were required in the clean beast, he assigned this for one, that the beast should chew the cud, to wit, the meat that it had eaten before.⁷ Now it is certain, that it was little to the purpose, whether the beast were clean, or unclean, and surely almighty God

⁷ See Lev. 11; Deut. 14.

made little accompt of that: But his meaning was, to represent unto us in that clean beast, that be spiritually clean, (to wit, of the just and righteous persons) that are not content only to care such things, as appertain unto almighty God, in believing them by faith, but after they have eaten them, they do also chew them by means of consideration, in searching and pondering the mysteries which they believe. And after they have understood the meaning and excellency of them that distribute and divide this meat unto all the spiritual members of the soul, for the sustentation, and repairing of the same.

Insomuch that if we mark this matter well, we shall find, that it fareth in this case, as in the seed of a tree, which although it do virtually contain within it the substance of the tree, yet hath it need of the virtue and influence of heaven, and of the benefit and moisture of the earth, to cause the virtue that is inclosed in the seed, to some forth to light, and to grow up by little, and little, and wax a tree. Even so in like manner we say, that although faith be the first seed, and original of all our weal, yet must it needs be holpen with this benefit of consideration, that by the same, and by means of charity, the green and fruitful tree of good life (which is virtually contained therein) may grow, and come to light.

§. II. How Consideration Helpeth Hope.

Consideration helpeth also no less the virtue of hope. This hope is an affection of our will that hath his motive and root in the understanding.⁸ As the Apostle signifieth plainly unto us, saying: *All things that are written, are written for our instruction: that through patience, and consolation, which the Scriptures give unto us, we may have hope and affiance in almighty God.*⁹ For undoubtedly the holy scripture is the fountain, from whence the just man gathereth the water of comfort, wherewith he strengtheneth himself, to put his hope and trust in God. For first of all he seeth in the holy Scriptures the greatness

⁸ See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 17, a. 7; q. 18, a. 1.

⁹ Rom. 15:4.

of the works and merits of our Savior Jesus Christ, which are the principal stay and foundation of our hope. There he seeth likewise in a thousand places the greatness of the goodness, sweetness, and majesty of almighty God lively expressed, and set out to the eye, and withal the merciful loving providence he hath over them that be his: the gentleness, and benignity, wherewith he receiveth them that come unto him: and the faithful promises and pledges he hath given unto them, whereby they are very well assured, that he will never forsake them, that repose their hope and trust in him.

There he seeth, that there is no one thing more often repeated in the Psalms, more commonly promised in the Prophets, more evidently declared in the histories from the beginning of the world, than the loving favors, graces, and benefits, that our Lord continually bestoweth upon such as be his servants: and how he hath most mercifully holpen and defended them in all their calamities, and distresses. How he helped Abraham in all his journeys: Jacob in his dangers: Joseph in his banishment: David in his persecutions: Job in his adversities: Tobias in his blindness: Judith in her enterprise: Hester in her petition: The noble Machabees in their battles, and triumphs: and to be short, as many as with humble and religious hearts committed themselves unto him. These and other the like examples do strengthen and encourage our heart in labors, and adversities, and cause it to hope, and trust assuredly in God. Now what doth consideration work in all this? Forsooth, it taketh this medicine into her hands, and applieth it to the weak and diseased member, that hath need of it. I mean hereby, that consideration bringeth all these things into our remembrance, and representeth them to our heart: it searcheth and weigheth the greatness of these loving pledges and mercies of almighty God, and with them animateth, and encourageth the afflicted person, that he be not dismayed, but rather fortifieth him with a strong hope, and induceth him also to put his trust in that most merciful and loving Lord, who never failed any one man, that had recourse unto him with all his heart. By this therefore thou seest Christian reader, how consideration is the minister and servant

of hope, and how it serveth her, and representeth unto her all such things as may strengthen, and encourage her. But that man that considereth not any of these things, and hath no eyes to see any part of them, wherewith can he possibly strengthen, and fortify this virtue of hope in himself, that it may be profitable unto him in his labors, and adversities?

§. III. How Consideration Helpeth Charity.

After Hope, followeth Charity, whose due praises can not be uttered in few words. For Charity is the most excellent virtue of all virtues, as well Theological, as Cardinal.¹⁰

Charity is the life and soul of them all: and charity is also the accomplishment of all the law. For as the Apostle saith: *He that loveth (that is, he that is in perfect charity) hath fulfilled the law.*¹¹ This is the virtue that maketh the yoke of God Sweet, and his burden light.¹² This is the measure whereby the portion of glory that shall be given unto us in the life to come must be measured. This is that virtue that is liking and acceptable unto almighty God, and for whose sake all such things are very acceptable unto him, as be indeed acceptable unto him. For truly without charity neither faith, nor prophecy, nor martyrdom be of any value in the sight of God.¹³ To conclude, Charity is the fountain and original of all other virtues, by reason of the preeminency and sovereignty it hath to command them, and to make them to do their offices. As the same Apostle confirmeth, saying: *Charity is patient, and benign: Charity is not envious, it doth no hurt to any man, it is not proud, nor ambitious, neither doth it seek her own commodity: Charity is not angry, it thinketh no evil, it rejoiceth not at wickedness, and it is very glad of the truth: Charity suffereth all things, it believeth all things, trusteth all things, and beareth all things.*¹⁴

¹⁰ See 1 Cor. 13:13.

¹¹ See Rom. 13:10.

¹² See Matt. 11:30.

¹³ See 1 Cor. 13:2–3.

¹⁴ 1 Cor. 13:4–7.

