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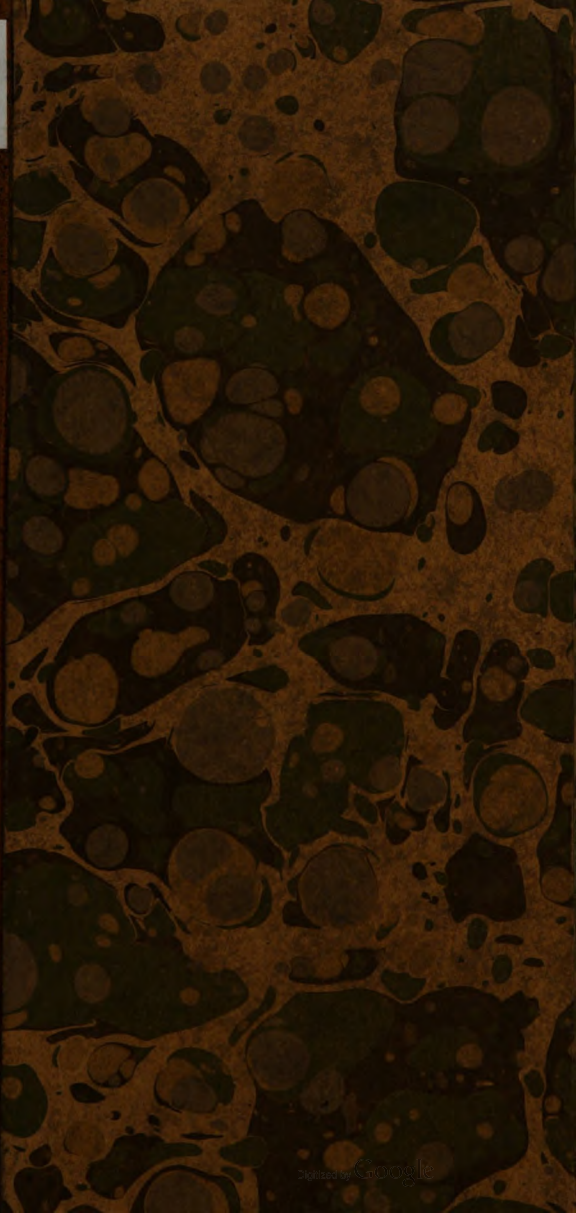
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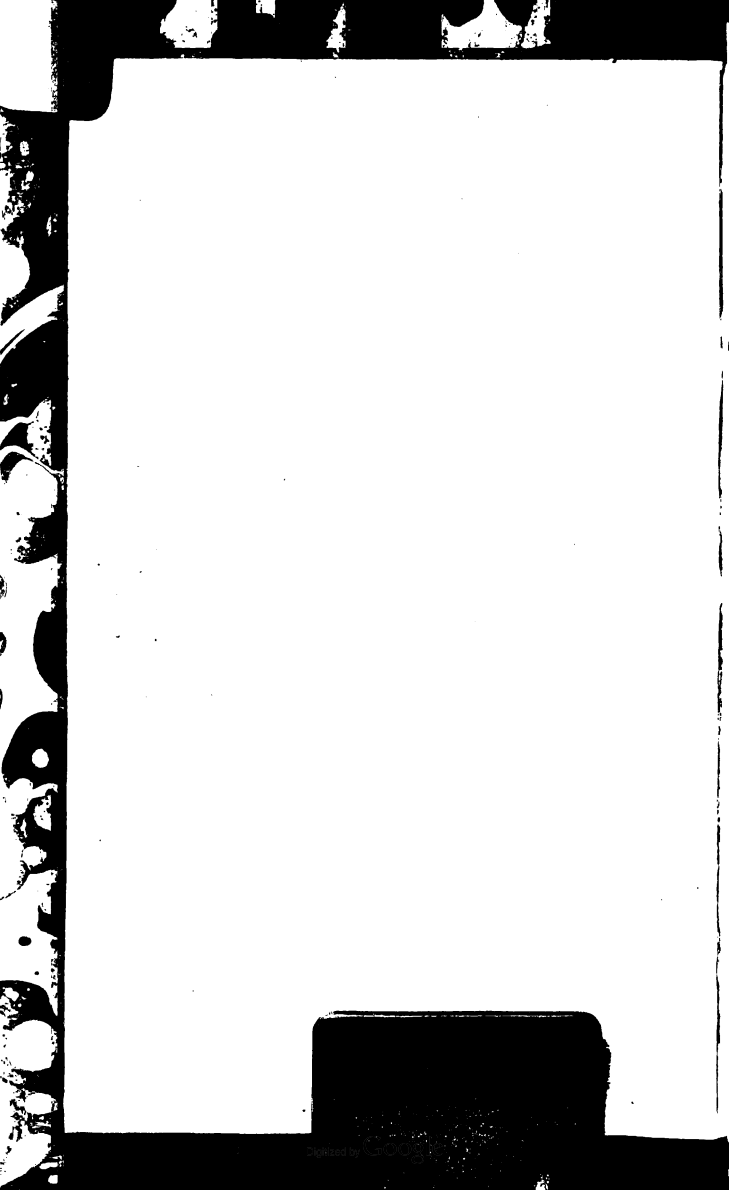
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A
COMPANION
FOR THE
ALTA R.

