The Centenary Edition.

THE COMPLETE WORKS

OF

SAINT ALPHONSOUS DE LIGUORI,

DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH,

Bishop of Saint Agatha, and Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN.

EDITED BY

REV. EUGENE GRIMM,

Priest of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

THE ASCETICAL WORKS.

Volume II.

THE WAY OF SALVATION

AND

OF PERFECTION.

(MEDITATIONS, PIous REFLECTIONS. SPIRITUAL TREATISES)
Centenary Edition.

THE COMPLETE ASCETICAL WORKS
OF
ST. ALPHONSOUS DE LIGUORI.

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Benziger Brothers, New York, Cincinnati, and St. Louis.
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THE WAY OF SALVATION
AND
OF PERFECTION.

Meditations—Pious Reflections—
Spiritual Treatises.

BY
St. ALPHONSUS DE LIGUORI,
Doctor of the Church.
EDITED BY
REV. EUGENE GRIMM,
Priest of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

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APPROBATION.

By virtue of the authority granted me by the Most Rev. Nicholas Mauron, Superior General of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, I hereby sanction the publication of the work entitled "Way of Salvation and of Perfection," which is Vol. II. of the new and complete edition in English of the works of Saint Alphonsus de Liguori, called "The Centenary Edition."

ELIAS FRED. SCHAUER,

Sup. Prov. Baltimorensis.

BALTIMORE, MD., January 20, 1886.

JAN 28 1886

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NOTICE.

This volume contains the quintessence of the science of the saints. It gives a correct idea of the spirit, of the heart, and of the talent of Saint Alphonsus: one might say that in it his whole soul is poured out.

The entire work is divided into three parts. In the first, we resume, under another form, the considerations on the eternal truths or the Last Things, treated at greater length in the preceding volume. The second part traces and paves the way that leads to divine love, or to sanctity and true happiness, and inspires us at the same time with the desire, the zeal, and the courage to undertake everything to reach this end. The third part transports us to the summit of the holy mountain, or Christian perfection, shows us in detail the mysteries of the interior life, and enables us to breathe its sweetest perfume.

Some persons have objected that the writings of Saint Alphonsus contain many repetitions. This is true in regard to the ascetical works; but these repetitions are not useless. There is no question here of a study, a scientific work done for the sole purpose of exercising the mind. It is a food destined to give strength to the life of the soul. Each one takes for himself every day the amount that agrees with his spiritual temperament. But let us hear what the author himself says in regard to this matter: "I entreat my readers not to grow weary if in those prayers they always find petitions for the grace of perseverance and the grace of divine love. For
us, these are the two graces most necessary for the attainment of eternal salvation.”¹ He also says: “One should not find it tiresome that I repeat the texts that I have already cited several times. . . . The authors of pernicious books, who treat of obscene things, reproduce even to satiety their impure sallies in order to inflame their imprudent readers with the fire of concupiscence; and should it not be permitted to me to repeat sacred texts that are most suitable to inflame souls with divine love?”² Ah, let us never grow tired of reading and meditating on what the holy bishop has had the patience to write so many times for our benefit.—Ed.

¹ Preparation for Death. Preface.
² Consid. on the Passion, ch. 8.
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THE
WAY OF SALVATION AND OF PERFECTION.

PART I.
Meditations Suitable for all Times in the Year.*

MEDITATION I.
Eternal Salvation.

1. Our most important affair is that of our eternal salvation; upon it depends our happiness or misery forever. This affair will come to an end in eternity, and will decide whether we shall be saved or lost forever; whether we shall have acquired an eternity of delights, or an eternity of torments; whether we shall live forever happy, or forever miserable.

O God! what will my lot be? Shall I be saved, or shall I be lost? I may be either. And if I may be lost, why do I not embrace such a life, as may secure for me life eternal? O Jesus! Thou didst die to save me; yet have I been lost, as often as I have lost Thee, my sovereign good: suffer me not to lose Thee any more.

* These meditations were published by Saint Alphonsus in 1767. For a method of making meditation, see Compendium of Rules for a Christian Life, at the end of the volume.—Ed.
2. Men esteem it a great affair to gain a lawsuit, to obtain a post of honor, or to acquire an estate. Nothing, however, that will end with time deserves to be esteemed great. Since, therefore, all the goods of this world will one day end in our regard, as we shall either leave them or they will leave us, that affair alone should be esteemed great, upon which depends eternal happiness or eternal misery.

O Jesus, my Redeemer, cast me not away from Thy face, as I have deserved! I am indeed a sinner; but I am grieved from the bottom of my heart for having offended Thy infinite goodness. Hitherto I have despised Thee, but now I love Thee above all things. Henceforth Thou alone shalt be my only good, my only love. Have pity on a sinner who penitently casts himself at Thy feet, and desires to love Thee. If I have grievously offended Thee, I now ardently desire to love Thee. What would have become of me, if Thou hadst called me out of life when I had lost Thy grace and favor? Since Thou, O Lord! hast shown so much mercy to me, grant me grace to become a saint.

3. Let us awaken our faith in a heaven and a hell of eternal duration: one or other will be our lot.

O God! how could I, knowing that by committing sin I was condemning myself to eternal torments—how could I sin so often against Thee and forfeit Thy grace? Knowing that Thou art my God and my Redeemer, how could I, for the sake of a miserable gratification, so often turn my back upon Thee? O God, I am sorry above every evil for having thus despised Thee. I love Thee above every good, and henceforth I will suffer the loss of all things rather than lose Thy friendship. Give me strength to continue faithful. And do Thou, O Blessed Virgin Mary! pray for me and assist me.
MEDITATION II.

Sin as it Dishonors God.

