

Centuries of Meditations (The First Century)

Thomas Traherne

Anglican · Post-Reformation · Meditation

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INTRODUCTION

Traherne's masterpiece went unpublished until 1908 — the manuscript sat unrecognized on a London bookstall until a collector, Bertram Dobell, bought it by chance and identified the handwriting decades later. Structured as short numbered meditations rather than continuous argument, the First Century opens with a striking claim: that the whole visible world is yours, given freely, and that failing to feel its wonder each morning is itself a kind of poverty. There's little polemic in it — no heresies to refute, no doctrine to defend — just a sustained, almost ecstatic attention to ordinary things as evidence of love. Expect short, dense paragraphs built for slow reading, closer to devotional poetry than prose argument.

The First Century

1

An empty book is like an infant's soul, in which anything may be written. It is capable of all things, but containeth nothing. I have a mind to fill this with profitable wonders. And since Love made you put it into my hands I will fill it with those Truths you love without knowing them: with those things which, if it be possible, shall shew my Love; to you in communicating most enriching Truths: to Truth in exalting her beauties in such a Soul.

2

Do not wonder that I promise to fill it with those Truths you love but know not; for though it be a maxim in the schools that there is no Love of a thing unknown, yet I have found that things unknown have a secret influence on the soul, and like the centre of the earth unseen violently attract it. We love we know not what, and therefore everything allures us. As iron at a distance is drawn by the loadstone, there being some invisible communications between them, so is there in us a world of Love to somewhat, though we know not what in the world that should be. There are invisible ways of conveyance by which some great thing doth touch our souls, and by which we tend to it. Do you not feel yourself drawn by the expectation and desire of some Great Thing?

3

I will open my mouth in Parables, I will utter things that have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. Things strange yet common, incredible, yet known; most high, yet plain; infinitely profitable, but not esteemed. Is it not a great thing that you should be Heir of the World? Is it not a great enriching verity? In which the fellowship of the Mystery which from the beginning of the World hath been hid in God lies concealed! The thing hath been from the Creation of the World, but hath not so been explained as that the interior Beauty should be understood. It is my design therefore in such a plain manner to unfold it that my friendship may appear in making you possessor of the whole world.

4

I will not by the noise of bloody wars and the dethroning of kings advance you to glory: but by the gentle ways of peace and love. As a deep friendship meditates and intends the deepest designs for the advancement of its objects, so doth it shew itself in choosing the sweetest and most delightful methods, whereby not to weary but please the person it desireth to advance. Where Love administers physic, its tenderness is expressed in balms and cordials. It hateth corrosives, and is rich in its administrations. Even so, God designing to show His Love in exalting you hath chosen the ways of ease and repose by which you should ascend. And I after His similitude will lead you into paths plain and familiar, where all envy, rapine, bloodshed, complaint and malice shall be far removed; and nothing appear but contentment and thanksgiving. Yet shall the end be so glorious that angels durst not hope for so great a one till they had seen it.

5

The fellowship of the mystery that hath been hid in God since the creation is not only the contemplation of the work of His Love in the redemption, tho' that is wonderful, but the end for which we are redeemed; a communion with Him in all His Glory. For which cause St. Peter saith The God of all Grace hath called us unto His Eternal Glory by Jesus Christ. His Eternal Glory by the method of His Divine Wisdom being made ours; and our fruition of it the end for which our Saviour suffered.

6

True Love as it intendeth the greatest gifts intendeth also the greatest benefits. It contenteth not itself in showing great things unless it can make them greatly useful. For Love greatly delighteth in seeing its object continually seated in the highest happiness. Unless therefore I could advance you higher by the uses of what I give, my Love could not be satisfied in giving you the whole world. But because when you enjoy it you are advanced to the Throne of God and may see His Love; I rest well pleased in bestowing it. It will make you to see your own greatness, the truth of the Scriptures, the amiableness of Virtue, and the beauty of Religion. It will enable you to condemn the world, and to overflow with praises.

7

To condemn the world and to enjoy the world are things contrary to each other. How, then can we condemn the world, which we are born to enjoy? Truly there are two worlds. One was made by God, the other by men. That made by God was great and beautiful. Before the Fall it was Adam's joy and

the Temple of his Glory. That made by men is a Babel of Confusions: Invented Riches, Poms and Vanities, brought in by Sin: Give all (saith Thomas à Kempis) for all. Leave the one that you may enjoy the other.

8

What is more easy and sweet than meditation? Yet in this hath God commended His Love, that by meditation it is enjoyed. As nothing is more easy than to think, so nothing is more difficult than to think well. The easiness of thinking we received from God, the difficulty of thinking well proceeded from ourselves. Yet in truth, it is far more easy to think well than ill, because good thoughts be sweet and delightful: Evil thoughts are full of discontent and trouble. So that an evil habit and custom have made it difficult to think well, not Nature. For by nature nothing is so difficult as to think amiss.

9

Is it not easy to conceive the World in your Mind? To think the Heavens fair? The Sun Glorious? The Earth fruitful? The Air Pleasant? The Sea Profitable? And the Giver bountiful? Yet these are the things which it is difficult to retain. For could we always be sensible of their use and value, we should be always delighted with their wealth and glory.

10

To think well is to serve God in the interior court: To have a mind composed of Divine Thoughts, and set in frame, to be like Him within. To conceive aright and to enjoy the world, is to conceive the Holy Ghost, and to see His Love: which is the Mind of the Father. And this more pleaseth Him than many Worlds, could we create as fair and great as this. For when we are once acquainted with the world, you will find the goodness and wisdom of God so manifest therein, that it was impossible another, or better should be made. Which being made to be enjoyed, nothing can please or serve Him more, than the Soul that enjoys it. For that Soul doth accomplish the end of His desire in Creating it.

11

Love is deeper than at first it can be thought. It never ceaseth but in endless things. It ever multiplies. Its benefits and its designs are always infinite. Were you not Holy, Divine, and Blessed in enjoying the World, I should not care so much to bestow it. But now in this you accomplish the end of your creation, and serve God best, and please Him most: I rejoice in giving it. For to enable you to please GOD, is the highest service a man can do you. It is to make you pleasing to the King of Heaven, that you may be the Darling of His bosom.

12

Can you be Holy without accomplishing the end for which you are created? Can you be Divine unless you be Holy? Can you accomplish the end for which you were created, unless you be Righteous? Can you then be Righteous, unless you be just in rendering to Things their due esteem? All things were made to be yours; and you were made to prize them according to their value: which is your office and

duty, the end for which you were created, and the means whereby you enjoy. The end for which you were created, is that by prizing all that God hath done, you may enjoy yourself and Him in Blessedness.

13

To be Holy is so zealously to desire, so vastly to esteem, and so earnestly to endeavour it, that we would not for millions of gold and silver, decline, nor fail, nor mistake in a tittle. For then we please God when we are most like Him. We are like Him when our minds are in frame. Our minds are in frame when our thoughts are like His. And our thoughts are then like His when we have such conceptions of all objects as God hath, and prize all things according to their value. For God doth prize all things rightly, which is a Key that opens into the very thoughts of His bosom. It seemeth arrogance to pretend to the knowledge of His secret thoughts. But how shall we have the Mind of God, unless we know His thoughts? Or how shall we be led by His divine spirit, till we have His Mind? His thoughts are hidden: but He hath revealed unto us the hidden Things of Darkness. By His works and by His attributes we know His Thoughts: and by thinking the same, are Divine and Blessed.

14

When things are ours in their proper places, nothing is needful but prizing to enjoy them. God therefore hath made it infinitely easy to enjoy, by making everything ours, and us able so easily to prize them. Everything is ours that serves us in its place. The Sun serves us as much as is possible, and more than we could imagine. The Clouds and Stars minister unto us, the World surrounds us with beauty, the Air refresheth us, the Sea revives the earth and us. The Earth itself is better than gold because it produceth fruits and flowers. And therefore in the beginning, was it made manifest to be mine, because Adam alone was made to enjoy it. By making one, and not a multitude, God evidently shewed one alone to be the end of the World and every one its enjoyer. For every one may enjoy it as much as he.

15

Such endless depths live in the Divinity, and in the wisdom of God, that as He maketh one, so He maketh every one the end of the World: and the supernumerary, persons being enrichers of his inheritance. Adam and the World are both mine. And the posterity of Adam enrich it infinitely. Souls are God's jewels, every one of which is worth many worlds. They are His riches because His image, and mine for that reason. So that I alone am the end of the World: Angels and men being all mine. And if others are so, they are made to enjoy it for my further advancement. God only being the Giver and I the Receiver. So that Seneca philosophized rightly when he said "Deus me dedit solum toti Mundo, et totem Mundum mihi soli": God gave me alone to all the World, and all the World to me alone.