Extracted from THOMAS à KEMPIS.

By JOHN WESLEY, M. A.
Fellow of *Lincoln* College, OXON.

The THIRD EDITION.



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A
 COMPANION
 FOR THE
 ALTAR.

*An EXHORTATION unto the HOLY
 COMMUNION.*

The Voice of CHRIST.

COME unto Me, all ye that travel and are
 heavy laden, and I will refresh you.

The Bread, which I give, is my Flesh,
 which I give for the Life of the World.

Take, eat, This is my Body which is given
 for you: do this in Remembrance of Me.

He that eateth my Flesh, and drinketh my Blood, dwell-
 leth in Me and I in him.

The Words which I speak unto you are Spirit and Life.

CHAP. I.

*With how great Reverence CHRIST ought
 to be received.*

The Voice of the DISCIPLE.

THESE are thy Words, O CHRIST, the ever-
 lasting Truth.

Because therefore they are thine and true, they are all
 thankfully and faithfully to be received by me.

They are Thine, and Thou hast spoken them ; and they are mine also, because Thou hast spoken them for my Salvation.

I willingly receive them from thy Mouth, that they may be the deeper imprinted in my Heart.

These so gracious Words, so full of Sweetness and Love encourage me ; but my own Offences drive me back from receiving so great Mysteries.

2. Thou commandest me to come confidently unto Thee, if I will have Part with Thee ; to receive the Food of Immortality, if I desire to obtain everlasting Glory.

Come, sayest Thou, unto Me, all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.

O sweet and friendly Word in the Ear of Sinners, that Thou, my LORD GOD, shouldst invite the Poor and Nedy to the partaking of Thy most holy Body !

But who am I, LORD, that I should presume to approach unto Thee?

Behold the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain Thee, and thou sayest, *Come ye ALL unto Me.*

3. What meaneth this so gracious Condescension, this so friendly Invitation ?

How shall I dare to come, that know no Good in myself ?

How shall I bring Thee into my House, that have so often offended thy most gracious Countenance ?

The Angels and Archangels revere Thee ; the Saints and just Men fear Thee ; and Thou sayest, *Come ye all unto Me!*

Unless Thou, O LORD, didst say it, who would believe it to be true ?

And unless Thou didst command it, who would dare to come unto Thee ?

Behold *Noah* a just Man laboured a hundred Years in the making the Ark, that he might be saved with a few ; and how can I in one Hour prepare myself to receive with Reverence the Maker of the World ?

4. *Moses* Thy great Servant, and Thy special Friend, made an Ark of incorruptible Wood, which also he covered with most pure Gold, to put the Tables of the Law therein ; and I a corruptible Creature, how shall

I dare so lightly to receive the Maker of the Law, and the Giver of Life?

Solomon the wisest of the Kings of *Israel*, bestowed seven Years in building a magnificent Temple to the Praise of thy Name.

He celebrated the Feast of the Dedication thereof eight Days together: he offered a thousand Peace-offerings, and he solemnly set the Ark in the Places prepared for it, with the Sound of the Trumpets, and Joy.

And I the most miserable and poorest of Men, how shall I bring Thee into my House, that can scarce spend one half Hour devoutly? Yea, would I could once spend near an half Hour in due Manner?

5. O my GOD, how much did they do out of an Endeavour to please Thee?

And alas, how little is that which I do! I am very seldom wholly recollected, very seldom free from Distraction.

And yet surely no unbecoming Thought ought to appear in the Presence of thy Deity, nor any Creature find any Place in me, for I am not to harbour an Angel, but the LORD of Angels.

Why therefore am I not more inflam'd at thy venerable Presence?

6. The most devout King *David* danced before the Ark of GOD with all his Might, calling to Mind the Benefits bestowed in Times past upon his Fore-fathers.

He made Instruments of sundry Kinds, he composed Psalms, and appointed them to be sung with Joy.

He also often sung himself to the Harp, being inspired with the HOLY GHOST.

He taught the People of *Israel* to bless GOD with their whole Heart, and with joint Voices every Day to bless and praise him.

If so great Devotion was then shewn, and there was such celebrating of the divine Praise before the Ark of the Covenant; with what Reverence and Devotion ought I to receive the most precious Body and Blood of CHRIST?

7. O GOD, the invisible Creator of the World, how wonderfully dost Thou deal with us!

How sweetly and graciously dost Thou dispose of all Things with those, to whom Thou offerest Thyself in this Holy Sacrament!

This exceedeth all Understanding! This strongly draweth the Hearts of the Devout, and inflameth their Affections.

8. O the admirable and hidden Grace of this Sacrament, which such as will be Slaves unto Sin, cannot experience!

In this Sacrament spiritual Grace is given, the Strength which was lost is restored in the Soul, and the Beauty disfigured by Sin, returneth again.

This Grace is sometimes so great, that not only the Mind, but the weak Body also, feeleth great Increase of Strength.

9. Our Coldness and Negligence is much to be bewailed, that we are not drawn with greater Affection to receive CHRIST, in whom all the Hope and Merit of those that are saved consists.