Now although it be true, that all virtues and good works do help us towards the obtaining of this most excellent and precious jewel: yet of all others consideration helpeth us most specially. For certain it is, that our will is a blind power, that can not step one foot, unless the understanding do go before, and illuminate, and teach it, what thing it ought to desire, and withal how much it ought to will and desire the same. It is also certain (as Aristotle saith) that each good thing is amiable in itself, and that every thing doth naturally love his own proper weal. And therefore that our will may be inclined to love almighty God, it is requisite that the understanding do go before it, to examine, and try, and so consequently to declare unto the will, how amiable almighty God is, both in respect of himself: (to wit, in regard of his divine perfections,) as also in respect of us, (to wit, in regard of his wonderful love and mercies shewed towards us,) that is: the understanding must weigh the greatness and excellence of his bounty, and goodness, of his benignity, of his mercy, of his beauty, of his sweetness, of his meekness, of his liberality, of his nobleness, and of all other his perfections, which are innumerable. Besides this, the understanding hath to consider, how loving and merciful almighty God hath been towards us: how much he hath loved us: how much he hath done and suffered for our sakes, even from the manger until his very death upon the cross: how many great blessings and benefits he hath prepared for us for the time to come: how many he doth presently bestow upon us: from how many great evils and miseries he hath delivered us: with how great patience he hath suffered us: and how gently and lovingly he hath dealt with us: with all his other benefits, which be also innumerable. And thus by considering, and pondering very much in the consideration of these things, our heart shall by little and little be enkindled, and inflamed in the love of such a merciful and bountiful loving Lord.¹⁵ For if the very wild and savage beasts do love their well willers, and benefactors, and if gifts (as it is commonly said) do break the hard and stony rocks, and if that a man that findeth benefits, findeth withal (as the Philosopher

¹⁵ See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 27, a. 2; II-II, q. 82, a. 3.

saith) *Chains whereby to take and bind men's hearts*: what heart is there then so stony hard, or savage, that considering the passing bountiful goodness and greatness of all these inestimable benefits, is not enkindled and inflamed in the love of our most loving and merciful Lord, that hath bestowed them upon us?

Add also hereunto, that when a man considereth these things attentively with himself, and endeavoreth with the grace of God to do so much as he is able to do for his part, almighty God will then also do that, that appertaineth unto him: that is, almighty God will move him, that moveth himself, and help him, that helpeth himself, by helping our consideration with the light of the holy Ghost, and with the gift of understanding: the which the more it penetrateth and understandeth all these reasons that induce us to the love of God, the more doth it enkindle, and inflame us in the same love of him. For like as that everlasting light and word of the father is not a barren word, but a fruitful word, which together with the father produceth the holy Ghost, which is a love consubstantial: even so doth this light and word of God work in our hearts, by enkindling, and inspiring this love of God in them.

This may yet be confirmed and declared more plainly by another reason. For it is manifest, that although this virtue of charity do grow and increase (as we have said) with the acts of all other virtues, being done in the state of grace: yet doth it chiefly increase with her own proper acts, when such acts be vehement, according as St. Thomas affirmeth.¹⁶ For like as by writing well, and with an earnest care, and diligence, a man attaineth to be a good writer: by painting, a painter: and by the exercise of singing, a musician: even so likewise by loving, he may become a lover. I mean hereby, that like as the use of writing well, causeth a man to be a good writer, and of painting well, a good painter and even so likewise the use, exercise, and continuance of loving much almighty God, maketh a man at length to become a great lover of God. For albeit this heavenly hability, and virtue be the gift of God, and a thing which he

¹⁶ See St. Thomas, II-II, q. 24, a. 6.

infuseth, powereth, and worketh in our souls, yet nevertheless he worketh this by this mean: I mean hereby, that as well the virtues infused into our souls by almighty God, as the virtues acquise (to wit, the virtues that be obtained by our own labor, and industry,) do both of them grow and increase with the exercise of their own acts, although in a different manner. Whereupon we may infer thus much, that the more a man shall multiply the acts of the love of God, and the more he shall exercise himself in this virtue of charity, and the longer he shall endure and persevere in this work of love, the more shall this heavenly gift of charity be rooted and fortified in him. But now how can this be done without the exercise of consideration? How can the will be occupied in loving of almighty God, unless the understanding be exercised in blowing, enkindling, and discovering unto it the causes of the love of God? For like as when two horses draw in a chariot, the one can not go forwards without the other: even so these two powers (to wit the will, and understanding) be in such sort linked together, that ordinarily the one can not go forwards without the other: (at the least the will can not move without the understanding.) Thou seest now good Christian reader how inwardly and entirely the exercise of consideration is annexed to the love of God. Forsomuch as a man can never (or very hardly) set himself to love, unless he do also consider, or have before considered such things as may move him unto this love. And it is very needful for us to use some exercise of consideration, not only for the increasing of this virtue of charity, but also for the preservation of the same: that is to say, consideration is necessary, not only that charity may increase, but also that it may not fail, and decrease, among so many contradictions, and stumbling blocks, as it hath in this frail and miserable life. We see that a fish being out of the water dieth forthwith: and a drop of water being out of the sea is quickly dried up: and the fire being out of his natural region is incontinently consumed, unless there be some care and diligence used to feed and maintain it, by putting often times wood unto it wherewith to preserve it. Now the very like need hath the fire of

charity also to preserve it in this life, where it is as it were a stranger, and pilgrim. And the wood wherewith it must be preserved, is the consideration of the benefits of almighty God, and of his perfections. For each one of these things being well considered, is as it were a fagot, or firebrand, that enkindleth and inflameth this fire of the love of God in our hearts. Wherefore it behooveth us to nourish and maintain this fire of charity often times with the wood of consideration, that this divine flame may never fail in us. According as almighty God hath signified in the law, when he said: *Upon my Altar* (which is the heart of the just man) *there shall be always fire.*¹⁷ And therefore let good diligence and care be taken every day in the morning, to maintain this fire of charity with wood, (to wit, with the Consideration of all these things,) that by this mean it may be always preserved. And so it is said in the Psalm: *Through my meditation there is enkindled a fire:* to wit, the fire of charity.¹⁸