16

That all the World is yours, your very senses and the inclinations of your mind declare. The Works of God manifest, His laws testify, and His word Both prove it. His attributes most sweetly make it evident. The powers of your soul confirm it. So that in the midst of such rich demonstrations, you may infinitely delight in God as your Father, Friend and Benefactor, in yourself as His Heir, Child and Bride, in the

whole World, as the Gift and Token of His love; neither can anything but Ignorance destroy your joys. For if you know yourself, or God, or the World, you must of necessity enjoy it.

To know GOD is Life Eternal. There must therefore some exceeding Great Thing be always attained in the Knowledge of Him. To know God is to know Goodness. It is to see the beauty of infinite Love: To see it attended with Almighty Power and Eternal Wisdom; and using both those in the magnifying of its object. It is to see the King of Heaven and Earth take infinite delight in Giving. Whatever knowledge else you have of God, it is but Superstition. Which Plutarch rightly defineth, to be an Ignorant Dread of His Divine Power, without any joy in His goodness. He is not an Object of Terror, but Delight. To know Him therefore as He is, is to frame the most beautiful idea in all Worlds. He delighteth in our happiness more than we: and is of all other the most Lovely Object. An infinite Lord, who having all Riches, Honors, and Pleasures in His own hand, is infinitely willing to give them unto me. Which is the fairest idea that can be devised.

18

The WORLD is not this little Cottage of Heaven and Earth. Though this be fair, it is too small a Gift. When God made the World He made the Heavens, and the Heavens of Heavens, and the Angels, and the Celestial Powers. These also are parts of the World: So are all those infinite and eternal Treasures that are to abide for ever, after the Day of Judgment. Neither are these, some here, and some there, but all everywhere, and at once to be enjoyed. The WORLD is unknown, till the Value and Glory of it is seen: till the Beauty and the Serviceableness of its parts is considered. When you enter into it, it is an illimited field of Variety and Beauty: where you may lose yourself in the multitude of Wonders and Delights. But it is an happy loss to lose oneself in admiration at one's own Felicity: and to find GOD in exchange for oneself: Which we then do when we see Him in His Gifts, and adore His Glory.

19

You never know yourself till you know more than your body. The Image of God was not seated in the features of your face, but in the lineaments of your Soul. In the knowledge of your Powers, Inclinations, and Principles, the knowledge of yourself chiefly consisteth. Which are so great that even to the most learned of men, their Greatness is Incredible; and so Divine, that they are infinite in value. Alas the WORLD is but a little centre in comparison of you. Suppose it millions of miles from the Earth to the Heavens, and millions of millions above the stars, both here and over the heads of our Antipodes: it is surrounded with infinite and eternal space: And like a gentleman's house to one that is travelling; it is a long time before you come unto it, you pass it in an instant, and leave it for ever. The Omnipresence and Eternity of God are your fellows and companions. And all that is in them ought to be made your familiar Treasures. Your understanding comprehends the World like the dust of a balance, measures Heaven with a span, and esteems a thousand years but as one day. So that Great, Endless, Eternal Delights are only fit to be its enjoyments.

20

The laws of GOD, which are the commentaries of His works, shew them to be yours: because they teach you to love God with all your Soul, and with all your Might. Whom if you love with all the endless powers of your Soul, you will love Him in Himself, in His attributes, in His counsels, in all His works, in all His ways; and in every kind of thing wherein He appeareth, you will prize Him, you will Honour

Him, you will delight in Him, you will ever desire to be with Him and to please Him. For to love Him includeth all this. You will feed with pleasure upon everything that is His. So that the world shall be a grand Jewel of Delight unto you: a very Paradise and the Gate of Heaven. It is indeed the beautiful frontispiece of Eternity; the Temple of God, and Palace of His children. The Laws of God discover all that is therein to be created for your sake. For they command you to love all that is good, and when you see well, you enjoy what you love. They apply the endless powers of your Soul to all objects: and by ten thousand methods make everything to serve you. They command you to love all Angels and Men. They command all Angels and Men to love you. When you love them, they are your treasures; when they love you, to your great advantage you are theirs. All things serve you for serving them whom you love, and of whom you are beloved. The entrance of His words giveth Light to the simple. You are magnified among Angels and men: enriched by them, and happy in them.

21

By the very right of your senses you enjoy the World. Is not the beauty of the Hemisphere present to your eye? Doth not the glory of the Sun pay tribute to your sight? Is not the vision of the World an amiable thing? Do not the stars shed influences to perfect the Air? Is not that a marvellous body to breathe in? To visit the lungs, repair the spirits, revive the senses, cool the blood, fill the empty spaces between the Earth and Heavens; and yet give liberty to all objects? Prize these first: and you shall enjoy the residue: Glory, Dominion, Power, Wisdom, Honour, Angels, Souls, Kingdoms, Ages. Be faithful in a little, and you shall be master over much. If you be not faithful in esteeming these; who shall put into your hands the true Treasures? If you be negligent in prizing these, you will be negligent in prizing all. For there is a disease in him who despiseth present mercies, which till it be cured, he can never be happy. He esteemeth nothing that he hath, but is ever gaping after more: which when he hath he despiseth in like manner. Insatiableness is good, but not ingratitude.

22

It is of the nobility of man's soul that he is insatiable. For he hath a Benefactor so prone to give, that He delighteth in us for asking. Do not your inclinations tell you that the World is yours? Do you not covet all? Do you not long to have it; to enjoy it; to overcome it? To what end do men gather riches, but to multiply more? Do they not like Pyrrhus, the King of Epire, add house to house and lands to lands; that they may get it all? It is storied of that prince, that having conceived a purpose to invade Italy, he sent for Cineas, a philosopher and the King's friend: to whom he communicated his design, and desired his counsel. Cineas asked him to what purpose he invaded Italy? He said, to conquer it. And what will you do when you, have conquered it? Go into France, said the King, and conquer that. And what will you do when you have conquered France? Conquer Germany. And what then? said the philosopher. Conquer Spain. I perceive, said Cineas, you mean to conquer all the World. What will you do when you have conquered all? Why then said the King we will return, and enjoy ourselves at quiet in our own land. So you may now, said the philosopher, without all this ado. Yet could he not divert him till he was ruined by the Romans. Thus men get one hundred pound a year that they may get another; and having two covet eight, and there is no end of all their labour; because the desire of their Soul is insatiable. Like Alexander the Great they must have all: and when they have got it all, be quiet. And may they not do

all this before they begin? Nay it would be well, if they could be quiet. But if after all, they shall be like the stars, that are seated on high, but have no rest, what gain they more, but labour for their trouble? It was wittily feigned that that young man sat down and cried for more worlds to conquer. So insatiable is man, that millions will not please him. They are no more than so many tennis-balls, in comparison of the Greatness and Highness of his Soul.

23

The noble inclination whereby man thirsteth after riches and dominion, is his highest virtue, when rightly guided; and carries him as in a triumphant chariot, to his sovereign happiness. Men are made miserable only by abusing it. Taking a false way to satisfy it, they pursue the wind: nay, labour in the very fire, and after all reap but vanity. Whereas, as God's love, which is the fountain of all, did cost us nothing: so were all other things prepared by it to satisfy our inclinations in the best of manners, freely, without any cost of ours. Seeing therefore all satisfactions are near at hand, by going further we do but leave them; and wearying ourselves in a long way round about, like a blind man, forsake them. They are immediately near to the very gates of our senses. It becometh the bounty of God to prepare them freely: to make them glorious, and their enjoyment easy. For because His love is free, so are His treasures. He therefore that will despise them because he hath them is marvellously irrational: the way to possess them is to esteem them. And the true way of reigning over them, is to break the world all into parts, to examine them asunder: And if we find them so excellent that better could not possibly be made, and so made they could not be more ours, to rejoice in all with pleasure answerable to the merit of their Goodness. We being then Kings over the whole world, when we restore the pieces to their proper places, being perfectly pleased with the whole composure. This shall give you a thorough grounded contentment, far beyond what troublesome wars or conquests can acquire.

24

Is it not a sweet thing to have all covetousness and ambition satisfied, suspicion and infidelity removed, courage and joy infused? Yet is all this in the fruition of the World attained. For thereby God is seen in all His wisdom, power, goodness, and glory.

25

Your enjoyment of the World is never right, till you so esteem it, that everything in it, is more your treasure than a King's exchequer full of Gold and Silver. And that exchequer yours also in its place and service. Can you take too much joy in your Father's works? He is Himself in everything. Some things are little on the outside, and rough and common, but I remember the time when the dust of the streets were as pleasing as Gold to my infant eyes, and now they are more precious to the eye of reason.