For He is our Sanctification and Redemption: He is the Comfort of us Travellers, and the everlasting Enjoyment of Saints.

It is much therefore to be lamented, that many so little consider this blessed Mystery, which rejoiceth Heaven, and preserveth the whole World.

O the Blindness and Hardness of Man's Heart, that doth not more deeply weigh so unspeakable a Gift!

Thanks be unto Thee, gracious JESUS, the everlasting Shepherd, that hath vouchsafed to refresh us poor Exiles with Thy precious Body and Blood, and to invite us to the receiving of these Mysteries with the Words of Thy own Mouth, saying, *Come unto Me, all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.*

C H A P. II.

That the great Goodness and Love of GOD is exhibited to Man in this Sacrament.

The Voice of the DISCIPLE.

IN Confidence of thy Goodness, I come, O LORD, a sick Man unto my SAVIOUR, hungry and thirsty to

the Fountain of Life, needy to the King of Heaven, a Servant unto my LORD, a Creature to my Creator; disconsolate to Thee my merciful Comforter.

But whence is this to me, that Thou vouchsafest to come unto me! who am I, that Thou shouldst give Thyself unto me!

How dare a Sinner appear before Thee? And how is it that Thou dost vouchsafe to come unto a Sinner?

Thou knowest Thy Servant, and seest that he hath no good Thing in him, for which Thou shouldest bestow this Favour upon him.

I confess therefore my Unworthiness; I acknowledge Thy Goodness; I praise Thy Mercy, and give Thee Thanks for this Thy transcendent Love.

For Thou dost this for Thine own Sake, not for any Merits of mine; that Thy Goodness may be better known unto me, Thy Love more abundantly shew'd, and Thy gracious Condescension the more eminently displayed.

Since therefore it is Thy Pleasure, and Thou hast commanded that it should be so, this Thy Favour is also pleasing to me, and may my Sins be no Hindrance.

2. O most gracious JESUS, how great Reverence and Thanks, together with perpetual Praise, are due unto Thee for the receiving of thy sacred Body, whose Preciousness no Man is able to express!

But what shall I think of, now that I am to approach unto my LORD, whom I am not able duly to honour, and yet I desire to receive Him with Devotion?

What is better, than to humble myself wholly before Thee, and to exalt Thy infinite Goodness over me?

I praise Thee, my GOD, and will exalt Thee for ever: I despise and submit myself unto Thee, in a deep Sense of my own Unworthiness.

3. Behold Thou art the Holy of Holies, and I the vilest of Sinners!

Behold Thou inclinest unto me, who am not worthy so much as to look up unto Thee!

Behold Thou comest unto me, it is Thy Will to be with me, Thou invitest me to Thy Banquet.

Thou wilt give me the Food of Heaven, the Bread of Angels to eat, which is no other than Thyself, the living Brea

Bread, that descended from Heaven, and giveth Life unto the World.

4. Behold from whence doth this Love proceed ! what a gracious Condescension appeareth herein ! how great Thanks and Praises are due unto Thee for these Benefits !

O how good wast Thou, when Thou ordainedst it ! How sweet and pleasant the Banquet when Thou gavest Thyself to be our Food !

How wonderful is Thy Operation, O LORD, how mighty is Thy Power, how unspeakable is Thy Truth !

For thou hast said the Word, and all Things were made ; and this was done which Thou commandedst.

5. A Thing of great Admiration, that Thou, my LORD GOD, shouldst be exhibited unto us by the Elements of Bread and Wine.

Thou, who art the LORD of all Things, and standest in need of none, hast pleased to dwell in us by Means of this Thy Sacrament.

Preserve my Heart and Body undefiled, that with a chearful and pure Conscience I may always celebrate Thy Mysteries, and receive them to my everlasting Health : which Thou hast ordained for Thy Honour, and for a perpetual Memorial.

6 Rejoice, O my Soul, and give Thanks unto GOD for so excellent a Gift, so singular a Comfort left unto me in this Vale of Tears.

For as often as thou celebratest this Mystery, and receivest the Body of CHRIST ; so often art thou made Partaker of all the Merits of CHRIST.

For the Love of CHRIST is never extinguish'd, and the Greatness of his Propitiation is never exhausted.

Therefore thou oughtest always to weigh with attentive Consideration this great Mystery of thy Salvation.

So great, new, and joyful it ought to seem unto thee when thou comest to these holy Mysteries ; as if the same Day CHRIST, first descending into the Womb of the Virgin, was become Man ; or hanging on the Cross, did suffer and die for the Salvation of Mankind.

C H A P. III.

That it is profitable to communicate often.

The Voice of the DISCIPLE.

BEhold, O LORD, I come unto Thee, that I may be comforted by Thy Gift, and delighted in Thy holy Banquet, which Thou, O GOD, hast prepar'd in Thy Goodness for the Poor.

Behold in Thee is all that I can or ought to desire : Thou art my Salvation, and my Redemption, my Hope, and my Strength, my Honour and my Glory.

Make joyful therefore this Day the Soul of Thy Servant, for I have lifted it up unto Thee, O LORD JESUS.

I desire to receive Thee now with Devotion and Reverence. I long to bring Thee into my House, that with *Zaccheus* I may be blessed by Thee, and number'd amongst the Children of *Abraham*.