This necessity of Consideration may be proved by an other reason also. For we see by experience in all habilities, and graces, both such as are natural, as those also that are acquise, (I mean, gotten by our own travail, and industry,) that like as they increase by use, and exercise, even so are they also forgotten, if we leave to exercise them. And this we see plainly verified even in such things as be very natural, and customably used. For what thing is more usual than the tongue, and language, which a man in enured, and acquainted withal even from his mother's paps, and yet may it be forgotten in time, if it be not used, and exercised. But what speak I of the tongue, seeing it happeneth sometimes, that when a man hath lyen sick in his bed, but only four or five months, he can scarcely afterwards frame himself to go again when he riseth, notwithstanding that going is a thing so natural, and so customably used. Now if the habilities which be so natural, and so much exercised, do so much decay when they be not used: what will the supernatural habilities do, which are but as it were certain props and stays adjoined unto us,

¹⁷ Lev. 6:12.

¹⁸ Ps. 38:4.

to supply the defects of nature? And if charity with all other virtues infused be in like manner to be reckoned in this accompt, in what case then shall we be, if we do but very seldom or never exercise ourselves in them? For if that thing that is even natural will be lost for want of exercise, how much more will that be lost that is supernatural? And if that thing may be lost that is fastrieveted even in our very bowels, what shall that do, that is but as it were only fastened unto us with little pins?

Again, if it be true, that all amity, and friendship, is both preserved, and increased by means of familiarity, and communication: and by the want thereof is utterly quenched, and lost, (according as Aristotle affirmeth:) what shall then become of those persons, that have no manner of communication with almighty God at all? And what can we hope of them, not so much as think, consider, or treat of any heavenly matter? Thou seest then (dear Christian brother) of how great importance the exercise of consideration, and communication with almighty God is unto us, for the preservation of this virtue of charity.

§. IV. How Consideration Helpeth Devotion, and All Other Virtues Affective.

And Consideration is no less behooveful to be had for all such virtues, as are called affective: that is, appertaining to the affection, whereof we have made mention before. Among which virtues, one of the most principal is devotion: which is a certain heavenly hability and gift, that inclineth our will to desire all such things with great affection, and earnestness, as appertain to the service of almighty God: which is one of the things, that man hath most need of, in this state of nature corrupted.¹⁹ For we see by experience, that men do sin, not so much for want of understanding, as for want of will: I mean hereby: that they sin not so much for want of knowledge what is good, as for that they are unwilling to do the thing they know to be

¹⁹ See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 82, a. 1.

good. And this unwillingness proceedeth not of the nature of virtue, (which of itself is most sweet, delectable, and very agreeable to the nature of man,) but of the corruption of man.

Now considering that this defect of our will is the very chief and principal impediment we have to hinder us from virtue, and goodness: our principal care must be, to seek a remedy for the curing of this defect. For which purpose, one of the things that helpeth us most, is devotion. For devotion is none other thing, but a heavenly refreshing, and a blast, or inspiration of the holy Ghost, that breaketh and maketh his way through all these difficulties, shaketh of this heaviness, cureth this loathsomeness of our will, and causeth us to have a taste and savor in that thing, that was otherwise unsavory, and thereby maketh us very prompt, agile, and quick, unto all goodness. And this wonderful effect of devotion the servants of God do daily try and perceive by experience in themselves, at what time they have some great and singular devotion. For then they find themselves more willing and lusty unto all labor, and pains, than they be at other times. And then it seemeth, that the youth of their souls rejoiceth, and is renewed:²⁰ and then they try by experience in themselves the truth of those words of the prophet, where he saith: *They that trust in our lord, shall change their strength: they shall take wings, as it were of an Eagle: they shall run, and not be weary: they shall go, and not be faint.*²¹

Devotion hath also an other property, which is, to be as it were a certain fountain, and perpetual spring of good and holy desires. For which cause in the holy scriptures it is commonly called an ointment, which is compounded of many sundry sorts of odoriferous spices, and thereby yieldeth out from it many sweet odors:²² Now the very like operation hath devotion also, for the time it endureth in our hearts: for so much as it wholly spreadeth itself abroad into a thousand sundry kinds of holy purposes, and desires, the which the more they

²⁰ See Ps. 102.

²¹ Is. 40:31.

²² See Cant. 1; 4.

increase, and are dilated, the more doth the stench of our appetite decrease, and diminish: which are the evil desires, that proceed from the same. For like as the evil savour in a sick man's chamber, is not so much perceived, when there is a little frankincense, or some other odoriferous thing burnt therein: even so the savour of our evil desires is not so much perceived, so long as the most sweet savour of this precious ointment continueth within us. And forso much as it is certain, that all the corruption of our life cometh of the corruption, and stench of our appetite, and of the evil desires that proceed from the same, it shall be our part therefore to use great diligence in procuring this heavenly ointment of devotion, which is of very great force, and efficacy, to diminish and consume this pestilent corruption.