26

The services of things and their excellencies are spiritual: being objects not of the eye, but of the mind: and you more spiritual by how much more you esteem them. Pigs eat acorns, but neither consider the sun that gave them life, nor the influences of the heavens by which they were nourished, nor the very root of the tree from whence they came. This being the work of Angels, who in a wide and clear light

see even the sea that gave them moisture: And feed upon that acorn spiritually while they know the ends for which it was created, and feast upon all these as upon a World of Joys within it: while to ignorant swine that eat the shell, it is an empty husk of no taste nor delightful savour.

27

You never enjoy the world aright, till you see how a sand exhibiteth the wisdom and power of God: And prize in everything the service which they do you, by manifesting His glory and goodness to your Soul, far more than the visible beauty on their surface, or the material services they can do your body. Wine by its moisture quencheth my thirst, whether I consider it or no: but to see it flowing from His love who gave it unto man, quencheth the thirst even of the Holy Angels. To consider it, is to drink it spiritually. To rejoice in its diffusion is to be of a public mind. And to take pleasure in all the benefits it doth to all is Heavenly, for so they do in Heaven. To do so, is to be divine and good, and to imitate our Infinite and Eternal Father.

28

Your enjoyment of the world is never right, till every morning you awake in Heaven; see yourself in your Father's Palace; and look upon the skies, the earth, and the air as Celestial Joys: having such a reverend esteem of all, as if you were among the Angels. The bride of a monarch, in her husband's chamber, hath too such causes of delight as you.

29

You never enjoy the world aright, till the Sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens, and crowned with the stars: and perceive yourself to be the sole heir of the whole world, and more than so, because men are in it who are every one sole heirs as well as you. Till you can sing and rejoice and delight in God, as misers do in gold, and Kings in sceptres, you never enjoy the world.

30

Till your spirit filleth the whole world, and the stars are your jewels; till you are as familiar with the ways of God in all Ages as with your walk and table: till you are intimately acquainted with that shady nothing out of which the world was made: till you love men so as to desire their happiness, with a thirst equal to the zeal of your own: till you delight in God for being good to all: you never enjoy the world. Till you more feel it than your private estate, and are more present in the hemisphere, considering the glories and the beauties there, than in your own house: Till you remember how lately you were made, and how wonderful it was when you came into it: and more rejoice in the palace of your glory, than if it had been made but to-day morning.

31

Yet further, you never enjoy the world aright; till you so love the beauty of enjoying it, that you are covetous and earnest to persuade others to enjoy it. And so perfectly hate the abominable corruption of men in despising it, that you had rather suffer the flames of Hell than willingly be guilty of their error. There is so much blindness and ingratitude and damned folly in it. The world is a mirror of infinite beauty, yet no man sees it. It is a Temple of Majesty, yet no man regards it. It is a region of Light and Peace, did not men disquiet it. It is the Paradise of God. It is more to man since he is fallen than it was before. It is the place of Angels and the Gate of Heaven. When Jacob waked out of his dream, he said "God is here, and I wist it not. How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the House of God, and the Gate of Heaven."

32

Can any ingratitude be more damned than that which is fed by benefits? Or folly greater than that which bereaveth us of infinite treasures? They despise them merely because they have them: And invent ways to make themselves miserable in the presence of riches. They study a thousand newfangled treasures, which God never made: and then grieve and repine that they be not happy. They dote on their own works, and neglect God's, which are full of majesty, riches, and wisdom. And having fled away from them because they are solid, divine, and true, greedily pursuing tinselled vanities, they walk on in darkness, and will not understand. They do the works of darkness, and delight in the riches of the Prince of Darkness, and follow them till they come into Eternal Darkness. According to that of the psalmist All the foundations of the Earth are out of course.

33

The riches of darkness are those which men have made, during their ignorance of God Almighty's treasures: That lead us from the love of all, to labour and contention, discontentment and vanity. The works of darkness are Repining, Envy, Malice, Covetousness, Fraud, Oppression, Discontent and Vi-

olence. All which proceed from the corruption of Men and their mistake in the choice of riches: for having refused those which God made, and taken to themselves treasures of their own, they invented scarce and rare, insufficient, hard to be gotten, little, movable and useless treasures. Yet as violently pursued them as if they were the most necessary and excellent things in the whole world. And though they are all mad, yet having made a combination they seem wise; and it is a hard matter to persuade them either to Truth or Reason. There seemeth to be no way, but theirs: whereas God knoweth they are as far out of the way of Happiness, as the East is from the West. For, by this means, they have let in broils and dissatisfactions into the world, and are ready to eat and devour one another: particular and feeble interests, false proprieties, insatiable longings, fraud, emulation, murmuring and dissension being everywhere seen; theft and pride and danger, and cousenage, envy and contention drowning the peace and beauty of nature, as waters cover the sea. Oh how they are ready to sink always under the burden and cumber of devised wants! Verily, the prospect of their ugly errors, is able to turn one's stomach: they are so hideous and deformed.

34

Would one think it possible for a man to delight in gauderies like a butterfly, and neglect the Heavens? Did we not daily see it, it would be incredible. They rejoice in a piece of gold more than in the Sun; and get a few little glittering stones and call them jewels. And admire them because they be resplendent like the stars, and transparent like the air, and pellucid like the sea. But the stars themselves which are ten thousand times more useful, great, and glorious they disregard. Nor shall the air itself be counted anything, though it be worth all the pearls and diamonds in ten thousand worlds. A work of God so Divine by reason of its precious and pure transparency, that all worlds would be worth nothing without such a treasure.

35

The riches of the Light are the Works of God which are the portion and inheritance of His sons, to be seen and enjoyed in Heaven and Earth, the sea, and all that is therein: the Light and the Day, great and fathomless in use and excellency, true, necessary, freely given, proceeding wholly from His infinite love. As worthy as they are easy to be enjoyed: obliging us to love Him and to delight in Him, filling us with gratitude, and making us to overflow with praises and thanksgivings. The works of contentment and pleasure are of the Day. So are the works which flow from the understanding of our mutual serviceableness to each other: arising from the sufficiency and excellency of our treasures, Contentment, Joy, Peace, Unity, Charity, &c., whereby we are all knit together, and delight in each others' happiness. For while every one is Heir of all the World, and all the rest his superadded treasures, all the World serves him in himself, and he delights in them as His superadded treasures.

36

The common error which makes it difficult to believe all the World to be wholly ours, is to be shunned as a rock of shipwreck: or a dangerous quicksands. For the poison which they drank hath infatuated their fancies, and now they know not, neither will they understand, they walk on in Darkness. All the foundations of the World are out of course. It is safety not to be with them: and a great part of Happiness

to be freed from their seducing and enslaving errors. That while others live in a Golgotha or Prison, we should be in Eden, is a very great Mystery. And a mercy it is that we should be rejoicing in the Temple of Heaven, while they are toiling and lamenting in Hell, for the world is both a Paradise and a Prison to different persons.

37

The brightness and magnificence of this world, which by reason of its height and greatness is hidden from men, is Divine and Wonderful. It addeth much to the Glory of the Temple in which we live. Yet it is the cause why men understand it not. They think it too great and wide to be enjoyed. But since it is all filled with the Majesty of His Glory who dwelleth in it; and the Goodness of the Lord filleth the World, and His wisdom shineth everywhere within it and about it; and it aboundeth in an infinite variety of services; we need nothing but open eyes, to be ravished like the Cherubims. Well may we bear the greatness of the World, since it is our storehouse and treasury. That our treasures should be endless is an happy inconvenience: that all regions should be full of Joys: and the room infinite wherein they are seated.

38

You never enjoy the World aright, till you see all things in it so perfectly yours, that you cannot desire them any other way: and till you are convinced that all things serve you best in their proper places. For can you desire to enjoy anything a better way than in God's Image? It is the Height of God's perfection that hideth His bounty: And the lowness of your base and sneaking Spirit, that make you ignorant of His perfection. (Every one hath in him a Spirit, with which he may be angry.) God's bounty is so perfect that He giveth all Things in the best of manners: making those to whom He giveth so Noble, Divine, and Glorious, that they shall enjoy in His Similitude. Nor can they be fit to enjoy in His presence, or in communion with Him, that are not truly Divine and Noble. So that you must have Glorious Principles implanted in your nature; a clear eye able to see afar off, a great and generous heart, apt to enjoy at any distance: a good and liberal Soul prone to delight in the felicity of all, and an infinite delight to be their Treasure: neither is it any prejudice to you that this is required, for there is great difference between a Worm and a Cherubim. And it more concerneth you to be an Illustrious Creature, than to have the possession of the whole world.