1. *By transgression of the law thou dishonorest God.*¹ When the sinner deliberates whether he shall give or refuse his consent to sin, he takes the balance into his hands to decide which is of most value—the favor of God, some passion, some worldly interest or pleasure. When he yields to temptation, what does he do? He decides that some wretched gratification is more desirable than the favor of God. Thus it is that he dishonors God, declaring, by his consent, that a miserable pleasure is preferable to the divine friendship.

Thus, then, O God! have I so many times dishonored Thee, by esteeming Thee less than my miserable passions.

2. Of this the Almighty complains by the prophet Ezekiel, when he says: *They violated Me among My people, for a handful of barley and a piece of bread.*² If the sinner should exchange God for a treasure of jewels, or for a kingdom, it would indeed be doing a great evil, because God is of infinitely more value than all the treasures and kingdoms of the earth. But for what do so many exchange him? for a vapor, for a little dirt, for a poisoned pleasure, which is no sooner tasted than it vanishes.

O God! how could I have had the heart for such vile things, so often to despise Thee, who hast shown so much love for me? But behold, my Redeemer, how I now love Thee above all things; and because I love Thee, I feel more regret for having lost Thee, my God, than if I had lost all other goods, and even my life. Have pity on me, and forgive me. I will never more incur Thy

¹ “Per praevaricationem legis, Deum inhonoras.”—Rom. ii. 23.
² “Violabant me . . . propter pugillum hordei et fragmen panis.”—Ezek. xiii. 19.
displeasure. Grant that I may rather die than offend Thee any more.

3. *Lord, who is like to Thee?*¹ And what good things, O God! can be comparable to Thee, O infinite goodness? But how could I have turned my back upon Thee, to give myself to those vile things which sin held out to me? O Jesus, Thy precious blood is my hope. Thou hast promised to hear him who prays to Thee. I ask Thee not for the goods of this world: I ask Thee for the pardon of those sins which I have committed against Thee, and for which I am sorry above every other evil. I ask Thee for perseverance in Thy grace until the end of my life. I ask Thee for the gift of Thy holy love; my soul is enamoured of Thy goodness; hear me, O Lord! Only grant that I may love Thee both here and hereafter, and to all things else do with me as Thou pleasest. My Lord, and my only good, suffer me not to be any more separated from Thee! Mary, Mother of God, do thou also listen to me, and obtain for me that I may ever belong to God, and that God may be my inheritance forever.

MEDITATION III.

The Patience of God in waiting for Sinners.

1. Who in this world has so much patience with his equals as God with us his creatures, in bearing with us, and waiting for our repentance, after the many offences we have committed against him?

Ah! my God, had I thus offended my brother or my father, long ago would he have driven me from his face! O Father of mercies, cast me not away from Thy face,² but have pity on me.

2. *Thou hast mercy,* says the wise man, *upon all, because Thou canst do all things,* and overlookest the sins of men for the

¹ "Domine, quis similis tibi?"—Ps. xxxiv. 10.
² "Ne projicias me a facie tua." Ps. 1. 13.
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sake of repentance." Men conceal their sense of the inju-
ries which they receive, either because they are good,
and know that it belongs not to themselves to punish
those who offend them; or because they are unable, and
have not the power to revenge themselves. But to Thee,
my God, it does belong to take revenge of the offences
which are committed against Thy infinite majesty; and
thou indeed art able to avenge Thyself, whenever Thou
pleaseth; and dost Thou dissemble? Men despise Thee;
they make promises to Thee and afterwards betray Thee;
and dost Thou seem not to behold them, or as if Thou
hadst little concern for Thy honor?

Thus, O Jesus, hast Thou done towards me. Ah! my
God, my infinite good, I will no longer despise Thee, I
will no longer provoke Thee to chastise me. And why
should I delay until Thou abandonest me in reality and
condemnest me to hell? I am truly sorry for all my
offences against Thee. I would that I had died rather
than offend Thee! Thou art my Lord, Thou hast created
me, and Thou hast redeemed me by Thy death; Thou
alone hast loved, Thou alone deservest to be loved, and
Thou alone shalt be the sole object of my love.

3. My soul, how could you be so ungrateful and so
daring against your God? When you offended him,
could he not have suddenly called you out of life and
punished you with hell? And yet he waited for you;
instead of chastising you, he preserved your life and gave
you good things. But you, instead of being grateful to
him and loving him for such excessive goodness, you
continued to offend him!

O my Lord, since Thou hast waited for me with so
great mercy, I give Thee thanks. I am sorry for having
offended Thee. I love Thee. I might at this hour have
dwelt in hell, where I could not have repented, nor have

"Misereris omnium, quia omnia potes; et dissimulas peccata
hominum propter poenitentiam."—Wis. xi. 24.
loved Thee. But now that I can repent, I grieve with my whole heart for having offended Thy infinite goodness; and I love Thee above all things, more than I love myself. Forgive me, and grant that from this day I may love no other but Thee, who hast so loved me. May I live for Thee alone, my Redeemer, who for me didst die upon the cross! All my hopes are in Thy bitter Passion. O Mary, Mother of God! assist me by thy holy intercession.

MEDITATION IV.

The Certainty of Death.

1. *We must die!* how awful is the decree! *we must die.* The sentence is passed: *It is appointed for all men once to die.* Thou art a man and thou must die. St. Cyprian says that we are born with a rope around our necks, and as long as we live on earth we hourly approach the gallows, that is, the sickness that puts an end to our life. It would be madness for any one to delude himself with the idea that he shall not die. A poor man may flatter himself that he may become rich, or a vassal that he may be a king; but who can ever hope to escape death? One dies old, another young, but all at last must come to the grave.