And in like manner, as consideration serveth in all the premises, even so doth it also serve and further all the other virtues before mentioned: which are, the fear of God, the sorrow for our sins, the contempt of ourselves, (wherein consisteth the virtue of humility,) and thanks giving unto almighty God for his benefits. For (as we have said before) there can be no good affection in the will, unless it proceed of some consideration of the understanding.²³ For how can a man have sorrow and contrition for his sins, but by considering the filthiness, and multitude of them? The loss we receive by them? The hatred almighty God conceiveth against them? And withal, how polluted the soul remaineth by reason of them? Again, how can a man stir up his heart unto the fear of God, but by considering the highness of his majesty, the greatness of his justice, the profoundness of his judgements, the multitude of his own sins, with other the like things? How can a man humble and despise himself with all his heart, unless he consider the great number of his own frailties, infirmities, falls, and miseries? For if humility be (as St. Bernard saith) the contempt of ourselves, which proceedeth of the knowledge of ourselves, it is manifest that the deeper a man shall wade by means of consideration into this knowledge of himself, and the more he shall dig into this dunghill, the better and more

²³ See St Thomas, *Summa*, II-II, q. 82, a. 3.

truly shall he understand, what he is of himself, and the more shall he contemn, and humble himself. Now to speak of thanks giving unto almighty God for his manifold inestimable benefits, out of which do proceed those songs, and praises of God (which is a principal part of true religion) from whence (I say) doth this rendering of thanks proceed, but from the profound Consideration of the same benefits? For the more a man shall by means of Consideration penetrate, and understand the greatness, and excellency of God's benefits, the more is he provoked to praise, and give thanks unto almighty God with all his heart for the same. I do here also pass over the contempt of the world, and the hatred of sin, with other the like virtuous affections, which next after grace, do proceed of this exercise of Consideration, which is the spur and provoker of them all, and the oil wherewith the lamps of all these virtues, and good affections, and of other the like graces, are still nourished, and maintained.

§. V. How Prayer Joined with Consideration Helpeth All the Virtuous Affections.

Prayer likewise when it is joined with consideration (as ordinarily it is wont to be) helpeth no less than Consideration itself: yea sometimes it helpeth much more. For consideration commonly is not occupied any further but only about enkindling of some one of these virtuous affections: but prayer (when it is attent, and devout, and is withal accompanied with spirit, and fervency of the mind,) is wont to stir up all these virtues aforesaid. For when the soul presenteth herself before almighty God with an earnest great desire to appease his wrath, and to desire him of mercy, then there is no stone so hard, but that it is moved hereunto. I mean hereby, that there is no holy affection, but that it is then wholly exercised and employed to this purpose. And it fareth in this case as it doth with a mother, that is desirous to still her child, or as it doth with a good and loving wife, that hath a desire to pacify her husband, when she perceiveth him

to be angry: In which cases, they are wont to omit no means they can devise, that may anywise further the matter. Forsomuch as in prayer the religious soul accuseth herself before almighty God: there with the publican she is confounded, and ashamed for her sins, and offences: there she purposeth an amendment of life: there she humbleth herself, and trembleth before the supreme divine majesty.²⁴ There she believeth: there she hopeth: there she loveth: there she adoreth: there she praiseth: there she giveth thanks for all benefits: and there she offereth sacrifice unto almighty God, both for herself, and for all her neighbors. All these things be performed in a devout prayer. And because the habits of virtues do increase with the exercise of their acts, hereof it proceedeth, that the soul by means of this exercise of prayer remaineth very much beautified, and perfited in these virtues. As *St. Lourentius Justinianus* affirmeth in these words. *In the exercise of prayer the soul is cleansed from sin: Charity is nourished: Faith is illuminated: Hope is strengthened: the spirit is comforted: the bowels are mollified: the heart is quieted: truth is discovered: temptation is overcome: heaviness is put to flight: the senses are revived: the strength that was weakened is repaired: lukewarmness is abandoned: the rustiness of vices is consumed: and in this exercise the lively sparkles of heavenly desires do rise up, and shew themselves, among which burneth the flame of the love of God.*

By this we understand, that prayer is a most convenient exercise for that man, that mindeth to reform his manners, and life, and to change himself into an other man. As our Savior hath plainly signified unto us in the mystery of his glorious transfiguration, whereof *St. Luke* writeth thus: *that as he was praying in the mount, he suddenly transfigured himself in such wise, that his face shined very bright like the son, and his garments became white like snow.*²⁵

Our Savior could right well have transfigured himself at other times, than at prayer, if it had pleased him: But he would of very purpose be transfigured whiles he was at prayer: to signify unto us in the

²⁴ See Luke 18.

²⁵ See Matt. 17:2; Luke 9:29.

transfiguration of his body, what virtue prayer hath to transfigure our souls: that is: to make them to lose the customs of the old man, and to clothe them with the new man, which is created after the image of God. There it is, where the understanding is illuminated with the beams of the true sun of justice, and where the garments, and ornaments of the soul are renewed, and become whiter than snow. This is the very thing, that almighty God signified to holy Job, when he said.

*What? Is it by thy wisdom, that the hawk pruneth, and changeth her feathers, when she beateth her wings against the south?*²⁶ Certainly it is a thing greatly to be wondered at, that this bird knoweth how to cast of her old feathers, and how to feather herself with new. And that for this purpose, she seeketh the hot air of the south, that with the heat thereof her pores may be opened, and with her moving the old feathers fall off, and so give place to the new, that begin to spring out. But how much more wonderful is it, to see a soul unclout herself of Adam, and to put on Christ, to change the conditions of the old man, and to adorn herself with the conditions of the new man? Now this change that is so wonderful is then wrought, when the devout soul turneth herself to the south, and there beateth her wings in the air. And what is it to turn herself to the south, but to lift up her spirit to the consideration of the eternal light, and to the beams of the true sun of justice? And what is it to beat her wings in the air, but to be there sighing and panting with heavenly affections, and desires, calling upon almighty God, with great anguish of mind, and desiring most humbly his favor and grace? For then bloweth the air of the south, that is the heavenly refreshing of the holy Ghost, who with his temperate heat, and sweet moving, strengtheneth, and helpeth us to cast of all the old feathers of the old Adam, that they may give place to the new feathers of virtues, and holy desires, which there do begin to grow, and bud out. And this is that thing, that Ecclesiastic signified by other words, he said, *They that fear our lord will prepare their hearts, and sanctify their souls before him.*²⁷ The which

²⁶ Job 39:26.