39

Your enjoyment is never right, till you esteem every Soul so great a treasure as our Saviour doth: and that the laws of God are sweeter than the honey and honeycomb because they command you to love them all in such perfect manner. For how are they God's treasures? Are they not the riches of His love? Is it not His goodness that maketh Him glorious to them? Can the Sun or Stars serve him any other way, than by serving them? And how will you be the Son of God, but by having a great Soul like unto your Father's? The Laws of God command you to live in His image: and to do so is to live in Heaven. God commandeth you to love all like Him, because He would have you to be His Son, all them to be your riches, you to be glorious before them, and all the creatures in serving them to be your treasures, while you are His delight, like Him in beauty, and the darling of His bosom.

Socrates was wont to say—They are most happy and nearest the gods that needed nothing. And coming once up into the Exchange at Athens, where they that traded asked him, What will you buy; what do you lack? After he had gravely walked up into the middle, spreading forth his hands and turning about, Good Gods, saith he, who would have thought there were so many things in the world which I do not want! And so left the place under the reproach of Nature. He was wont to say: That Happiness consisted not in having many, but in needing the fewest things: for the Gods needed nothing at all, and they were most like them that least needed. We needed Heaven and Earth, our senses, such souls and such bodies, with infinite riches in the Image of God to be enjoyed: Which God of His mercy having freely prepared, they are most happy that so live in the enjoyment of those, as to need no accidental trivial things, no Splendours, Poms, and Vanities. Socrates, perhaps, being an heathen, knew not that all things proceeded from God to man, and by man returned to God: but we that know it must need all things as God doth, that we may receive them with joy, and live in His image.

As pictures are made curious by lights and shades, which without shades could not be: so is felicity composed of wants and supplies; without which mixture there could be no felicity. Were there no needs, wants would be wanting themselves, and supplies superfluous: want being the parent of Celestial Treasure. It is very strange; want itself is a treasure in Heaven: and so great an one that without it there could be no treasure. God did infinitely for us, when He made us to want like Gods, that like Gods we might be satisfied.

The heathen Deities wanted nothing, and were therefore unhappy, for they had no being. But the Lord God of Israel the Living and True God, was from all Eternity, and from all Eternity wanted like a God. He wanted the communication of His divine essence, and persons to enjoy it. He wanted Worlds, He wanted Spectators, He wanted Joys, He wanted Treasures. He wanted, yet He wanted not, for He had them.

42

This is very strange that God should want. For in Him is the fulness of all Blessedness: He overfloweth eternally. His wants are as glorious as infinite: perfective needs that are in His nature, and ever Blessed, because always satisfied. He is from eternity full of want, or else He would not be full of Treasure. Infinite want is the very ground and cause of infinite treasure. It is incredible, yet very plain Want is the fountain of all His fulness. Want in God is treasure to us. For had there been no need He would not have created the World, nor made us, nor manifested His wisdom, nor exercised His power, nor beautified Eternity, nor prepared the Joys of Heaven. But he wanted Angels and Men, Images, Companions: And these He had from all Eternity.

43

Infinite Wants satisfied produce infinite Joys; and in the possession of those joys are infinite joys themselves. The Desire Satisfied is a Tree of Life. Desire imports something absent: and a need of what is absent. God was never without this Tree of Life. He did desire infinitely, yet He was never without the fruits of this Tree, which are the joys it produced. I must lead you out of this, into another World, to learn your wants. For till you find them you will never be happy: Wants themselves being Sacred Occasions and Means of Felicity.

44

You must want like a God that you may be satisfied like God. Were you not made in His Image? He is infinitely Glorious, because all His wants and supplies are at the same time in his nature, from Eternity. He had, and from Eternity He was without all His Treasures. From Eternity He needed them, and from Eternity He enjoyed them. For all Eternity is at once in Him, both the empty durations before the World was made, and the full ones after. His wants are as lively as His enjoyments: and always present with Him. For His life is perfect, and He feels them both. His wants put a lustre upon His enjoyments and make them infinite. His enjoyments being infinite crown His wants, and make them beautiful even to God Himself. His wants and enjoyments being always present are delightful to each other, stable, immutable, perfective of each other, and delightful to Him. Who being Eternal and Immutable, enjoyeth all His wants and treasures together. His wants never afflict Him, His treasures never disturb Him. His wants always delight Him; His treasures never cloy Him. The sense of His wants is always as great, as if His treasures were removed: and as lively upon Him. The sense of His wants, as it enlargeth His life, so it infuseth a value, and continual sweetness into the treasures He enjoyeth.

45

This is a lesson long enough: which you may be all your life in learning, and to all Eternity in practising. Be sensible of your wants, that you maybe sensible of your treasures. He is most like God that is sensible of everything. Did you not from all Eternity want some one to give you a Being? Did you not want one to give you a Glorious Being? Did you not from all Eternity want some one to give you infinite Treasures? And some one to give you Spectators, Companions, Enjoyers? Did you not want a Deity to make them sweet and honourable by His infinite Wisdom? What you wanted from all Eternity, be sensible of to all Eternity. Let your wants be present from everlasting. Is not this a strange life to which I call you? Wherein you are to be present with things that were before the world was made? And at once present even like God with infinite wants and infinite Treasures: Be present with your want of a Deity, and you shall be present with the Deity. You shall adore and admire Him, enjoy and prize Him; believe in Him, and Delight in Him, see him to be the Fountain of all your joys, and the Head of all your Treasures.

46

It was His wisdom made you need the Sun. It was His goodness made you need the sea. Be sensible of what you need, or enjoy neither. Consider how much you need them, for thence they derive their value. Suppose the sun were extinguished: or the sea were dry. There would be no light, no beauty, no warmth, no fruits, no flowers, no pleasant gardens, feasts, or prospects, no wine, no oil, no bread, no life, no motion. Would you not give all the gold and silver in the Indies for such a treasure? Prize it now you have it, at that rate, and you shall be a grateful creature: Nay, you shall be a Divine and Heavenly person. For they in Heaven do prize blessings when they have them. They in Earth when they have them prize them not, they in Hell prize them when they have them not.

47

To have blessings and to prize them is to be in Heaven; to have them and not to prize them is to be in Hell, I would say upon Earth: To prize them and not to have them, is to be in Hell. Which is evident by the effects. To prize blessings while we have them is to enjoy them, and the effect thereof is contentation, pleasure, thanksgiving, happiness. To prize them when they are gone, envy, covetousness, repining, ingratitude, vexation, misery. But it was no great mistake to say, that to have blessings and not to prize them is to be in Hell. For it maketh them ineffectual, as if they were absent. Yea, in some respect it is worse than to be in Hell. It is more vicious, and more irrational.

48

They that would not upon earth see their wants from all Eternity, shall in Hell see their treasures to all Eternity: Wants here may be seen and enjoyed, enjoyments there shall be seen, but wanted. Wants here may be blessings; there they shall be curses. Here they may be fountains of pleasure and thanksgiving, there they will be fountains of woe and blasphemy. No misery is greater than that of wanting in the midst of enjoyments, of seeing, and desiring yet never possessing. Of beholding others happy, being seen by them ourselves in misery. They that look into Hell here may avoid it hereafter. They that refuse to look into Hell upon earth, to consider the manner of the torments of the damned, shall be forced in Hell, to see all the earth, and remember the felicities which they had when they were living. Hell itself

is a part of God's Kingdom, to wit His prison. It is fitly mentioned in the enjoyment of the world. And is itself by the happy enjoyed, as a part of the world.

49

The misery of them who have and prize not, differeth from others, who prize and have not. The one are more odious and, less sensible; more foolish, and more vicious: the senses of the other are exceeding keen and quick upon them; yet are they not so foolish and odious as the former: The one would be happy and cannot, the other may be happy and will not. The one are more vicious, the other more miserable. But how can that be? Is not he most miserable that is most vicious? Yes, that is true. But they that prize not what they have are dead; their senses are laid asleep, and when they come to Hell they wake: And then they begin to feel their misery. He that is most odious is most miserable, and he that is most perverse is most odious.

50

They are deep instructions that are taken out of hell, and heavenly documents that are taken from above. Upon Earth we learn nothing but vanity. Where people dream, and loiter, and wander, and disquiet themselves in vain, to make a vain show; but do not profit because they prize not the blessings they have received. To prize what we have is a deep and heavenly instruction. It will make us righteous and serious, wise and holy; divine and blessed. It will make us escape Hell and attain Heaven, for it will make us careful to please Him from whom we have received all, that we may live in Heaven.