My Soul thirsteth to receive Thy Body and Blood, my Heart desireth to be united with Thee.

2. Give me Thyself, and it sufficeth : But without Thee, no Comfort is available.

I cannot be without Thee, nor live without Thy Visitation :

And therefore I must often come unto Thee, and receive Thee for the Welfare of my Soul ; lest haply I faint by the Way, if I be depriv'd of the heavenly Food :

For so, most merciful Jesus, Thou once didst say, preaching to the People, and curing sundry Diseases, I will not send them home fasting, lest they faint by the Way.

Deal Thou therefore in like manner now with me, who hast vouchsafed to leave Thyself in this Sacrament for the Comfort of the Faithful.

For Thou art the sweet Refreshment of the Soul ; and he that eateth Thee worthily, shall be a Partaker of everlasting Glory.

O the wonderful Condescension of Thy Mercy towards us, that Thou, O LORD GOD, the Creator and

Giver of Life to all Spirits, dost vouchsafe to come unto a poor Soul, and with Thy whole Deity to replenish her Hunger!

O happy Mind and blessed Soul, that receives Thee, her LORD GOD, with devout Affection, and in receiving of Thee is filled with spiritual Joy!

O how great a LORD doth she entertain! How beloved a Guest doth she harbour! How pleasant a Companion doth she receive! How faithful a Friend doth she take in! How lovely and glorious a Spouse doth she embrace!

She embraceth Him, who is to be loved above all that is beloved, and above all Things that may be desired.

Let Heaven and Earth, and all the Hosts of them be silent in Thy Presence: For what Praise and Beauty soever they have, it is received from Thy Bounty, and cannot equal the Beauty of Thy Name, of whose Wisdom there is no Number.

CHAP. IV.

That many Gifts are bestowed upon them that communicate devoutly.

The Voice of the DISCIPLE.

MY LORD GOD, prevent Thy Servant with the Blessings of Thy Goodness, that I may approach devoutly to Thy glorious Sacrament.

Stir up my Heart unto Thee, and deliver me from a heavy Numbness of Mind.

Visit me with Thy Salvation, that I may taste in Spirit Thy Sweetness, which plentifully lyeth in this Sacrament, as in a Fountain.

Enlighten also my Eyes to behold so great a Mystery, and strengthen me to believe it with steady Faith.

For it is Thy Work, and not Man's Power, Thy sacred Institution, not Man's Invention.

For no Man is of himself able to comprehend these Things, which surpass the Understanding of Angels.

What

What therefore shall I unworthy Sinner, Dust and Ashes, be able to comprehend of so high and sacred a Mystery ?

2. O LORD, in the Simplicity of my Heart, at Thy Commandment I come unto Thee with Hopes and Reverence, and do truly believe that Thou art present in this Sacrament.

Thy Will is, that I receive Thee, and that by Love I unite myself unto Thee.

Wherefore I implore Thy Mercy, and crave Thy special Grace, that I may wholly melt, and overflow with Love unto Thee ; and hereafter never seek any Comfort out of Thee.

For this most high and worthy Sacrament is the Health of the Soul and Body, the Remedy of all spiritual Weakness ; hereby my Vices are cured, my Passions bridled, Temptations overcome, Grace infused, Holiness increased, Faith confirm'd, Hope strengthened, and Love inflamed.

3. For Thou hast bestowed, and still doth bestow many Benefits in this Sacrament upon Thy Children ; O my GOD, the Protector of my Soul, the Repairer of human Weakness, and the Giver of all inward Comfort.

Thou impartest unto them much Comfort against sundry Tribulations :

Thou liftest them up from the Depth of their own Misery, to hope in Thy Protection.

Who is there, that approaching humbly unto the Fountain of Sweetness, doth not carry away from thence at least some little Sweetness ?

Or who standing by a great Fire, receiveth not some small Heat thereby ?

And thou art a Fountain always full and overflowing, a Fire ever burning and never decaying.

4. Wherefore if I cannot draw out of the full Fountain itself, nor drink my Fill ; I will notwithstanding set my Lips to the Mouth of this heavenly Conduit, that I may draw from thence at least some small Drop to refresh my Thirst ; and not wholly be dried up.

And tho' I be not so inflamed as the Cherubim and Seraphim ; notwithstanding I will endeavour after some

small Spark of divine Fire, by humbly receiving of this enlivening Sacrament.

And whatsoever is wanting in me, O merciful JESUS, do Thou graciously supply, who hast vouchsafed to call ALL unto Thee, saying, *Come unto me, all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.*

5. I indeed labour in the Sweat of my Brow, I am vexed with Grief of Heart, I am burthen'd with Sin, I am troubled with Temptations, I am entangled with many evil Passions; and there is none to help me, none to deliver me, but Thou, O LORD, my SAVIOUR, to whom I commit myself, and all that is mine, that Thou mayest keep me to Life everlasting.

C H A P. V.

Of the examining our Conscience, and giving up ourselves to GOD.

The Voice of the BELOVED.

ABOVE all Things, thou oughtest to receive this Sacrament with great Humility of Heart, and lowly Reverence.