²⁷ Eccclus. 2:20.

is principally done in the exercise of devout prayer. For there it is, where the soul presenteth herself most familiarly before almighty God, (as St. Bernard saith.) And there it is, where by approaching near unto the everlasting light, she seeth more clearly her own defects, and so bewaileth, and accuseth them, and seeketh remedy for them, desiring our lord of his grace, and fully purposing an amendment on her part, and thus by little and little she sanctifieth and amendeth her life. Thou seest now good Christian reader, what a great help this exercise of consideration is, towards the obtaining of those most high, and excellent virtues, which are (as we have said) peculiar to a Christian man.

§. VI. How Consideration Helpeth towards the Obtaining of the Four Cardinal Virtues, Which Be: Prudence: Justice: Fortitude: and Temperance.

Moreover consideration helpeth also (after a sort) towards the obtaining of the other four virtues, called Cardinal virtues: which be PRUDENCE, JUSTICE, FORTITUDE, AND TEMPERANCE: as Saint Bernard plainly affirmeth in his book of consideration, by these words: *First of all, consideration purifieth and cleanseth the very fountain, from whence it proceedeth: which is the soul. Besides that, it governeth our natural passions, it directeth our works, it correcteth our faults, it frameth our manners, it beautifieth and directeth our life: to be short, it giveth knowledge to a man of things both divine, and human. It is consideration that distinguisheth things confounded, it recollecteth those that be scattered abroad, it searcheth secrets, it seeketh for truths, and trieth and examineth such things, as are in deed but apparent, and counterfeit. It is consideration that disposeth for the time to come, and thinketh of the time past, providing for the one, and bewailing the other, that so nothing may remain without correction, and due chastisement. It is consideration that in the midst of prosperity forseeth adversity, and therefore is not dismayed when it cometh: for that it hath prevented the same before hand with consideration. Of which two*

things, the one appertaineth to Prudence, and the other to Fortitude. It is consideration that sitteth down as a judge, to give sentence between pleasure, and necessity, and appointeth to every of them their bounds, and limits: giving to necessity, that which is sufficient, and taking from pleasure that which is superfluous, and in so doing it maketh and formeth the virtue of temperance, whereunto this office appertaineth. Thus far be the words of Saint Bernard: whereby thou mayst perceive, how great, and general a help consideration is towards the obtaining of these virtues.

§. VII. How Consideration Helpeth to Resist Vices.

And consideration doth not only help to obtain virtues, but also to resist the vices, that be contrary unto them. For what kind of temptation is there, against which a man doth not fight with the weapons of prayer and consideration? For although it be most necessary to use other weapons for this purpose, as fasting, taking of discipline, (by scourging ourselves,) alms deeds, austerity, and affliction of body, and to eschew the occasions of evils, with other like things: yet at a sodain, what other weapon can be devised more ready, and as it were ever at hand, than prayer, and consideration? With what other weapons doth the just man fight, and overcome in these battles, than with them? If he be assaulted with the cogitation of carnal pleasure, and delight, he hideth himself wholly in the holes of the rock: that is, in the precious wounds of our Savior Christ crucified. If he be assaulted with anger, and desire of revenge, he thinketh upon the wonderful patience, and meekness of our Savior Christ, and upon those sweet words he spake, when he desired pardon on the Cross for those very persons, that crucified him. If he be enticed with gluttony, and delicious fare, if he be allured with the desire to lie in a soft bed, and to lead a delicate and wanton life, he lifteth up his eyes, and considereth the bitter gall, and vinegar, which that

fountain of life, our sweet Savior Christ, drank upon the cross, and also the hard bed of the cross, whereupon he died, and the painful and austere troublesome life which he led for our sakes. When he beginneth to be puffed up with pride, he considereth the greatness of our Savior Christ's humility. When he is moved with covetousness, he considereth the extremity of the poverty of our Savior Christ. When sleep and slothfulness maketh him to become heavy, and dull, he considereth the painful watchings, and travails, that our savior endured for us in his prayers. When he is wearied with the troublesome labors and pains of this present life, he considereth the greatness of the heavenly treasures, and glorious delights, which he shall receive in the life to come. When he is tempted with the fickle pleasures, and delights, of this miserable world, he considereth the everlastingness, and bitterness of the horrible pains, and torments of hell fire? When he is molested, and wearied, with the exercises of penance he thinketh upon the virtuous examples, of the Martyrs, of the Apostles, of the Prophets, and of the ancient holy religious Monks: and with the consideration of that which is past, he causeth all that he doth presently, to seem little unto him. And when it so happeneth, that with all these defensives he can not well sustain the weight of his burden, he addeth then unto the diligence of consideration the voice of prayer, calling, and crying with great anguish of mind upon almighty God, who (be you well assured) will never forsake them that call upon him, but promiseth that he will give ear unto them: and hath given us very manifest, and sundry examples, that he never forsaked them, that called upon him with all their hearts. This is that, which the prophet David affirmeth in a thousand places he did, when he saw himself compassed about with the snares of his enemies, and with tribulations, and afflictions, saying *I presented my prayer before him, and I imparted unto him my tribulation.*²⁸

²⁸ Ps. 141:3.