51

Wants are the bands and cements between God and us. Had we not wanted we could never have been obliged. Whereas now we are infinitely obliged, because we want infinitely. From Eternity it was requisite that we should want. We could never else have enjoyed anything: Our own wants are treasures. And if want be a treasure, sure everything is so. Wants are the ligatures between God and us, the sinews that convey Senses from him into us, whereby we live in Him, and feel His enjoyments. For had we not been obliged by having our wants satisfied, we should not have been created to love Him. And had we not been created to love Him, we could never have enjoyed His eternal Blessedness.

52

Love has a marvellous property of feeling in another. It can enjoy in another, as well as enjoy him. Love is an infinite treasure to its object, and its object is so to it. God is Love, and you are His object. You are created to be His Love: and He is yours. He is happy in you, when you are happy: as parents in their children. He is afflicted in all your afflictions. And whosoever toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye. Will not you be happy in all His enjoyments? He feelth in you; will not you feel in Him? He hath obliged you to love Him. And if you love Him, you must of necessity be Heir of the World, for you are happy in Him. All His praises are your joys, all His enjoyments are your treasures, all His pleasures are your enjoyments. In God you are crowned, in God you are concerned. In Him you feel, in Him you live, and move, and have your being, in Him you are blessed. Whatsoever therefore serveth Him; serveth you and in Him you inherit all things.

O the nobility of Divine Friendship! Are not all His treasures yours, and yours His? Is not your very Soul and Body His: is not His life and felicity yours is not His desire yours? Is not His will yours? And if His will be yours, the accomplishment of it is yours, and the end of all is your perfection. You are infinitely rich as He is: being pleased in everything as He is. And if His will be yours, yours is His. For you will what He willeth, which is to be truly wise and good and holy. And when you delight in the same reasons that moved Him to will, you will know it. He willed the Creation not only that He might Appear but Be: wherein is seated the mystery of the Eternal Generation of His Son. Do you will it as He did, and you shall be glorious as He. He willed the happiness of men and angels not only that He might appear, but be good and wise and glorious. And He willed it with such infinite desire, that He is infinitely good: infinitely good in Himself, and infinitely blessed in them. Do you will the happiness of men and angels as He did, and you shall be good, and infinitely blessed as He is. All their happiness shall be your happiness as it is His. He willed the glory of all ages, and the government and welfare of all Kingdoms, and the felicity also of the highest cherubims. Do you extend your Will like Him and you shall be great as He is, and concerned and happy in all these. He willed the redemption of mankind, and therefore is His Son Jesus Christ an infinite treasure. Unless you will it too, He will be no treasure to you. Verily you ought to will these things so ardently that God Himself should be therefore your joy because He willed them. Your will ought to be united to His in all places of His dominion. Were you not born to have communion with Him? And that cannot be without this heavenly union. Which when it is what it ought is Divine and Infinite. You are God's joy for willing what He willeth. He loves to see you good and blessed. And will not you love to see Him good? Verily, if ever you would enjoy God, you must enjoy His goodness: All His goodness to all His hosts in Heaven and Earth. And when you do so, you are the universal heir of God and all things. God is yours and the whole world. You are His, and you are all; or in all, and with all.

He that is in all, and with all, can never be desolate. All the joys and all the treasures, all the counsels, and all the perfections; all the angels, and all the saints of God are with him. All the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them are continually in his eye. The patriarchs, prophets, and Apostles are always before Him. The councils and the fathers, the bishops and the doctors minister unto him. All temples are open before him, the melody of all quires reviveth him, the learning of all universities doth employ him, the riches of all palaces delight him, the joys of Eden ravish him, the revelations of St. John transport him, the creation and the day of Judgment please him, the Hosannas of the church militant and the Hallelujahs of the Saints Triumphant fill him, the splendour of all coronations entertain him, the joys of Heaven surround him, and our Saviour's cross, like the Centre of Eternity, is in him; it taketh up his thoughts, and exerciseth all the powers of his soul, with wonder, admiration, joy and thanksgiving. The Omnipotence of God is his House, and Eternity his habitation.

55

The contemplation of Eternity maketh the Soul immortal. Whose glory it is, that it can see before and after its existence into endless spaces. Its Sight is its presence. And therefore in the presence of the understanding endless, because its Sight is so. O what glorious creatures should we be could we be present in spirit with all Eternity! How wise, would we esteem this presence of the understanding, to be more real than that of our bodies! When my soul is in Eden with our first parents, I myself am there in a blessed manner. When I walk with Enoch, and see his translation, I am transported with him. The present age is too little to contain it. I can visit Noah in his ark, and swim upon the waters of the deluge. I can see Moses with his rod, and the children of Israel passing through the sea; I can enter into Aaron's Tabernacle, and admire the mysteries of the holy place. I can travel over the Land of Canaan, and see it overflowing with milk and honey; I can visit Solomon in his glory, and go into his temple, and view the sitting of his servants, and admire the magnificence and glory of his kingdom. No creature but one like unto the Holy Angels can see into all ages. Sure this power was not given in vain, but for some wonderful purpose; worthy of itself to enjoy and fathom. Would men consider what God hath done, they would be ravished in spirit with the glory of His doings. For Heaven and Earth are full of the majesty of His glory. And how happy would men be could they see and enjoy it! But above all these our Saviour's cross is the throne of delights. That Centre of Eternity, that Tree of Life in the midst of the Paradise of God!

56

There are we entertained with the wonder of all ages. There we enter into the heart of the universe. There we behold the admiration of Angels. There we find the price and elixir of our joys. As on every side of the earth all heavy things tend to the centre; so all nations ought on every side to flow in unto it. It is not by going with the feet, but by journeys of the Soul, that we travel thither. By withdrawing our thoughts from wandering in the streets of this World, to the contemplation and serious meditation of His blood sufferings. Where the carcase is thither will the eagle be gathered together. Our eyes must be towards it, our hearts set upon it, our affections drawn, and of thoughts and minds United to it. When I am lifted up, saith the Son of Man, I will draw all men unto me. As fishes are drawn out of the water, as Jeremie was drawn out of the dungeon, as St. Peter's sheet was drawn up into Heaven; so shall we

be drawn by that sight from Ignorance and Sin, and Earthly vanities, idle sports, companions, feast and pleasures, to the joyful contemplation of that Eternal Object. But by what cords? The cords of a man, and the cords of Love.

57

As eagles are drawn by the scent of a carcase, as children are drawn together by the sight of a lion, as people flock to a coronation, and as a man is drawn to his beloved object, so ought we. As the sick drawn by the credit of a physician, as the poor drawn by the liberality of a King, as the devout drawn by the fame of the Holy, and as the curious drawn by the noise of a miracle, so ought we. As stones were drawn to the building of Thebes by Melody of Amphion, as the hungry are drawn with desire of a feast, and the pitiful, drawn to a woe spectacle, so ought we. What visible chains or cords draw these? What invisible links allure? They follow all, or flock together of their own accord. And shall not we much more! Who would not be drawn to the Gate of Heaven, were it open to receive him? Yet nothing compels him, but that which forceth the Angels, Commodity and Desire. For those are things which the Angels desire to look into. And of men it is written, They shall look on Him whom they have pierced. Verily the Israelites did not more clearly see the brazen serpent upon the pole in the wilderness, than we may our Saviour upon the Cross. The serpent was seen with their eyes, the slayer of the serpent is seen with our Souls. They had less need to see the one, than we to see the other.

58

The Cross is the abyss of wonders, the centre of desires, the school of virtues, the house of wisdom, the throne of love, the theatre of joys, and the place of sorrows; It is the root of happiness, and the gate of Heaven.

59

Of all the things in Heaven and Earth it is the most peculiar. It is the most exalted of all objects. It is an Ensign lifted up for all nations, to it shall the Gentiles seek, His rest shall be glorious: the dispersed of Judah shall be gathered together to it, from the four corners of the earth. If Love be the weight of the Soul, and its object the centre, all eyes and hearts may convert and turn unto this Object: cleave unto this centre, and by it enter into rest. There we might see all nations assembled with their eyes and hearts upon it. There we may see God's goodness, wisdom and power: yea His mercy and anger displayed. There we may see man's sin and infinite value. His hope and fear, his misery and happiness. There we might see the Rock of Ages, and the Joys of Heaven. There we may see a Man loving all the world, and a God dying for mankind. There we may see all types and ceremonies, figures and prophecies. And all kingdoms adoring a malefactor: An innocent malefactor, yet the greatest in the world. There we may see the most distant things in Eternity united: all mysteries at once couched together and explained. The only reason why this Glorious Object is so publicly admired by Churches and Kingdoms, and so little thought of by particular men, is because it is truly the most glorious: It is the Rock of Comforts and the Fountain of Joys. It is the only supreme and sovereign spectacle in all Worlds. It is a Well of Life beneath in which we may see the face of Heaven above: and the only mirror, wherein all things appear in their proper colours: that is, sprinkled in the blood of our Lord and Saviour.