I therefore must one day die and enter eternity. But what will be my lot for eternity? happy or miserable? My Saviour Jesus, be Thou a Saviour to me!

2. Of all those who were living upon the earth at the beginning of the last century, not one is now alive. The greatest and most renowned princes of this world have exchanged their country; scarcely does there remain any remembrance of them, and their bare bones are hardly preserved in stone monuments.

Make me, O God! more and more sensible of the folly

1 "Statutum est hominibus semel mori."—*Heb.* ix. 27.
of loving the goods of this world, and for the sake of
them renouncing Thee, my sovereign and infinite good.
What folly have I not been guilty of; and how much it
grieves me! I give Thee thanks for having made me
sensible of it.

3. A hundred years hence, at most, and neither you
nor I will be any longer in this world; both will have
gone into the house of eternity. A day, an hour, a mo-
ment, is approaching which will be the last both for you
and me; and this hour, this moment, is already fixed by
Almighty God; how then can we think of anything else
but of loving God, who will then be our judge?

Alas! what will my death be? O my Jesus and my
judge! what will become of me when I shall have to ap-
pear before Thee to give an account of my whole life?
Pardon me, I beseech Thee, before that moment arrives
which will decide my happiness or misery for eternity. I
am sorry for having offended Thee, my sovereign good.
Hitherto I have not loved Thee; but now I will love Thee
with my whole soul. Grant me the grace of persever-
ance. O Mary, refuge of sinners, have pity on me!

MEDITATION V.

The Loss of all Things in Death.

1. The day of destruction is at hand.1 The day of death
is called the day of destruction, because then is destroy-
all that man has acquired; honors, friends, riches, pos-
sessions, kingdoms—all are then no more. What then
doth it profit us to gain the whole world if in death we
must leave all? All is at an end at the bedside of the
dying man. Is there any king, think you,—said St.
Ignatius to Xavier when he sought to bring him to God,
—who has taken with him into the other world even a
thread of purple to mark his sovereignty? Has any rich

1 "Juxta est dies perditionis."—Deut. xxxii. 35.
man taken with him a single coin, or even one servant to attend him? In death all is left behind. The soul enters eternity alone and unattended, except by its works.

Woe to me! where are my works to accompany me to a blessed eternity? I can discover none but such as render me deserving of eternal torments.

2. Men come into the world in unequal conditions: one is born rich, another poor, one a noble, another a plebeian; but all go out of it equal and alike. Consider the graves of the dead: see if you can discover among the bodies which are there interred, who was a master and who a servant, who was a king and who a beggar.

O God! while others amass the fortunes of this world, may my only fortune be Thy holy grace. Thou alone art my only good both in this life and in the next.

3. In one word, everything on earth will come to an end. All greatness will end, all misery will end, honors will end, ignominies will end; pleasures will end, sufferings will end. Blessed in death, therefore, not he who has abounded in riches, honors, and pleasures, but he who has patiently endured poverty, contempt, and sufferings! The possession of temporal goods affords no consolation at the moment of death: that alone consoles us which has been done or suffered for God.

O Jesus! separate my heart from this world, before death entirely takes me from it. Help me with Thy grace; Thou indeed knowest how great is my weakness. Permit me not to be any more unfaithful to Thee, as I have hitherto been. I am sorry, O Lord! for having so often despised Thee. Now will I love Thee above every good, and will die a thousand times rather than forfeit Thy grace. But the infernal one ceases not to tempt me; in mercy abandon me not, leave me not to myself, permit me not to be any more separated from Thy love. O Mary, my hope! obtain for me the grace of perseverance.
MEDITATION VI.

The Great Thought of Eternity.

1. Thus did St. Augustine designate the thought of eternity: "The great thought"—"magna cogitatio." It was this thought that induced so many solitaries to retire into deserts; so many religious, even kings and queens, to shut themselves up in cloisters; and so many martyrs to sacrifice their lives in the midst of torments, in order to acquire a happy eternity in heaven, and to avoid a miserable eternity in hell. The Ven. John of Avila converted a certain lady with these two words: "Reflect," said he to her, "on these two words: Ever and Never." A certain monk went down into a grave that he might meditate continually on eternity, and constantly repeated, "O eternity! eternity!"

How frequently, my God, have I deserved the eternity of hell! Oh, that I had never offended Thee! Grant me sorrow for my sins; have compassion on me.

2. The same Ven. John of Avila says, that he who believes in eternity and becomes not a saint should be confined as one deranged. He who builds a house for himself takes great pains to make it commodious, airy, and handsome, and says: "I labor and give myself a great deal of trouble about this house, because I shall have to live in it all my life." And yet how little is the house of eternity thought of! When we shall have arrived at eternity there will be no question of our residing in a house more or less commodious, or more or less airy: the question will be of our dwelling in a palace overflowing with delights, or in a gulf of endless torments. And for how long a time? not for forty or fifty years, but forever, as long as God shall be God. The saints, to obtain salvation, thought it little to give their
whole lives to prayer, penance, and the practice of good works. And what do we do for the same end?

O my God! many years of my life are already past, already death is near at hand, and what good have I hitherto done for Thee? Give me light, and strength, to devote the remainder of my days to Thy service. Too much, alas! have I offended Thee; I desire henceforth to love Thee.

3. *With fear and trembling work out your salvation.* To obtain salvation we must tremble at the thought of being lost, and tremble not so much at the thought of hell, as of sin, which alone can send us thither. He who dreads sin avoids dangerous occasions, frequently recommends himself to God, and has recourse to the means of keeping himself in the state of grace. He who acts thus will be saved; but for him who lives not in this manner it is morally impossible to be saved. Let us attend to that saying of St. Bernard: “We cannot be too secure where eternity is at stake.”