And, if thou hast Time, confess unto GOD in the Secret of thine Heart all the Miseries of thy disordered Passions.

2. Lament and grieve, that thou art yet so carnal, so worldly, so unmortified as to thy Passions.

So unwatchful over thy outward Senses, so often entangled with vain Imaginations ;

So negligent and cold in Prayer, so undevout in celebrating, so dry in receiving ;

So quickly distracted, so seldom wholly recollected ;

So suddenly moved to Anger, so apt to take Displeasure against another, and speak Evil of others.

So prone to judge ;

So often purposing much Good, and yet performing little.

3. These and other thy Defects being confessed, with full Resignation, and with thy whole Will, offer up thyself a perpetual Sacrifice to the Honour of my Name on the Altar of thy Heart, faithfully committing thy Body and Soul unto me;

That so thou mayst receive profitably the Sacrament of my Body.

4. For a Man hath no other Oblation, than to offer up himself unto God in the Holy Communion.

And whensoever he shall come to me for Pardon and Grace, as I live, says the LORD, who will not the Death of a Sinner, but rather that he be converted and live, I will not remember his Sins any more, but they shall be all forgiven him.

5. As I willingly offer'd up myself unto God my Father for thy Sins, my Hands being stretched forth on the Cross, and my Body naked, so that nothing remained in me that was not wholly turned into a Sacrifice, for the appeasing the Divine Majesty.

So oughtest thou also to offer up thyself willingly unto me every Day, as a pure and holy Oblation, with all thy Might and Affections, in as hearty a manner as thou canst.

What do I require of thee more than that thou entirely resign thyself unto me?

Whatever thou givest besides thyself is of no Account in my Sight; for I seek not thy Gifts but thyself.

6. As it would not suffice thee to have all Things besides me; so neither can it please me, whatsoever thou givest, if thou offer not thyself.

Offer up thyself unto me, and give thyself wholly for God, and thy Offering shall be accepted.

Behold I offered up myself wholly unto my Father for thee, that I might be wholly thine, and thou remain mine.

But if thou abidest in thyself, and dost not offer thyself up freely unto my Will, thy Oblation is not entire, neither will the Union between us be perfect.

Therefore a free offering up of thyself into the Hands of God ought to go before all thy Actions, if thou wilt obtain Freedom and Grace.

For this Cause we become inwardly free, because they cannot wholly deny themselves.

My Saying is unalterable, *Unless a Man forsake all, he cannot be my Disciple.*

Therefore, if thou desirest to be my Disciple, offer up thyself unto me with thy whole Affections.

C H A P. VI.

That we ought to offer up ourselves, and all that is ours, unto GOD, and to pray for all.

The Voice of the DISCIPLE.

THINE, O LORD, are all Things that are in Heaven and in Earth.

I desire to offer up myself unto Thee, as a free Oblation, and to remain always Thine.

O LORD, in the Simplicity of my Heart I offer myself unto Thee this Day, for a Sacrifice of perpetual Praise, to be Thy Servant for ever.

2. I offer unto Thee, O LORD, all my Sins and Offences, which I have committed before Thee and Thy holy Angels, from the Day wherein I first could sin, to this Hour, upon Thy merciful Altar.

Consume and burn them all with the Fire of Thy Love, and wash out all the Stains of my Sins.

O cleanse my Conscience from all Offences, and restore to me again Thy Grace, which I lost by Sin, fully forgiving me all my Offences, and receiving me mercifully with a Kiss of Peace.

3. What can I do for my Sins, but humbly confess and bewail them, and incessantly intreat Thy Favour?

I beseech Thee hear me graciously, when I stand before Thee, O my GOD.

All my Sins are very displeasing unto me. I will never commit them any more; but I bewail them, and am purposed to repent, and according to the utmost of my Power to please Thee.

Forgive me, O GOD, forgive me my Sins for Thy holy Name's Sake.

Save my Soul, which Thou hast redeemed with Thy most precious Blood.

Behold, I commit myself to Thy Mercy, I resign myself into Thy Hands.

Do with me according to Thy Goodness; not according to my Wickedness and Iniquity.

4. I offer up also unto Thee all whatsoever Good Thou hast given me, altho' it be very little and imperfect, that Thou mayst amend and sanctify it.

That Thou mayst make it grateful and acceptable unto Thee, and always perfect it more and more;

And bring me also, who am a slothful and unprofitable Creature, to a good and blessed End.

5. I offer up also unto Thee all the pious Desires of devout Persons, the Necessities of my Parents, Friends, Brethren, Sisters, and of all those that are dear unto me, or that have done Good either to myself or to others for Thy Love.

And that have desired me to pray for them and all theirs: That they all may receive the Help of Thy Grace and Comfort, Protection from Dangers, Deliverance from Pain; and being freed from all Evils, may joyfully give worthy Thanks unto Thee.

6. I offer up also unto Thee my Prayers, especially for them who have in any thing wronged, or grieved, or slandered me, or have done me any Damage or Displeasure;

And for all those also, whom I have at any Time troubled, grieved, or scandalized by Words or Deeds, wittingly or at unawares; that it may please Thee to forgive us all our Sins and Offences, one against another.

Take, O LORD, from our Hearts, all Jealousy, Indignation, Wrath, and Contention, and whatsoever may impair Charity, and lessen brotherly Love.