The Cross of Christ is the Jacob's ladder by which we ascend into the highest heavens. There we see joyful Patriarchs, expecting Saints, Prophets ministering Apostles publishing, and Doctors teaching, all Nations centering, and Angels praising. That Cross is a tree set on fire with invisible flame, that Illumineth all the world. The flame is Love: the Love in His bosom who died on it. In the light of which we see how to possess all the things in Heaven and Earth after His similitude. For He that suffered on it was the Son of God as you are: tho' He seemed only a mortal man. He had acquaintance and relations as you have, but He was a lover of Men and Angels. Was he not the Son of God; and Heir of the whole world? To this poor, bleeding, naked Man did all the corn and wine, and oil, and gold and silver in the world minister in an invisible manner, even as He was exposed lying and dying upon the Cross.

Here you learn all patience, meekness, self-denial, courage, prudence, zeal, love, charity, contempt of the world, penitence, contrition, modesty, fidelity, constancy, perseverance, contentation, holiness, and thanksgiving: With whatsoever else is requisite for a Man, a Christian, or a King. This Man bleeding here was tutor to King Charles the Martyr: and Great Master to St. Paul, the convert who learned of Him activity, and zeal unto all nations. Well therefore may we take up with this prospect, and from hence behold all the things in Heaven and Earth. Here we learn to imitate Jesus in His love unto all.

LORD JESUS what love shall I render unto Thee, for Thy love unto me! Thy eternal love! Oh what fervour, what ardour, what humiliation, what reverence, what joy, what adoration, what zeal, what thanksgiving! Thou that art perfect in Beauty, Thou that art the King of Eternal Glory, Thou that reignest in the Highest Heavens camest down from Heaven to die for me! And shall not I live unto Thee? O my Joy! O my Sovereign Friend! O my life and my all! I beseech Thee let those trickling drops of blood that ran down Thy flesh drop upon me. O let Thy love enflame me. Which is so deep and infinite, that Thou didst suffer the wrath of GOD for me: And purchase all nations and Kingdoms to be my treasures. O Thou that redeemed me from Hell, and when Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of Death didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers; what shall I do unto Thee? What shall I do for Thee, O Thou preserver of Men? Live, Love, and Admire; and learn to become such unto Thee as Thou unto me. O Glorious Soul; whose comprehensive understanding at once contains all Kingdoms and Ages! O Glorious Mind! Whose love extendeth to all creatures! O miraculous and eternal Godhead, now suffering on the cross for me: As Abraham saw thy Day and was glad, so didst Thou see me and this Day from all Eternity, and seeing me wast Gracious and Compassionate towards me. (All transient things are permanent in God.) Thou settest me before Thy face forever. O let me this day see Thee, and be united to Thee in Thy Holy Sufferings. Let me learn, O God, such lessons from Thee, as may make me wise, and blessed as an Angel of GOD!

Why, Lord Jesus, dost Thou love men; why are they all Thy treasures? What wonder is this, that Thou shouldst so esteem them as to die for them? Shew me the reasons of Thy love, that I may love them too. O Goodness ineffable! They are the treasures of Thy goodness. Who so infinitely lovest them that Thou gavest Thyself for them. Thy Goodness delighted to be communicated to them whom Thou hast saved. O Thou who art more glorious in Goodness, make me abundant in this Goodness like unto Thee. That I may as deeply pity others misery, and as ardently thirst for their happiness as Thou dost. Let the same mind be in me that is in Jesus Christ. For he that is not led by the spirit of Christ is none of His. Holy Jesus I admire Thy love unto me also. O that I could see it through all those wounds! O that I could feel it in all those stripes! O that I could hear it in all those groans! O that I could taste it beneath the gall and vinegar! O that I could smell the savour of Thy sweet ointments, even in this Golgotha, or place of a skull. I pray Thee teach me first Thy love unto me, and then unto mankind! But in Thy love unto mankind I am beloved.

These wounds are in themselves orifices too small to let in my sight, to the vast comprehensions of Thine eternal love. Those wounds engraven in Thy hands but shady impressions, unless I see the Glory of Thy Soul, in which the fullness of the GODHEAD dwelleth bodily. These bloody characters are too dim to let me read it, in its lustre and perfection till I see Thy person, and know Thy ways! O Thou that hangest upon this Cross before mine eyes, whose face is bleeding, and covered over with tears and filth and blows! Angels adore the Glory of Thy GODHEAD in the highest heavens. Who in every thought and in every work didst Glorious things for me from Everlasting. What could I, O my Lord, desire more than such a World! Such Heavens and such an Earth! Such beasts and fowls and fishes made for me. All these do homage unto me, and I have dominion over them from the Beginning! The Heavens and the Earth minister unto me, as if no man were greater, but I alone. I willingly acknowledge it to be thy Gift! thy bounty unto me! How many thousand ways do men also minister unto me! O what riches hast Thou prepared out of nothing for me! All creatures labor for my sake, and I am made to enjoy all Thy creatures. O what praises shall I return unto Thee, the wisdom of the Father, and the brightness of the glory of His Eternal Goodness!, Who didst make all for me before Thou didst redeem me.

65

Had I been alive in Adam's stead, how should I have admired the Glories of the World! What a confluence of Thoughts and wonders, and joys, and thanksgivings would have replenished me in the sight of so magnificent a theatre, so bright a dwelling place; so great a temple, so stately a house replenished with all kind of treasure, raised out of nothing and created for me and for me alone. Shall I now despise them? When I consider the heavens which Thou hast made, the moon and stars, which are the works of Thy fingers: what is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visiteth him! Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honour. O what love must that needs be, that prepared such a palace! Attended with what power! With what wisdom illuminated! Abounding with what zeal! And how glorious must the King be, that could out of nothing erect such a curious, so great, and so beautiful a fabric! It was glorious while new: and is as new as it was glorious.

66

But this is small. What O my Lord, could I desire to be which Thou hast not made me! If Thou hast expressed Thy love in furnishing the house, how gloriously doth it shine in the possessor! My limbs and members when rightly prized, are comparable to the fine gold, but that they exceed it. The topaz of Ethiopia and the gold of Ophir are not to be compared to them. What diamonds are equal to my eyes; what labyrinths to my ears; what gates of ivory, or ruby leaves to the double portal of my lips and teeth? Is not sight a jewel? Is not hearing a treasure? Is not speech a glory? O my Lord pardon my ingratitude, and pity my dullness who am not sensible of these gifts. The freedom of thy bounty hath deceived me. These things were too near to be considered. Thou presentedst me with Thy blessings, and I was not aware. But now I give thanks and adore and praise Thee for Thine inestimable favors. I believe Thou lovest me, because Thou hast endued me with those sacred and living treasures. Holy Father, henceforth I more desire to esteem them than Palaces of Gold! Yea, though they were given me

by Kings, I confess unto Thee that I am richer in them. O what Joy, what Delight and Jubilee should there always be, would men prize the Gifts of God according to their value!

67

But what creature could I desire to be which I am not made? There are Angels and Cherubim. I rejoice, O Lord, in their happiness, and that I am what I am by Thy grace and favour. Suppose, O my Soul, there were no creature made at all, and that God making Thee alone offered to make thee what Thou wouldst: What could Thou desire; or what wouldst Thou wish, or crave to be? Since GOD is the most Glorious of all Beings, and the most blessed, couldst thou wish any more than to be His IMAGE! O my Soul, He hath made thee His Image. Sing, O ye Angels, and laud His name, ye Cherubims: Let all the Kingdoms of the the Earth be glad, and let all the Host of Heaven rejoice for He hath made His Image, the likeness of Himself, His own similitude. What creature, what being, what thing more glorious could there be! God from all Eternity was infinitely blessed, and desired to make one infinitely blessed, and desired to make one infinitely blessed. He was infinite Love, and being lovely in being so, would prepare for Himself a most lovely object. Having studied from all Eternity, He saw none more lovely than the Image of His Love, His own Similitude. O Dignity unmeasurable! Triumph, O my Soul, and rejoice for ever! I see that I am infinitely beloved. For infinite Love hath exprest and pleased itself in creating an infinite object. God is Love, and my Soul is Lovely! God is loving, and His Image amiable. O my Soul these are the foundations of an Eternal Friendship between God and Thee. He is infinitely prone to love, and thou art like Him. He is infinitely lovely and Thou art like Him. What can more agree than that which is infinitely lovely, and that which is infinitely prone to love! Where both are so lovely, and so prone to love, joys and affections will be excited between them! What infinite treasures will they be to each other! O my God Thou hast glorified Thyself, and Thy creature infinitely, in making Thine Image! That is fitted for the Throne of God! It is meet to be Thy companion! It is so sublime and wonderful and amiable, that all Angels and Men were created to admire it: As it was created to admire Thee, and to live in communion with Thee for ever.