Thy blood, O Jesus, my Redeemer! is my security. I should have been already lost on account of my sins, hadst Thou not offered me Thy pardon, on condition of my repentance for having offended Thee. I am sorry therefore with my whole heart for having offended Thee, who art infinite goodness. I love Thee, O sovereign good! above every other good. I know that Thou wiltest my salvation, and I will endeavor to secure it by loving Thee forever. O Mary, Mother of God! pray to Jesus for me.

MEDITATION VII.

The Death of Jesus Christ.

1. How is it possible to believe that the Creator should have been willing to die for us, his creatures? Yet we

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1 "Cum metu et tremore vestram salutem operamini."—Phil. ii. 12.
2 Nulla nimis securitas, ubi periclitatur æternitas.
must believe it because faith so teaches it. Hence the Council of Nice commands us to confess: "I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who for us men and for our salvation was crucified for us, suffered, and was buried." ¹

And if it is true, O God of love! that Thou hast died for the love of men, can there be one who believes this, and does not love Thee, so loving a God? But, O God! of those who are guilty of such ingratitude I am one; and not only have I not loved Thee, my Redeemer, but I have many times, for the sake of gratifying my miserable and depraved inclinations, renounced Thy grace and Thy love.

2. Thou hast then, my Lord and my God, died for me; and how could I, knowing this, have so often dis-owned Thee and turned my back upon Thee? But Thou, my Saviour, didst come down from heaven to save that which was lost.² My ingratitude, therefore, does not deprive me of the hope of pardon. Yes, O Jesus! I hope that Thou wilt pardon me all offences which I have committed against Thee, through the death which Thou didst suffer for me on Mount Calvary. Oh that I could die of grief and of love as often as I think of the offences which I have committed against the love which Thou hast shown towards me! Make known to me, O Lord! what I must do henceforward to make amends for my ingratitude. Keep up in my mind a continual remembrance of the bitter death Thou wast pleased to suffer for me, that I may love Thee and never more offend Thee.

3. God, then, has died for me; and shall I be able to

¹ Credo . . . in unum Dominum Jesum Christum, Filium Dei . . . qui propter nos homines, et propter nostram salutem . . . crucifixus . . . passus et sepultus est. ² "Venit enim Filius hominis salvare quod perierat."—Matt. xviii.

II.
love anything else but God? No, my Jesus, I will love none but Thee. Thou hast loved me too much. Thou canst do no more to compel me to love Thee. I have obliged Thee by my sins to cast me away from Thy face; but Thou hast not abandoned me forever; Thou regardest me with tender affection; Thou art about to call me to Thy love; I will no longer resist. I love Thee, my sovereign good; I love Thee, my God, who art worthy of infinite love; I love Thee, my God, who hast died for me. I love Thee, but I love Thee not enough; do Thou increase my love. Grant that I may forsake all things, and forget all things else, to please and to love Thee, my Redeemer, my love, and my all. O Mary, my hope! recommend me to thy divine Son.

MEDITATION VIII.

The Abuse of God's Mercy.

1. There are two ways by which the devil endeavors to deceive men to their eternal ruin: after they have committed sin he tempts them to despair on account of the severity of divine justice; but before they have sinned he encourages them to do so by the hope of obtaining the divine mercy. And he effects the ruin of numberless souls as well by the second as by the first artifice. "God is merciful," says the obstinate sinner to him who would convert him from the iniquity of his ways. "God is merciful." But as the Mother of God expresses it in her canticle, *His mercy is to them that fear Him.* 1 Yes, the Lord deals mercifully with him that fears to offend him, but not so with the man who presumes upon his mercy to offend him still more.

O God! I give Thee thanks for having made me sensible of Thy patience in bearing with me. Behold, I am

1 "Misericordia ejus timentibus eum."—Luke i. 50.
of the number of those who, presuming on Thy goodness, have offended Thee again and again.

2. God is merciful; but he is also just. Sinners are desirous that he should be merciful only, without being just; but that is impossible, because were he only to forgive and never to chastise, he would be wanting in justice. Hence Father Avila observes that patience on the part of God towards those who avail themselves of his compassion to offend him the more, would not be compassion, but a want of justice. He is bound to chastise the ungrateful. He bears with them for a certain time, but after that abandons them.

Such a punishment, O God! has not as yet overtaken me, or else I had now dwelt in hell, or had been obstinate in my sins. But no: I desire to amend my life; I desire to offend Thee no more. Though I have hitherto displeased Thee, I am sorry for it with my whole soul; I desire henceforth to love Thee, and I desire to love Thee more than others do, because Thou hast not shown the same patience towards others as towards me.

3. *God is not mocked.* Yet he would be mocked, if the sinner could go on continually offending him, and yet afterwards enjoy him in heaven. *What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap.* He who sows good works shall reap rewards; but he who sows iniquities shall reap chastisements. The hope of those who commit sin because God is forgiving, is an abomination in his sight: *their hope,* says holy Job, *is an abomination.* Hence the sinner, by such hope, provokes God to chastise him the sooner, as that servant would provoke his master, who, because his master was good, took advantage of his goodness to behave ill.

O Jesus! such, I fear, has been my conduct towards

1 "Deus non irridetur."—*Gal.* vi. 7.
2 "Quae seminaverit homo, haece et metetur."—Ibid. 8.
3 "Spes illorum abominatio."—*Job,* xi. 20.
Meditations. [PART I.

Thee; because Thou wast good I have made no account of Thy precepts. I confess that I have done wickedly; and I detest all the offences I have committed against Thee. Now do I love Thee more than myself, and I desire never more to displease Thee. Ah, if I should again offend Thee by mortal sin! Permit it not, O Lord; rather let me die. O Mary, Mother of perseverance, do thou assist me.