Have Mercy, O LORD, have Mercy on those that crave Thy Mercy: Give Grace unto them that stand in need thereof; and grant that we may be counted worthy to enjoy Thy Grace, and to attain to Life everlasting. *Amen.*

C H A P. VII.

That the Body of CHRIST, and the Holy Scripture, are most necessary unto a faithful Soul.

The Voice of the DISCIPLE.

O LORD JESUS, how great Sweetness hath a Soul that feasteth with Thee in Thy Banquet, where there is set no other Food but Thyself, her only Beloved, and most to be desired above all the Desires of her Heart!

And verily it would be a sweet Thing unto me to pour out Tears from the very Bottom of my Heart in Thy Presence: And with holy *Magdalene* to wash Thy Feet with my Tears.

But where is this Devotion? Where is this so plentiful shedding of holy Tears?

Surely in the-Sight of Thee and Thy holy Angels my whole Heart should be inflamed, and even weep for Joy!

For I enjoy Thee in the Sacrament truly present, tho' hidden under another Representation.

2. For to behold Thee in Thine own divine Brightness, mine Eyes would not be able to endure it.

Neither could the whole World stand in the Brightness of the Glory of Thy Majesty.

I enjoy Him, whom the Angels adore in Heaven:

But I, as yet, by Faith; they by Sight, and without a Veil.

I ought to be content with the Light of true Faith, and to walk therein until the Day of everlasting Brightness break forth, and the Shadows of Figures pass away.

For when that which is perfect shall come, the Use of Sacraments shall cease.

For the Blessed in Heaven need not any sacramental Remedy, but rejoice without End in the Presence of
G O D.

Beholding his Glory Face to Face, and being transformed from Glory to Glory in the Image of the incomprehensible Deity, they taste the Word of GOD made
Flesh,

Flesh, as He was from the Beginning, and as he remna-
eth for ever.

3. Thou art my Witness, O GOD, that nothing can
comfort me; no Creature can give me Rest, but Thou,
O GOD, whom I desire to behold everlastingly.

But I submit myself to Thee in all my Desires.

For thy Saints also, O LORD, who now rejoice with
Thee, whilst they lived, expected in Faith and great Pa-
tience the coming of Thy Glory. What they believed,
I believe: What they hoped for, I also hope for: Whi-
ther they are come, I trust I shall come by Thy Grace.

In the mean time I will go forward in Faith, streng-
thened by their Examples:

I have also Thy holy Book for my Comfort and Guide,
and Thy most holy Body for a Remedy and Refuge.

4. I perceive two Things to be especially necessary in
this Life, without which it would be insupportable.

Whilst I am kept in the Prison of this Body, I chiefly
need two Things, to wit, Food and Light.

Thou hast therefore given unto me Thy sacred Body
and Blood for the Nourishment of my Soul; and Thou
hast set Thy Word as a Light unto my Feet.

Without these Two I could not well live.

For the Word of GOD is the Light of the Soul, and
Thy Sacrament the Bread of Life.

Thanks be unto Thee, O JESUS CHRIST, the Light
of everlasting Life, for the holy Doctrine which Thou
hast afforded us by Thy Servants, the Prophets and A-
postles.

5. Thanks be unto Thee, O Thou Creator and Re-
deemer of Man, who, to manifest Thy Love to the
whole World, has prepared a great Supper, wherein
Thou hast set before us to be eaten, Thy most sacred
Body and Blood.

Rejoicing all the Faithful with Thy holy Banquet,
and replenishing them with the Cup of Salvation; and
the holy Angels do feast with us, but yet with a more
happy Sweetness.

O how great and honourable is the Office of GOD'S
Ministers, to whom it is given with sacred Words to
consecrate the Sacrament to the LORD of Glory, with

their Lips to bless, with their Hands to hold, with their Mouth to receive, and also to administer it to others.

Nothing but what is holy, no Word but good and profitable, ought to proceed from his Mouth, who so often receiveth the Sacrament of CHRIST.

7. Assist, Almighty GOD, with Thy Grace, that they who have undertaken the Office of Priesthood, may serve Thee worthily and devoutly in all Purity.

And, if they have not lived in so great Innocency as they ought, grant them at least duly to bewail their Sins which they have committed; and in the Spirit of Humility, and with full Purpose of Heart, to serve Thee hereafter more fervently.

C H A P. VIII.

How he, who is to communicate, ought to prepare himself.

The Voice of the BELOVED.

I AM the Lover of Purity, and the Giver of all Holiness.

I seek a pure Heart, and here is the Place of my Rest.

Make ready and adorn for me the great Chamber, and I will keep with thee the Passover among my Disciples.

2. Know thou notwithstanding, that the Merit of no Action of thine is able to make this Preparation, altho' thou shouldst prepare thyself a whole Year together, and think of nothing else.

Thou art of my mere Grace and Favour suffered to come to my Table.

Like a Beggar invited to Dinner to a rich Man, who hath nothing else to return him for his Benefits, but humble himself, and give him Thanks.

Do what lieth in thee, and do it diligently, not for Custom, not for Necessity, but with Fear and Reverence, and Affection, receive thy beloved LORD GOD, who vouchsafeth to come unto thee.