68

Being made alone, O my soul, thou wouldst be in thy body like God in the World, an invisible mystery, too great to be comprehended by all creatures. Thou wouldst have all the Goodness of God towards thee to enjoy, in that thy Creation. Whatever is in Him would be thy Treasure. But had He determined to create no more: there had been no witnesses of thy Glory, no spectators of thy communion with God, no other treasures beside God and thou. One would think those were sufficient. But Infinite Goodness loves to abound, and to overflow infinitely with infinite treasures. Love loves to do somewhat for its object more than to create it: It is always more stately being surrounded with power, and more delightful being inaccessible in a multitude of treasures, and more honourable in the midst of admirers; and more glorious when it reigneth over many attendants. Love therefore hath prepared all these for itself and its object. And because it is always more great by how much the greater they are that minister unto it, it maketh its attendants the most Glorious that can be, and infinitely delighteth in giving them all with all its treasures to its beloved. Had God created thee alone He had not been so good as He is. He is good to innumerable millions now whom He createth besides. And He glorifieth His eternal Wisdom,

in making His goodness unto all them wholly thine, and wholly infinite unto each of them, yet wholly and solely thine in all. Friendship will manifest itself in doing all it can for its beloved. Since therefore God will make some other creatures, what kind of creatures doth thy Soul desire? Wish wisely thou shalt receive a grant. Since Love is so sweet, and thou art by God's Love so infinitely exalted: what canst thou desire but creatures like unto Thy creator? Behold therefore Angels and Men produced by His goodness and made to delight thee.

69

O Adorable Trinity! What hast Thou done for me? Thou hast made me the end of all things, and all the end of me. I in all, and all in me. In every soul whom Thou hast created, Thou hast given me the Similitude of Thyself to enjoy! Could my desires have aspired unto such treasures? Could my wisdom have devised such sublime enjoyments? Oh! Thou hast done more for us than we could ask or think. I praise and admire, and rejoice in Thee who art infinitely infinite in all Thy doings.

70

But what laws O my Soul wouldst thou desire, by which the lives of those creatures should be guided towards Thee? A friend commandeth all in his jurisdiction to love his friend; and therein supremely manifesteth his love. God Himself exalteth thee, and causeth thee to reign in His soul. He exalteth thee by His laws and causeth thee to reign in all others. The world and souls are like His, thy heavenly mansions, The Law-giver of Heaven and Earth employeth all His authority for thee. He promoteth thee in His eternal palace, and maketh thee His friend, and telleth His nobles and all His subjects, Whatsoever ye do unto him ye do unto Me. Joseph was not so great in Pharaoh's Court, nor Haman in the court of Ahasuerus, as thou art in Heaven. He tendereth thee as the apple of His eye. He hath set His heart upon thee: Thou art the sole object of His eye, and the end of all His endeavours.

71

But what life wouldst thou lead? And by what laws wouldst thou thyself be guided? For none are so miserable as the lawless and disobedient. Laws are the rules of blessed living. Thou must therefore be guided by some laws. What wouldst thou choose? Surely since thy nature and God's are so excellent, the Laws of Blessedness, and the Laws of Nature are the most pleasing. God loved thee with an infinite love, and became by doing so thine infinite treasure, Thou art the end unto whom He liveth. For all the lines of His works and counsels end in thee, and in thy advancement. Wilt not thou become to Him an infinite treasure, by loving Him according to His desert? It is impossible but to love Him that loveth. Love is so amiable that it is irresistible. There is no defence against that arrow, nor any deliverance in that war, nor any safeguard from that charm. Wilt thou not live unto Him? Thou must of necessity live, unto something. And what so glorious as His infinite Love? Since therefore, laws are requisite to lead thee, what laws can thy soul desire, than those that guide thee in the most amiable paths to the highest end? By Love alone is God enjoyed, by Love alone delighted in, by Love alone approached or admired. His Nature requires Love, thy nature requires Love. The law of Nature commands thee to Love Him: the Law of His nature, and the Law of thine.

There is in love two strange perfections, that make it infinite in Goodness. It is infinitely diligent in doing good, and it infinitely delighteth in that Goodness. It taketh no pleasure comparable in anything to that it taketh in exalting and blessing. And therefore hath it made thee a comprehension infinite to see all ages, and an affection endless to love all Kingdoms, and a power fathomless to enjoy all Angels. And a thirst insatiable to desire and delight in them. And a never-wearied faculty all-sufficient to love; number, take in, prize, and esteem all the varieties of creatures and their excellencies in all worlds, that thou mayest enjoy them in communion with Him. It is all obligation, that He requires it. What life wouldst thou lead? Wouldst thou love God alone? God alone cannot be beloved. He cannot be loved with a finite love, because He is infinite. Were He beloved alone, His love would be limited. He must be loved in all with an unlimited love, even in all His doings, in all His friends, in all His creatures. Everywhere in all things thou must meet His love. And this the Law of Nature commands. And it is thy glory that thou art fitted for it. His love unto thee is the law and measure of thine unto Him: His love unto all others the law and obligation of thine unto all.

His nature requireth that thou love all those whom He loveth, and receive Him in all those things wherein He giveth Himself unto thee. Their nature loveth to be beloved and being amiable require love, as well as delight in it. They require it both by desert and desire. Thy nature urgeth it. For without loving thou art desolate, and by loving thou enjoyest. Yea by loving thou expandest and enlargest thyself, and the more thou lovest art the more glorious. Thou lovest all thy friends' friends; and needest not to fear any dearth of love or danger of insufficiency. For the more thou lovest thy friend, thy Sovereign Friend, the more thou lovest all His Friends. Which showeth the endless proneness of love to increase and never to decay. O my Soul thou livest in all those whom thou lovest: and in them enjoyest all their treasures.

74

Miraculous are the effects of Divine Wisdom. He loveth every one, maketh every one infinitely happy and is infinitely happy in every one. He giveth all the world to me, He giveth it to every one in giving it to all, and giveth it wholly to me in giving it to every one for everyone's sake. He is infinitely happy in every one as many times therefore as there are happy persons He is infinitely happy. Every one is infinitely happy in every one, every one therefore is as many times infinitely happy as there are happy persons. He is infinitely happy above all their happiness in comprehending all. And I, comprehending His and theirs, am Oh, how happy! Here is love! Here is a kingdom! Where all are knit in infinite unity. All are happy in each other. All are like Deities. Every one the end of all things, everyone supreme, every one a treasure, and the joy of all, and every one most infinitely delighted in being so. All things are ever joys for every one's sake and infinitely richer to every one for the sake of all. The same thing is multiplied by being enjoyed. And He that is greatest is most my treasure. This is the effect of making Images, and by all their love is every Image infinitely exalted. Comprehending in his nature all Angels, all Cherubims, all Seraphims, all Worlds, all Creatures, and GOD over all Blessed for ever.

75

Being to lead this Life within, I was placed in Paradise without, with some advantages which the Angels have not: And being designed to immortality and an endless life, was to abide with God from everlasting to everlasting in all His ways. But I was deceived by my appetite, and fell into Sin. Ungratefully I despised Him that gave me my being. I offended in an apple against Him that gave me the whole world: But Thou O Saviour art here upon the Cross suffering for my Sins. What shall I render unto Thee for so great a Mercy! All thanksgiving is too weak, and all expression too feeble. I give Thee myself, my Soul and Body I offer unto Thee. It is unworthy of Thee, but Thou lovest me. Wash me with Thy blood from all my Sins: And fill me with Thy Holy Spirit that I may be like unto Thee. So shall I praise Thy Name acceptably for ever more. Amen.