MEDITATION IX.

The Emptiness and Shortness of Human Life.

1. Holy David said that the happiness of this life is as the dream of one awaking from sleep: as the dream of them that awake.¹ All the greatness and glory of this world will appear no more to poor wordlings, at the hour of death, than as a dream to one awaking from sleep, who finds that the fortune which he had acquired in his dream ends with his sleep. Hence, did one who was undeceived wisely write on the skull of a dead man, "Cogitanti omnia viles- cunt"—He who thinks, undervalues all things. Yes, to him who thinks on death, all the goods of this life appear, as they really are, vile and transitory. Nor can that man fix his affections on the earth who reflects that in a short time he must leave it forever.

Ah, my God, how often have I despised Thy grace for the miserable goods of this world! Henceforth I desire to think of nothing but of loving and serving Thee. Assist me with Thy holy grace.

2. "And is it thus, then, that worldly grandeur and sovereign power must end?" Such was the exclamation of St. Francis Borgia, when he beheld the corpse of the Empress Isabella, who died in the flower of her youth. Reflecting upon what he saw, he resolved to bid adieu to the world, and to give himself entirely to God, say-

¹ "Velut somnium surgetium."—Ps. lxxii. 20.
ing, "I will henceforth serve a master who will never forsake me." Let us detach ourselves from present goods before death tears us away from them. What folly it is to expose ourselves to the danger of losing our souls, for the sake of some attachment to this miserable world, from which we shall soon have to depart; for soon it will be said to us by the minister of God, "Go forth, Christian soul, out of this world!"  

O my Jesus, that I had always loved Thee! How many offences have I been guilty of against Thee! Teach me how to correct my disorderly life, for I am willing to do whatever Thou pleasest. Accept of my love, accept of my repentance, in which I love Thee more than myself, and crave Thy mercy and compassion.

3. Reflect that you cannot remain forever in this world. You must one day leave the country in which you now reside; you must one day go out from the house in which you now dwell to return to it no more. Think that many before you inhabited the same room in which you are at present reading; that they slept in the same bed in which you are accustomed to sleep; and where are they? gone into eternity. The same will happen to you.

Make me sensible, O God, of the injustice I have been guilty of in turning my back upon Thee, my sovereign good; and grant me the sorrow to bewail my ingratitude as I ought. O that I had died rather than ever offended Thee! Suffer me not to live any longer ungrateful for the love which Thou hast shown me. My dear Redeemer, I love Thee above all things, and I desire to love Thee to the best of my power during the remainder of life. Strengthen my weakness by Thy grace; and do thou, Mary, Mother of God, intercede for me.

1 Proficiscere, anima Christiana, de hoc mundo.
Meditations. [PART I.

MEDITATION X.

The Contempt with which the Sinner treats God.

1. God himself declares that the sinner treats him with contempt, and complains of it in these words: I have brought up children, and exalted them; but they have despised me.¹ I have brought up my children, I have preserved and nourished them, but with base ingratitude they have despised me. But who is God who is thus despised by men? He is the Creator of heaven and earth; he is the sovereign infinite good, in whose sight men and angels are as a drop of water, or a grain of sand: as a drop of a bucket, as a little dust.² In a word, all things created, in the presence of his infinite greatness, are as though they were not: All nations are before him as if they had no being at all, and counted to him nothing and vanity.³

Behold me, O God! a daring sinner who have presumed to despise Thy infinite majesty. But whilst Thou art infinite majesty, Thou art also infinite mercy. I love Thee, O Lord! and because I love Thee I am sorry for having offended Thee; do Thou have pity on me.

2. And, O God! who am I who have despised Thee? A poor helpless worm, who have nothing but what Thou in Thy bounty hast bestowed upon me. Thou hast given me my soul, my body, the use of reason, and numberless other benefits in this world; and I have made no other use of them all but to offend Thee, my benefactor. Nay, more; at the very time that Thou didst preserve my life, that I might not fall into hell as I deserved, I abused Thy goodness and forbearance. O my Saviour! how couldst Thou have had such patience with me? Wretch

¹ "Filios enutrivi et exaltavi; ipsi autem spreverunt me."—Isa. i. 2.
² "Quasi stilla situla . . . quasi pulvis exiguus."—Ibid. xl. 15.
³ "Omnes gentes quasi non sint, sic sunt coram eo."—Ibid. xl. 17.
that I am, how many nights I slept under Thy displeasure! But Thou wouldst not have me perish. I trust, O my Jesus! in Thy blessed Passion that Thou wilt enable me to change my life. Let not that sacred blood be lost, which with so much pain and sorrow Thou didst shed for my salvation.

3. But, O God! what have I done! Thou, my Redeemer, hast shown that regard for my soul, so as to shed Thy blood for its salvation, and I have been so wretched as to allow it to perish for a mere nothing, for a caprice, for a maddening passion, for a miserable gratification, for contempt of Thy grace and love. Ah! if faith did not assure me that Thou hast promised to pardon those who repent, I should not now dare to implore Thy forgiveness. O my Saviour! I kiss Thy sacred wounds, and for the love of these wounds I beseech Thee to forget the injuries which I have committed against Thee. Thou hast said that, when the sinner repents, Thou wilt forget all his ingratitude. I am sorry above every evil for having despised Thee, my sovereign good; make haste to pardon me, as Thou hast promised; let me be quickly reconciled to Thee. I love Thee now more than myself; may I never more incur Thy displeasure. O Mary, refuge of sinners! succor a poor sinner who invokes thy assistance.

MEDITATION XI.

The Pain of Loss.