§. VIII. How Consideration Helpeth Us to Achieve and Accomplish All Works of Virtue, That Be Austere and Full of Hardness, and Difficulty.

And consideration helpeth us not only in overcoming the temptation of vices: but also in every virtuous work, that is hard, and full of difficulty unto us. For when taking of discipline: (which is whipping our rebellious flesh for our sins,) the wearing of haircloth: the going barefoot: the fasting with bread, and water: the rising to prayer at midnight: and the labors, troubles, and persecutions of this life be irksome unto us, if then we intend (like faithful servants of God) to persevere, and go forward with our good beginning, unto what other haven we do resort, but to prayer, and consideration? For there do we humbly beseech our Lord to grant us fortitude and grace, that we fall not under our burthen, and there do we lift up our eyes, and consider a thousand kinds of examples, and remedies, that may encourage us to persevere in our good purposes? Thou seest now devout Christian reader, what a great help, and succor, we have in this virtue of consideration, towards the service, and use, of all other virtues.

§. IX. How Consideration Excludeth Not Other Particular Helps unto Virtue.

Howbeit let no man for all this imagine, that hereby is excluded the particular labor, and study, that is to be used about every one of the other virtues, for that consideration is so great a help to obtain them. Forsomuch as general helps do not exclude the particular helps that be required in every thing. And the general helps required towards the obtaining of all virtues, are not only consideration, but also fasting, silence, prayer, hearing of Sermons, going to Confession, receiving of the blessed Sacrament of the altar, and devotion, with other the like virtues, which be general helps and

provocations unto all virtues. But besides these general helps, that do give light to the understanding, and move the will to goodness, it is very requisite also to use the proper exercises of the same virtues, whereby to root, and make the habits of them more perfect by use, and to cause a man to have a more promptness, and facility, in the exercise of good works. For otherwise, like as the sword that never cometh out of the scabbard, is commonly very hard to be drawn out, at the time that a man hath need to occupy it: even so whosoever doth never exercise himself in the acts of virtues, shall never be prompt, or quick in doing them, when he shall have need to use them.

And although charity be the greatest, and most general help we have unto all virtues, yet consideration is, as it were, the general instrument of charity, whereby to attain unto all goodness, as we have here declared. And therefore like as the soul is the first beginning of all the works of man, and yet it useth natural heat as a general instrument unto all such things as it doth: even so is charity the beginning of all our good works, and yet charity useth consideration, and devotion, as general instruments to bring them to pass. So that it is no derogation to charity, to give this preeminence unto these virtues: forso much as this preeminence belongeth unto charity, as to the mistress, and principal agent, but to consideration, and devotion, as to her instruments, and helpers.

**§. X. How the Exercises of Prayer,
Consideration, and Meditation, etc.
Appertain Not Only to the Religious
Persons, and Priests, (Though Principally
unto Them,) but unto the Laity Also.**

But peradventure thou wilt say, that these exercises of prayer, consideration, and meditation do appertain only unto religious persons, and priests, and not to the laity. True it is I grant, that these exercises do principally appertain unto religious persons, and

priests, by reason of their state, and profession of life: but yet nevertheless, the laity are not utterly excused of using some kind of exercise of prayer (though not in so high a degree, and perfection,) if they mind continually to preserve themselves, and to live in the fear of God, without committing any deadly sin. For even the laity also are bound to have Faith, Hope, Charity, Humility, the fear of God, contrition, devotion, and an hatred against sin. How seeing all these virtues be for the most part virtues affective, (as we have already declared,) which affections must necessarily proceed of some consideration of the understanding, if this consideration be not exercised, how shall these virtues be preserved? How shall a man help himself by faith, if he do not sometimes consider such things, as his faith telleth him? How shall he be enkindled in charity, and strengthened in hope, how shall he bridle himself with the fear of God, how shall he be moved to devotion, to sorrow for his sins, and to the contempt of himself (wherein consisteth the virtue of humility, which appertaineth unto all kinds of persons) if he do not consider those things, wherewith these affections are wont to be enkindled, according as we have before declared? Neither ought a man to pass over these things in the exercise of consideration with to much speed, and in post haste. For among the miseries of man's heart, one of the greatest is, that it is so sensible to understand the things of the world, and so unsensible to understand the things appertaining unto almighty God. Insomuch that unto the one, it is, as it were a very dry reed, and to the other, as it were green wood that can not be set on fire, and enkindled, but with very great labor, and travail. And therefore we must not in our exercise of consideration pass over these things in such haste, but stay, and pause for a time in them, more or less, according as the holy Ghost shall instruct us, and according also, as the business and occupations of every man in his state, and vocation of life shall give him leave. And it is not a matter of mere necessity to have certain times appointed every day for consideration.