I am He, that hath called thee, I have commanded it to be done, I will supply what is wanting in thee: Come, and receive Me.

3. When I bestow the Grace of Devotion, give Thanks to Thy GOD; for it is given thee, not for that thou art worthy, but because I have Mercy on thee.

If thou hast it not, but dost feel thyself dry; continue in Prayer, sigh and knock, and give not over until thou receive some Drop of saving Grace.

Thou hast Need of Me, not I of thee.

Neither comest thou to sanctify Me, but I come to sanctify and improve thee.

Thou comest that thou mayest be sanctified by Me, and united unto Me, that thou mayest receive new Grace, and be inflamed anew to Amendment.

C H A P. IX.

*That we ought to desire with our whole Heart,
to be united unto CHRIST in the Sacrament.*

The Voice of the Disciple.

WHO will give me, O LORD, to find Thee alone, and to open my whole Heart unto Thee, and enjoy Thee as my Soul desireth?

And that no Creature may move or regard me, but Thou alone mayst speak unto me, and I unto Thee, as the Beloved is wont to speak to his Beloved, and a Friend to banquet with a Friend.

This I pray for, this I desire, that I may be wholly united unto Thee, and may withdraw my Heart from all created Things.

That I may, by often communicating, learn more and more to relish heavenly and eternal Things.

Ah, LORD GOD, when shall I be wholly united to Thee, and swallowed up in Thee, and altogether forgetful of myself?

Thou in me, and I in Thee, and so grant Us both to continue in one.

2. Verily, Thou art my Beloved, the choicest among Thousands, in whom my Soul is well pleased to dwell all the Days of her Life.

Verily, Thou art my Peace-maker, in whom is great Peace and true Rest, without whom is Labour and Sorrow, and infinite Misery.

Verily, thou art a GOD that hidest Thyself, and Thy Counsel is not with the Wicked, but thy Speech is with the Humble and Simple of Heart.

O LORD, how good is thy Spirit, who to shew Thy Sweetness towards Thy Children, vouchsafest to feed them with the Bread of Heaven!

Verily, there is no other Nation so great, that hath GOD so nigh unto them, as Thou our GOD art to all Thy faithful Ones.

Unto whom, for the raising up their Hearts to Heaven, Thou givest Thyself to be eaten and enjoy'd.

3. For what other Nation is there so honoured as the Christian People?

Or what Creature under Heaven so beloved, as the believing Soul, whom GOD Himself feedeth with his glorious Flesh?

O unspeakable Grace! O admirable Condescension! O infinite Love singularly bestowed upon Man!

But what shall I give unto the LORD in Return of His Grace, for so eminent an Expression of Love?

There is nothing more acceptable than to give my Heart wholly to my GOD, and to unite it closely unto Him.

Then shall my inward Parts rejoice, when my Soul shall be perfectly united unto GOD.

Then he will say unto me: If thou wilt be with Me, I will be with thee.

And I will answer Him: Vouchsafe, O LORD, to remain with me, and I will gladly be with Thee.

This is my whole Desire, that my Heart be united unto Thee.

4. O how great is Thy Goodness, O LORD, which Thou has laid up for them that fear Thee!

When I remember some who come with the greatest Devotion and Affection, I am confounded, and blush within myself, that I come so heavily and coldly to Thy Table.

That I remain so dry and without hearty Affection, that I am not inflamed in thy Presence! while others, out of vehement Desire, and feeling Affection of Heart, cannot contain themselves from weeping.

With Desire both of Soul and Body, they earnestly longed after Thee, O GOD, the living Fountain.

Be

Be merciful unto me, good JESUS, sweet and gracious LORD, and grant me, Thy poor needy Creature, to feel sometimes at least, in this holy Communion, somewhat of thy tender cordial Affection.

That my Faith may be more strengthened, my Hope in thy Goodness increased, and that my Love once perfectly inflamed, after the tasting of the heavenly Manna, may never decay.

5. Thy Mercy, O LORD, is able to give me the Grace I desire, and to visit me with the Spirit of Fervour when it shall please Thee.

For tho' I burn not with so great Desire as those : Yet by Thy Grace I pant for this inflamed Desire.

Praying and craving that I may partake with all such thy fervent Lovers, and be numbred among them.

C H A P. X.

How the Grace of Devotion is obtained.

The Voice of the BELOVED.

THOU oughtest to seek the Grace of Devotion fervently, to ask it earnestly, to expect it patiently and with Confidence, to receive it gratefully, to keep it humbly, to work with it diligently, and to commit the Time and Manner of this heavenly Visitation to GOD, until it please Him to come unto thee.

Thou oughtest to humble thyself, when thou seekest little or no Devotion ; and yet not to be too much dejected, nor to grieve inordinately.

GOD often giveth in a Moment, that which he hath a long Time denied.

He giveth sometimes in the End, that which in the Beginning of Prayer he deferred to grant.

It is sometimes a little Thing that hindereth and hideth Grace from us.

If it may be called little, that hindreth so great Good.

But if thou remove this, be it great or small, thou shalt have thy Desire.