1. The greatest pain of hell is not the fire nor the darkness, not the stench, nor any other of all the material torments of that dreadful prison of despair; it is the pain of loss—that is, the pain of having lost God—which of itself may be said to constitute hell. The soul was created to be forever united with God, and to enjoy the sight of his enrapturing countenance. God is its last
end, its only good, so that all the goods of earth and heaven, without God, could not make it happy. Hence it is that if a condemned soul in hell could possess and love God, hell, with all its torments, would be to it a paradise. But this will be its sovereign punishment, which will render it forever inconceivably miserable, to be deprived of God for all eternity, without the least hope of ever again beholding him or loving him.

Jesus, my Redeemer! nailed to the cross for my sake, Thou art my hope; oh that I had died rather than offended Thee!

2. The soul, being created for God, has an instinctive tendency to become united with its sovereign good, its God; but being united with the body, when it wallows in iniquity, it becomes so darkened by the created objects which allure the senses that it loses its sight, and has so little knowledge of God as no longer to desire to be united with him. But when separated from the body, and from sensible objects, then it will know that God is the only good that can render it happy. Therefore, as soon as it shall have departed hence, it will feel itself drawn with most powerful attraction towards a union with God; but having left this life an enemy of God, it will be not only kept back from him by its sins, as by a chain, but dragged by them into hell, there to be forever separated and at a distance from God. The wretched soul in that eternal dungeon will know how beautiful God is, but will not be able to behold him. It will know how amiable God is, but will not be able to love him; it will even feel itself forced by its sins to hate him; and this will be its hell of hells, to know that it hates a God who is infinitely lovely. It will desire that it were possible to destroy God, to whom it is hateful; and to destroy itself, hating God; and this will be the eternal occupation of this unhappy soul.

Do Thou, O Lord! have pity on me.
The Particular Judgment.

3. This torment will be immensely increased by the remembrance of the graces that God bestowed upon it, and the love which he evinced towards it during its lifetime. It will especially call to mind the love of Jesus Christ in shedding his blood, and laying down his life for its salvation; but, ungrateful soul, not to forego its own miserable gratifications, it consented to lose God, its sovereign good; and it will find that no hope will be left of ever regaining him.

Ah, my God! were I in hell, I should not be able to love Thee, nor to repent of my sins; but as I have it now in my power to repent and to love Thee, I am sorry with my whole soul for having offended Thee, and love Thee above all things. Grant me to remember continually that hell which I have deserved, that I may love Thee with still greater and greater fervor. O Mary, refuge of sinners! do not abandon me.

MEDITATION XII.

The Particular Judgment.

1. It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.¹ It is of faith, that immediately after death we shall be judged according to our works in this life. And it is also of faith, that upon this judgment will depend our eternal salvation or perdition. Imagine yourself to be in your agony, and to have only a short time to live. Think that in a short time you would then have to appear before Jesus Christ to give an account of your whole life. Alas! how alarming would the sight of your sins then be to you!

Jesus, my Redeemer! pardon me, I beseech Thee, before Thou judgest me. I know that I have many times

¹“Statutum est hominibus semel mori; post hoc autem, judicium.”

Heb. ix. 27.
already deserved to be sentenced to eternal death. No, I desire not to present myself guilty before Thee, but penitent and pardoned. O my sovereign good! I am grievously sorry for having offended Thee.

2. O God! what will be the anguish of the soul when it shall first behold Jesus Christ as its judge, and behold him terrible in his wrath? It will then see how much he has suffered for its sake; it will see what great mercies he has exercised towards it, and what powerful means he has bestowed upon it for the attainment of salvation; then will it also see the greatness of eternal goods, and the vileness of earthly pleasures, which have wrought its ruin; it will then see all these things, but to no purpose, because then there will be no more time to correct its past errors; what shall have then been done will be irrevocable. Before the judgment-seat of God, no nobility, nor dignity, nor riches will be considered; our works alone will be weighed there.

Grant, O Jesus! that when I first behold Thee I may see Thee appeased; and, for this end, grant me the grace to weep, during the remainder of my life, over the evil which I have done in turning my back upon Thee, to follow my own sinful caprices. No, I desire never more to offend Thee. I love Thee and desire to love Thee forever.

3. What contentment will that Christian enjoy at the hour of death who has left the world to give himself to God; who has denied his senses all unlawful gratifications; and who, if he has on some occasions been wanting, has at last been wise enough afterwards to do worthy penance for it! On the other hand, what anguish will that Christian experience who has continually relapsed into the same vices, and at last finds himself at the point of death! Then will he exclaim: "Alas! in a few moments I must appear before Jesus as my judge, and I have not as yet even begun to change my life! I have many times
promised to do so, but I have not done it; and now, in a short time, what will become of me?"

Ah, my Jesus and my judge! I return Thee thanks for the patience with which Thou hast hitherto waited for me. How many times have I myself written my own eternal condemnation! Since Thou hast thus waited to pardon me, reject me not, now prostrate at Thy feet. Receive me into Thy favor through the merits of Thy bitter Passion. I am sorry, my sovereign good! for having despised Thee. I love Thee above all things. I desire never more to forsake Thee. O Mary! recommend me to thy Son Jesus, and do not abandon me.

MEDITATION XIII.

Preparation for the Particular Judgment.

1. Be you ready: for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come.\(^1\) The time of death will not be the time to prepare ourselves to die well; to die well and happily, we must prepare ourselves beforehand. There will not be time then to eradicate bad habits from the soul, to expel from the heart its predominant passions, and to extinguish all affection to earthly goods. \textit{The night cometh when no man can work.}\(^2\) All in death will be night; when nothing will be seen; and, hence, nothing done. The heart hardened, the mind obscured, confusion, fear, the desire of health, will all render it almost impossible at the hour of death to set in order a conscience confused and entangled in sin.