Unto these things ye may add furthermore, the dangers of the world, with all the great difficulties men have to preserve themselves without deadly sin, in a body of evil disposed, and in a world so dangerous, and among so many enemies, as we have continually assaulting us on every side. And therefore (if for that thou art not a religious person) thy state of life do not bind thee unto so much exercise of prayer, and meditation: yet the greatness of the danger wherein thou livest in the world, must needs bind thee to use some exercise therein. The state of a religious person (I confess) is greater than thine, but thy danger of falling into deadly sin, is also greater than his. For the religious person is protected, and guarded, by his superior, by enclosure within his monastery, by observance of his rules, by obedience, by prayers, by fastings, by saying daily divine service, by the austerity of his order, by good company, and religious conversation, and by all other spiritual exercises, and virtuous labors of the holy monastical life; insomuch as even the very walls of their monasteries be a great defense, and safeguard unto them, to keep them from the occasions and dangers of deadly sin: But the lay person living, practicing, and dealing daily and hourly in the throng, and press of the world, (besides that he is destitute, and unprovided, of all these great helps, and safeguards) he is compassed about also on all sides, with dragons, and scorpions, and treadeth always upon serpents, and basilisks: I mean, the dangerous conversation with wicked persons, and the continual occasions, and temptations, of falling into deadly sin, both at home, and abroad, within himself, and without himself, both at doors, and at windows, and hath a thousand several devilish engines, and snares, laid to entrap him at all times, both day, and night. Among all which dangers, and temptations, for him to keep his heart pure, and his eyes chaste, and his body clean, in the midst of the raging fires of youth, of naughty company, of lewd conversation, and among so many evil examples of this wicked world, (where there is scarcely heard one word of God, but rather jesting and scoffing at all such, as be given to virtue, and godliness) it is one of the greatest

wonders, that almighty God worketh in the world. Wherefore if the religious person ought to be always armed, because he is by his profession a man of war: even so must the lay man be armed also in his manner, (although not in so high a degree:) not because the perfection of his state of life doth bind him so much thereunto, but by reason of the great peril and danger he liveth in. For as well do they go armed, that have enemies, as those that be soldiers, and men of war. The soldiers go armed by reason of the bond, and duty of their profession, and the others go armed by reason of their necessity. Among which spiritual weapons, we do not only put prayer, consideration, and meditation: but also fasting, silence, hearing of Sermons, reading of devout books, frequenting the Sacraments, and avoiding the occasions of sins, with all other austere usage of the body. All which things be as it were a certain brine, and pickle, to keep and preserve this corruptible, and evil inclined flesh of ours, that it breed not worms, and stench in it. For undoubtedly, since the corruption of original sin, it is the greatest and hardest matter of the world, for men to keep themselves any long time without deadly sin, living in such a corrupt and dissolute wicked world as this is. For if those very persons, that do use all these spiritual helps, and exercises, are all that notwithstanding much molested with the fear, and danger of falling into deadly sin: what shall become of those, that do never use any of all these spiritual exercises scarcely in all their life? And if the holy king David, and many other saints (that lived with so great wariness, and virtuous discipline, and went armed with so many kinds of spiritual weapons) did notwithstanding take such great falls, at what time the occasions of sin were ministered unto them, what shall become of them (trow ye) that make none accompt at all, of any of these spiritual exercises.

§. XI. An Answer to an Objection, That
Some Slothful Christians Do Make
Against the Holy Exercise of Prayer,
Meditation, and Consideration, Saying:
That They Are Bound to No More, but to
Keep and Observe the Commandments
of God, and of His Catholic Church.

But thou wilt say, I am not bound to keep any more than the Commandments of almighty God, and of his Catholic Church. True it is, I grant. But yet to keep well this wall, we have need of a forewall, or bulwark: and to keep this vessel, we have need of a cupboard to keep it in: and to raise up this building, we have need of a scaffold, and other engines to raise it up withal. I mean hereby, that to keep the law of God, we have need of many things to strengthen, and encourage our hearts, for the keeping, and observation of the same law. For if the nature of man were in such good plight, as it was before sin, then were it a very easy matter to fulfil our duty herein: but now alas having so many lettes, and contradictions, we have need to have ever two cares, the one how to keep the law of God, and the other how to strengthen our heart, that it may overcome the impediments, and contradictions, that do hinder us from fulfilling the laws, and commandments of God. When the children of Israel returned from the captivity of Babylon, they went about to build Jerusalem again, and they intended to do nothing else, but only to build: but because the borders round about them sought to hinder them in their building, their labor and travail was thereby doubled. So that they were constrained to appoint the one part of the people to attend to the building, and the other to fight, and drive away their enemies from the wall.²⁹ Now in our case, whereas there be so many enemies, that do daily and hourly seek to hinder us in this spiritual building of virtues: the devils on the one side, with a thousand subtle snares,

²⁹ See 2 Esd. 4.

and deceits: the world on the other side, with a thousand kinds of scandalous offences, and evil examples: and the flesh in the middle, with divers and sundry kinds of appetites, which be so fiery, and so contrary unto the law of God, (for God requireth chastity, and the flesh longeth after sensuality: God requireth humility, and the flesh seeketh after vanity: God would have austerity of life, and the flesh hunteth after delights, and pleasures:) if now there be no spiritual weapons exercised to drive away these enemies, if there be no medicines used to cure this corrupted flesh, how shall a man keep chastity among so many dangers, charity, among so many scandalous offences: peace, among so many contradictions: simplicity, among so many malicious deceits: cleanness of life, in a body so filthy: and humility, in a world so much given unto pompous pride, and vain glory. Now to cure this flesh, and to make resistance against these enemies, that do hinder us in this building of virtues, we have need of other virtues. Some to carry the burthen, and some others to help us to carry the same. For the virtue of chastity fulfilleth the burthen of the commandment: which saith: *Thou shalt not commit fornication:* but fasting, prayer, avoiding of occasions of sin, taking of discipline, by whipping our rebellious flesh and other the like holy exercises, do help to mortify the flesh, that it may be the better able to bear this burthen. All which virtues, although they be not always of precept, and bound duty: yet are they often times of very necessity, and bounden duty to be exercised, whensoever the danger we be in is so great, that it requireth the exercise of them, for the keeping and fulfilling of the commandments.