2. For as soon as ever thou hast delivered thyself to GOD, with thy whole Heart, and seekest not this or that, for thine own Pleasure or Will, but fixest thyself wholly upon Him, thou shalt find thyself at Peace.

For nothing will then please thee so much, as what pleases GOD.

3. Then shalt thou see, and be filled, and wonder, and thy Heart shall be enlarged within thee, because the Hand of the LORD is with thee, and he hath put himself wholly into thy Hands for ever.

Behold, so shall the Man be blessed, that seeketh GOD with his whole Heart, and busieth not his Soul in vain.

This Man obtaineth a high Degree of divine Love, in receiving the holy Eucharist.

Because he respecteth not his own Devotion and Comfort; but above all Devotion and Comfort, the Honour and Glory of GOD.

C H A P. XI.

That we ought to lay open our Necessities to CHRIST, and crave his Grace.

The Voice of the Disciple.

O Most loving LORD, whom I now desire to receive, Thou knowest my Infirmary, and the Necessity which I endure, with how many Evils I am oppressed. how often I am grieved, tempted, troubled and defiled.

I come unto Thee for Remedy, I crave of Thee Comfort and Succour.

I speak to him that knoweth all Things, to whom all inward Parts are open, and who alone can perfectly comfort and help me.

Thou knowest what good Things I stand most in Need of, and how poor I am in Virtues.

2. Behold, I stand before Thee poor and naked, calling for Grace, and craving Mercy.

Refresh Thy hungry Beggar, inflame my Coldness with the Fire of Thy Love; enlighten my Blindness with the Brightness of Thy Presence.

Turn all earthly Things to me into Bitterness, all Things grievous into Patience, all created Things into Contempt and Oblivion.

Lift up my Heart to Thee in Heaven, and suffer me not to wander upon Earth.

Be Thou only sweet unto me from henceforth for evermore.

For Thou only art my Meat and my Drink, my Love and my Joy, my Sweetness and all my Good.

3. O that with Thy Presence Thou wouldst wholly inflame, burn, and transform me into Thyself!

That I might be made one Spirit with Thee, by the Meltings of ardent Love!

Suffer me not to go from Thee hungry and thirsty! but deal mercifully with me, as Thou hast often dealt wonderfully with Thy Saints.

What Marvel is it, if I should be wholly inflamed by Thee, and die to myself?

Since Thou art a Fire always burning and never decaying, Love purifying the Heart, and enlightening the Understanding.

C H A P. XII.

Of vehement Desire to receive CHRIST.

The Voice of the Disciple.

I Desire to receive Thee, O LORD, with great Devotion and ardent Love, with the Affection and Fervour of my whole Heart, as many Saints and devout Persons have desired Thee, when they received Thy Sacrament, who were most pleasing unto Thee in Holiness of Life, and most fervent in Devotion.

O my GOD, my everlasting Love, my whole Good, my never-ending Happiness, I would gladly receive Thee with the most vehement Desire, and most worthy Reverence, that any of thy Saints ever had, or could feel.

2. And altho' I be unworthy to have all those Feelings of Devotion, yet I offer unto Thee the whole Affection of my Heart, as if I alone had all these inflamed Desires:

Yea, and whatsoever an holy Mind can conceive and desire, all this, with the greatest Reverence and most inward Affection, I offer and present unto Thee.

I desire to reserve nothing to myself, but freely and most willingly to sacrifice myself and all unto Thee.

My

My LORD GOD, my Creator and Redeemer : I desire to receive Thee this Day with such Affection, Reverence, Praise and Honour, with such Gratitude, Worthiness and Love, with such Faith, Hope and Purity, as Thy most holy Mother, the Virgin *Mary*, received Thee, when she humbly answered the Angel, Behold the Handmaid of the LORD, let it be done unto me according to Thy Word.

3. And as Thy blessed Forerunner, *John Baptist*, leaped for Joy, by Reason of the HOLY GHOST, whilst he was yet shut up in his Mother's Womb ;

And afterwards seeing JESUS walking amongst Men, humbling Himself deeply, said with devout Affection, The Friend of the Bridegroom that standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with Joy for the Voice of the Bridegroom ; so I also will be inflamed with great and holy Desires, and to offer myself up to Thee, with my whole Heart.

Wherefore I offer also and present unto Thee the Joys, fervent Affections and Illuminations of all devout Hearts, with all the Praises celebrated by all Creatures in Heaven and Earth, that by all Thou mayest be worthily praised and glorified for ever.

4. Receive, my LORD GOD, my Wishes and Desires of giving Thee infinite Praise and immense Blessing, which, according to the Multitude of Thy unspeakable Mercies, are most justly due unto Thee.

These I yield Thee, and desire to yield Thee every Day and Moment : I do intreat and invite all heavenly Minds, and all Thy devout Servants, to give Thanks and Praises together with me.

5. Let all People, Tribes and Tongues praise Thee, and magnify Thy holy Name, with the highest Joy and most fervent Devotion.

And let all, that reverently celebrate Thy most high Sacrament, find Grace and Mercy at Thy Hands, and pray humbly for me a sinful Creature.

And when they shall have obtained their desired Devotion and joyful Union, and depart from thy heavenly Table, well comforted, and marvellously refreshed, let them vouchsafe to remember my poor Soul.