O Sacred wounds of my Redeemer! I adore you, I humbly kiss you, and I confide in you.

2. The saints thought they did but little, though they spent their whole lives in preparing for death, by acts of

\(^1\) \textit{Estote parati, quia, qua hora non putatis, Filius hominis veniet.} \textit{Luke, xii. 40.}

\(^2\) \textit{Venit nox, quando nemo potest operari.} \textit{— John, ix. 4.}
penance, prayer, and the practice of good works; and they trembled when they came to die. The venerable John Avila, although he had led a very holy life from his youth, when it was announced to him that he was about to die, made answer and said, "Oh that I had a little more time to prepare myself for death!" And what shall we say when the summons of death shall be brought to us?

No, my God, I do not wish to die disquieted and ungrateful, as at present I should die, if death were to overtake me; I desire to change my life, I desire to Lewail my offences against Thee, I desire to love Thee with my whole heart. O Lord! help me, enable me to do something for Thee before I die,—for Thee who hast died for the love of me.

3. The time is short,¹ says the Apostle. Yes, we have but a short time in which to set our accounts in order. Hence the Holy Ghost admonishes us, Whatecever thy hand is able to do, do it quickly.² Whatever thou art able to do to-day, put it not off till to-morrow; for to-day is passing away, and to-morrow may bring death, which will deprive thee of all means of doing good, or of amending what thou hast done amiss. Woe to me! if death should find me still attached to this world.

Ah, my God, how many years have I lived at a distance from Thee! And how hast Thou had so much patience with me, in waiting for me and in calling me so often to repentance! I thank Thee, O my Redeemer! for Thy long forbearance, and I hope to thank Thee for it forever in heaven. The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever.³ Hitherto I have not loved Thee, and have made little account of being or not being loved by Thee, but now

¹ "Tempus breve est."—I Cor. vii. 29.
² "Quodcumque facere potest manus tua, instanter operare." Eccles. ix. 10.
³ "Misericordias Domini in æternum cantabo."—Ps. lxxviii. 2.
Mental Suffering of Souls in Hell.

I do love Thee with my whole heart; I love Thee above all things, more than I love myself, and I desire nothing so much as to be loved by Thee; and, recollecting how I have despised Thy love, I would willingly die of grief for having done so. Jesus, grant me perseverance in virtue. Mary, my holy mother, obtain for me the happiness of being faithful to God.

MEDITATION XIV.

The Suffering of Souls in Hell in their Mental Faculties.

1. The souls in hell will be tormented in their memory. Never, in the abode of infinite misery will they lose for a moment the remembrance of the time that was allowed them in this life to practise virtue, and to make amends for the evil which they have done; and never will it be concealed from them that there is no longer the least hope of remedy. They will call to mind the lights which they received from God, his many loving calls, his offers of pardon, all despised; and they will see that all is now at an end, and that nothing remains for them, but to suffer and to despair for all eternity.

O Jesus! Thy blood, Thy sufferings, and Thy death are my trust and hope. Alas! suffer me not to fall into hell, there to curse forever even the blessings which Thou hast bestowed upon me.

2. The souls in hell will be tormented in their understanding, by thinking continually of heaven, which they have wilfully lost through their own fault. The immense felicity enjoyed by the blessed in the abode of delights will be forever before their eyes; and this will render their life of dreadful sufferings, which they must drag on forever in the prison of despair and woe, still more tormenting.

Had I then died, my Redeemer, when I was in sin, I should now have had no hope of ever enjoying Thee in
heaven! Thou gavest me life that I might gain heaven, and now have I lost heaven for something worse than nothing, by losing Thy grace! I love Thee, O God, and I am sorry for having offended Thee; and I hope, through the merits of Thy Passion, to come to love Thee forever in heaven.

3. The souls in hell will be tormented in their will, by being denied everything which they desire, and by having every punishment inflicted upon them which they do not desire. They will never have anything which they wish for, but everything which they abhor. They will long to rid themselves of their torments and to find peace; but there will be no peace for them; they will be forced to dwell in the midst of their torments forever. Their perverse will, by hating God when they know him to be the supreme good, and worthy of infinite love, will become their greatest torment.

So it is, my God; Thou art an infinite good and worthy of infinite love, and I have exchanged Thee for nothing! Oh that I had died and had not offered Thee so grievous an injury! I love Thee, my sovereign good. Have pity on me and suffer me not to be again ungrateful to Thee! I renounce all the delights of this world, and embrace Thee as my only good. I will be forever Thine; be Thou forever mine. This is my hope, my God, my love, and my all. Deus meus et omnia. O Mary! thou art all-powerful with God; obtain for me the grace of leading a holy life.

MEDITATION XV.

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

1. Jesus is the mediator of justice; Mary obtains for us grace; for, as St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure, St. Bernardine of Sienna, St. Germanus, St. Antoninus, and others say, it is the will of God to dispense through the hands
of Mary whatever graces he is pleased to bestow upon us. With God, the prayers of the saints are the prayers of his friends, but the prayers of Mary are the prayers of his mother. Happy they who confidently and at all times have recourse to this divine mother! This, above all others, is the most pleasing devotion to the Blessed Virgin, ever to have recourse to her and to say: O Mary! intercede for me with thy Son Jesus.