But among these virtues, and defensives (that do help us to observe the commandments) one of the most principal is prayer. For prayer is a principal mean to obtain grace, which is the thing that is of chiefest force, to sustain the burthen of the law of God. And therefore Ecclesiasticus saith. *He that keepeth the law, multiplieth prayer.*³⁰ For whereas he seeth by experience, that none can keep the law of God (by the observation whereof everlasting glory is

³⁰ Ecclus. 35:1.

obtained)³¹ without the grace of God, he helpeth himself by prayer to obtain grace, by means whereof he may be able to keep the law of God. The law commandeth us to be chaste. But besides this, the holy Ghost addeth, and saith by the wise man. *Understanding that none could be chaste unless thou (O Lord didst give him grace for the same, and it was a great grace to know of whose gift this was) I went unto our Lord, and I demanded of him this grace with all my heart.*³² Whereby thou mayst see (according as we declared in the beginning) that the wall hath need of a forewall, or bulwark, and the vessel hath need of a cupboard to keep it in, and some virtues have need of other virtues to defend, and guard one another.

Now if this be true that thou art bound to keep the law of God, and not to commit any deadly sin, it is good reason, that thou do seek out all such means, as may help thee to keep the same law, and to preserve thee without deadly sin. The which means although generally they be but of counsel, yet sometimes they may be of precept, when the necessity of exercising them (as we have said) is so great, that without the use of those means, the very commandments themselves cannot be kept, and fulfilled, as all the learned divines do affirm. Howbeit every Christian that hath an earnest desire of his salvation ought not to expect, and delay the seeking for these remedies, until the very last, and extreme danger, when the knife is already at his throat: but he ought to make good provision, and to furnish himself before hand, by means of these foresaid spiritual exercises, that he may live more safe, and secure, from the peril of breaking God's commandments.

Again I confess, that these means (as we have said) do appertain to the religious, and to the lay people, after a divers sort: and that prayer, and consideration itself, which is one of these means, must be used of then in divers degrees. For the religious person must exercise the same, as a thing appertaining to his office, and duty of his profession, (because he walketh towards perfection:) but the lay person must exercise it as a mean, whereby he may the better fulfill his

³¹ See Matt. 19.

³² Wis. 8:21; see 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:9; Phil. 2:13; 4:13.

bounden duty of keeping the commandments of almighty God. And therefore the lay person must take so much of this medicine, (to wit of prayer, meditation, etc.,) as may suffice to cure his disease: and so much must he take of these means, as may suffice to obtain his end. It is sufficient for the lay person to withdraw himself sometimes, for to enter, and take an inward view within himself, and then by means of these, or any other spiritual exercises, and prayers, to attend unto the repairing of his conscience, and to the reformation of his life: for considering that this is the greatest of all our business, it is requisite that this be not the last of our cares.

§. XII. Of the Matter of Consideration.

Having now spoken both of the profit, and necessity of consideration, and our hearts being now well affected herewith towards this virtue: let us begin to treat of the matter of consideration, which consisteth of certain godly, and devout considerations, which are of greatest force, to induce us to the love and fear of God, to the abhorring of sin, and contempt of the world. For which purpose, there be no considerations better, nor of greater force and efficacy, than those that are taken out of the principal articles, and mysteries of our faith: as the bitter passion and death of our Savior: the remembrance of the terrible day of judgement: of the horrible torments of hell: of the glory of heaven: of the benefits of almighty God: of our sins: and of our life, and death: For every one of these points being well weighed, and considered, be able to provoke our hearts very much to all the effects above mentioned. These very points St. Bonaventure hath treated in a book, that he entituled, *FASCICULARIUS*, and hath divided them into the seven days of the week. And thus he did, that a man might have every day new food for his soul, and new provocations unto virtue, and so avoid the tediousness, that he should otherwise have in thinking always upon one same matter. And for this cause it seemed good unto me, to follow the same division, which this renowned, and blessed holy father hath made, who of all others hath treated most

largely of these matters. And if there by any, that shall not well like of this division, but will follow some other, he is at free liberty so to do, and hath also examples to follow therein. For it importeth not much, what order and division he follow in the same. And surely, that is the best order to be used in these matters, that each man findeth to be best for himself, and wherein he taketh most profit and commodity.

Moreover, I thought it expedient, considering that the food and sustenance of our soul is the word of God, and the consideration of heavenly matters, (for therewith is our soul sustained in the spiritual life, which consisteth in the love, and fear of God,) that like as we give ordinarily to our body his refection twice every day, to preserve it from fainting in this life: even so we should also give to our soul her ordinary refection twice every day, that she fail not in her life. Howbeit this is not a thing of bounded duty, nor of precept: but only of wholesome council: especially considering, that the Saints have used this exercise more often times. For we read, that the prophet Daniel withdrew himself to this exercise, three times in the day.³³ And the prophet David also used to praise God seven times in the day.³⁴ After whose virtuous example, our holy mother the Catholic Church, hath instituted the seven Canonical hours of daily service. And for this cause have we here assigned two kinds of meditations: The one for the morning, which treateth of the most bitter passion of our redeemer: and the other for the evening, or night, which treateth of the other points and matters here before mentioned.

But if any man shall have such want of time, or of devotion, that he can not withdraw himself unto this exercise twice in the day: let him yet find the means to withdraw himself thereunto at the least once in the day. And that he may not lose the fruit of all these meditations following, he may exercise himself one week in the one sort: and another week in the other sort. And in so doing he may taste, and take profit of all these godly instructions, which we have here set forth unto him.

³³ See Dan. 6.

³⁴ See Ps. 118.