2. Jesus is omnipotent by nature; Mary is very powerful by grace; she obtains whatever she asks for. It is impossible, says St. Antoninus, that this mother should ask any favor of her Son for those who are devout to her, and the Son not grant her request. Jesus delights to honor his mother by granting whatever she asks of him. Hence St. Bernard exhorts us to seek for grace, and to seek for it through Mary; because she is a mother to whom nothing can be denied. If, then, we should be saved, let us recommend ourselves to Mary, that she may intercede for us, because her prayers are always heard. O mother of mercy! have pity on me. Thou art styled the advocate of sinners; assist me, therefore, a sinner placing my confidence in thee.

3. Let us not doubt whether Mary will hear us when we address our prayers to her. It is her delight to exercise her powerful influence with God in obtaining for us whatever graces we stand in need of. It is sufficient to ask favors of Mary to obtain them. If we are unworthy of them, she renders us worthy, by her powerful intercession; and she is very desirous that we should have recourse to her, that she may save us. What sinner ever perished, who, with confidence and perseverance, had recourse to Mary, the refuge of sinners? He is lost who has not recourse to Mary.

O Mary, my mother and my hope! I take refuge

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1 "Quæramus gratiam, et per Mariam quæramus; quia Mater est, et frustrari non potest."—S. de Aquad.
under thy protection; reject me not, as I have deserved. Protect me and have pity on me, a miserable sinner. Obtain for me the forgiveness of my sins; obtain for me holy perseverance, the love of God, a good death, and a happy eternity. I hope all things of thee, because thou art most powerful with God. Make me holy, since thou hast it in thy power to do so, by thy holy intercession. O Mary! in thee do I confide, in thee do I place all my hopes, next to thy divine Son Jesus.

MEDITATION XVI.

Jesus suffering for our Sins.

1. Seeing men lost in their sins, God was pleased to take pity on them; but his divine justice required satisfaction, and there was no one capable of making adequate satisfaction. On this account he sent into the world his own Son, made man, and loaded him with all our offences: *The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all,* so that he might pay our debts, satisfy divine justice, and save mankind.

O eternal God! what more couldst Thou have done to induce us to confide in Thy mercy, and to attract our hearts to Thy love, than give us even Thy own Son? But how could I, after all that Thou hast done for me, have been guilty of so many offences against Thee? O my God! for the love of this Thy Son, have pity on me. I am sorry above every evil for having offended Thee. And though I have grievously offended Thee, I desire to love Thee with the greatest fervor; give me strength so to love Thee.

2. The eternal Father having loaded his Son with all our crimes, was not content even with such satisfaction from him, as would have amply atoned for us all, but, as

1 "Posuit Dominus in eo iniquitatem omnium nostrum."—*Isa.*
Jesus suffering for our Sins.

Isaias continues: *The Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity.*¹ He would have him mangled to exhaustion, with scourges, thorns, nails, and torments, until he died of tortures on an infamous gibbet.

If faith, O God! did not assure us of this excess of Thy love towards men, who could possibly believe it? O God, worthy of all love! permit us not to be any more ungrateful to Thee. Enlighten and strengthen us to correspond with such immense love during the remainder of our lives; do this, we beseech Thee, for the love of this Thy Son, whom Thou hast given to us.

3. Behold that innocent Son, attentive to the will of his Father, who would have him thus sacrificed for our sins, full of humility before his Father, full of love towards us, obediently embraces his life of pain and his bitter death: *He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.*²

Dearest Saviour, I will therefore say to Thee with the penitent Ezechias: *Thou hast delivered my soul that it should not perish; Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.*³ I had deserved by my sins to be cast into hell, but Thou hast delivered me from it, and, as I hope, pardoned me. I had offended Thy divine majesty, and Thou hast loaded Thyself with my crimes, and hast suffered for me. After this, if I should again offend Thee, or if I should not love Thee with my whole heart, what punishment will ever be sufficient for my chastisement? Beloved Jesus, O love of my soul! I am exceedingly sorry for having so grievously offended Thee. I give Thee my whole self; accept of me, and suffer me not to be any more separated from Thee. Holy Virgin, Mary, Mother,

¹ “Dominus voluit conterere eum in infirmitate.”—*Isa.* liii. 10.
² “Humiliavit semetipsum, factus oboediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis.”—*Phil.* ii. 8.
³ “Tu autem eruisti animam meam, ut non periret; projecisti post tegum tuum omnia peccata mea.”—*Isa.* xxxviii. 17.
pray to thy divine Son for me, that he may be pleased
to accept of me, and make me all his own.

MEDITATION XVII.

The One Thing Necessary.

1. One thing is necessary,¹ the salvation of our souls. It
is not necessary to be great, noble, or rich in this world,
or to enjoy uninterrupted health; but it is necessary to
save our souls. For this has God placed us here: not to
acquire honors, riches, or pleasures, but to acquire by our
good works that eternal kingdom which is prepared for
those who, during this present life, fight against and
overcome the enemies of their eternal salvation.

Ah, my Jesus, how often have I renounced heaven by
renouncing Thy grace! But, O Lord! I am more
grieved for having forfeited Thy friendship than for
having lost heaven. Give me, O Jesus! a great sorrow
for my sins, and mercifully pardon me.

2. Of what consequence is it if a man be poor, mean,
infirm, and despised in this life, provided that in the
end he dies in the grace of God and secures his salvation?
The more he has been afflicted with tribulations, if he
suffered them with patience, the more will he be glori-
ﬁed in the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand,
what does it profit a man to abound in riches and honors,
if, when he dies, he is lost forever? If we are lost, all
the goods that we have enjoyed in this world will be re-
membered only to increase our misery for eternity.

Do Thou, my God, enlighten me; give me to under-
stand that my only evil is to offend Thee, and my only
good to love Thee. Enable me to spend the remainder
of my days in serving Thee.

3. Salvation is necessary, because there is no medium;

¹ "Unum est necessarium."—Luke, x. 42.