76

And now, O Lord, Heaven and Earth are infinitely more valuable than they were before, being all bought with Thy precious blood. And Thou, O Jesus, art a treasure unto me far greater than all those. At what rate or measure shall I esteem Thee? Thou hast restored me again to the friendship of God, to the enjoyment of the World, to the hope of Eternal Glory, to the love of Angels, Cherubims, and Men. To the enjoyment and obedience of Thy Holy Laws: which alone are sweeter to me than the honey and the

honeycomb, and more precious than thousands of gold and silver. Thou hast restored me above all to the Image of God. And Thou hast redeemed all Ages and Kingdoms for me alone, who am commanded to love them as Thou dost. O that I might be unto them as Thou art! O that I might be unto Thee as Thou art to me, as glorious and as rich in Love! O that I might die for Thee! O that I might ever live unto Thee! In every thought, in every action of my life, in every moment I bless Thee for renewing the old commandment; upon new obligations among Sinners,— As I have loved you, so do ye also love one another. O let Thy love be in me that Thy joy may be fulfilled in me for evermore.

77

Now O Lord I see the greatness of Thy love wherewith Thou diedst. And by Thy actions more than by Thy sufferings admire Thee. But henceforth I will more admire Thee by Thy sufferings; for considering that such actions went before; what love must move Thee to come into the place of guilty Sinners!

78

Lord I lament and abhor myself that I have been the occasion of these Thy sufferings. I had never known the dignity of my nature, hadst not Thou esteemed it: I had never seen or understood its glory, hadst not Thou assumed it. Be Thou pleased to unite me unto Thee in the bands of an Individual Love, that I may ever more live unto Thee, and live in Thee. And by how much the more vile I have been, let my love be so much, O Lord, the more violent henceforth, and fervent unto Thee. O Thou who wouldst never have permitted sin, hadst Thou not known how to bring good out of evil, have pity upon me: hear my prayer. O my God since pity embalms love, let Thine come enriched, and be more precious to me, miserable Sinner. Let the remembrance of all the glory wherein I was created make me more serious and humble, more deep and penitent, more pure and holy before Thee. And since the World is sprinkled with Thy blood, and adorned with all Kingdoms and Ages for me: which are Heavenly Treasures and vastly greater than Heaven and Earth, let me see Thy glory in the preparation of them, and Thy goodness in their government. Open unto me the Gate of Righteousness, that I may enter in to the New Jerusalem.

79

My Lord, Thou head of the Holy Catholic Church, I admire and praise Thee for purchasing to Thyself such a glorious Bride and for uniting us all by the blood of Thy Cross, I beseech Thee let my love unto all be regular like Thine, and pure, and infinite. Make it Divine and make it Holy. I confess I can see, but I cannot moderate, nor love as I ought. I pray Thee for Thy loving kindness sake supply my want in this particular. And so make me to love all, that I may be a blessing to all: and well pleasing to Thee in all, Teach me wisdom, how to expend my blood, estate, life, and time in Thy service for the good of all, and make all them that are round about me wise and holy as Thou art, That we might all be knit together in Godly Love, and united in Thy service to Thy Honour and Glory.

80

My excellent friend, you see that there are treasures in Heaven and Earth fit to be enjoyed, besides those of King's Courts, and Taverns. The joys of the Temple are the greatest joys were they understood; they

are the most magnificent, solemn and divine. There are glorious entertainments in this miserable world, could we find them out. What more delightful can be imagined, than to see a Saviour at this distance, dying on the Cross to redeem a man from Hell, and to see oneself the beloved of God and all Kingdoms, yea, the admired of ages, and the heir of the whole world? Hath not His blood united you and me, cannot we see and love and enjoy each other at a hundred miles distance? In Him is the only sweet and divine enjoyment. I desire but an amiable Soul in any part of all Eternity, and can love it unspeakably: And if love it, enjoy it. For love implies pleasure, because it is ever pleased with what is beloved. Love God and Jesus Christ and Angels and Men, which you are made to do as naturally as the sun is made to shine, and the beauty of the Holy Ghost dwelling in you will make you my delight, the treasure of the Holy Angels. You will at last be seen by me and all others, in all your thoughts and in all your motions. In the mean time, delight only in the love of Jesus, and direct all your love unto Him. Adore Him, rejoice in Him, admire His love and praise Him; secretly and in the congregation. Enjoy His Saints that are round about you, make yourself amiable that you may be admitted to their enjoyment, by meekness, temperance, modesty, humility, charity, chastity, devotion, cheerfulness, gratitude, joy, thanksgiving. Retire from them that you may be the more precious, and come out unto them the more wise. So shall you make the place wherein you live a nest of sweet perfumes, and every Soul that is round about you will be a bed of Honour, and sweet repose unto you.¹

81

My goodness extendeth not to Thee, O Lord, but to Thy Saints, and to the excellent in the Earth in whom is all my delight. To delight in the Saints of God is the way to Heaven. One would think it exceeding easy and reasonable to esteem those whom Jesus purchased with His precious blood. And if we do so how can we help but inherit all things. All the Saints of all Ages and all Kingdoms are His inheritance, His treasures, His jewels. Shall they not be yours since they are His whom you love so infinitely? There is not a cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple, but He accepteth it as done to Himself. Had you been with Mary Magdalen, would you not have anointed His feet, and washed them in tears, and wiped them with the hairs of your head? His poor servants, His contemptible and disguised members here upon earth are his feet, yea more the apple of His eye: yea more for He gave His eyes and heart and hands and feet for them. O therefore universally in all places tender them, and at all times be ready and willing to minister unto them. And that with infinite joy, knowing the excellency of your duty. For you are enjoying the world, and communicating yourself like God unto them. You are laying up treasure in Heaven, and enlarging your Soul, beautifying your life, and delighting the Holy Angels, offering up sacrifices unto God, and perfuming the world; embracing Jesus Christ and caressing your Saviour, while you are dispensing charities among them. Every alms deed is a precious stone in the Crown of Glory.

82

But there are a sort of Saints meet to be your companions, in another manner, but that they be concealed. You must therefore make yourself exceeding virtuous that by the very splendour of your fame you may find them out. While the wicked are like heaps of rubbish, these few jewels lie buried in the ruins of mankind: and must diligently be digged for. You may know them by their lustre, and by the very desire

and esteem they have of you when you are virtuous. For as it is the glory of the sun that darkness cannot approach it, because it is always encompassed with its own beams; so it is the privilege of Holy Souls, that they are always secure in their own light, which driveth away devils and evil men: and is accessible by none, but lovers of virtue. Beginners and desirers will give you the opportunity of infusing yourself and your principles into them. Practicers and growers will mingle souls and be delightful companions. The sublime and perfect, in the lustre of their spirit, will show you the Image of Almighty God and the joys of Heaven. They will allure, protect, encourage, comfort, teach, honour and delight you. But you must be very good, for that is the way to find them. And very patient to endure some time, and very diligent to observe where they are.

They will praise our Saviour with you, and turn the world into Heaven. And if you find those of noble and benevolent natures, discreet and magnanimous, liberal and cheerful, wise and holy as they ought to be, you will have in them treasures greater than all relations whatsoever. They will exchange Souls with you, divide estates, communicate comforts, counsels and honours, and in all tenderness, constancy, fidelity, and love be more yours than their own. There are exceeding few such Heavenly Lovers as Jesus was, who imparted His own soul unto us. Yet some may doubtlessly be found. And half a dozen such as these wisely chosen will represent unto us the New Jerusalem, entertain us always with divine discourses, please us always with Heavenly affections, delight us always with melody and praise, and ever make us near unto our Saviour.

84

Yet you must arm yourself with expectations of their infirmities, and resolve nobly to forgive them: not in a sordid and cowardly manner, by taking no notice of them, nor in a dim and lazy manner, by letting them alone: but in a divine and illustrious manner by chiding them meekly, and vigourously rendering and showering down all kind of benefits. Cheerfully continuing to do good, and whatever you suffer by your piety and charity, confidence or love, to be like our Saviour, unwearied: who when He was abused and had often been evil-intreated among men, proceeded courageously through all treacheries and deceits to die for them. So shall you turn their very vices, into virtues, to you, and, as our Saviour did, make of a wreath of thorns a crown of glory. But set the splendour of virtues before you, and when some fail, think with yourself, there are some sincere and excellent, and why should not I be the most virtuous?

85

With all their eyes behold our Saviour, with all their hearts adore Him, with all their tongues and affections praise him. See how in all closets, and in all temples; in all cities and in all fields; in all nations and in all generations, they are lifting up their hands and eyes unto His cross; and delight in all their adorations. This will enlarge your Soul and make you to dwell in all kingdoms and ages: strengthen your faith and enrich your affections: fill you with their joys and make you a lively partaker in communion with them. It will make you a possessor greater than the world. Men do mightily wrong themselves when they refuse to be present in all ages: and neglect to see the beauty of all kingdoms, and despise the resentments of every soul, and busy themselves only with pots and cups and things at home, or shops and trades and things in the street: but do not live to God manifesting Himself in all the world, nor care to see (and be present with Him in) all the glory of His Eternal Kingdom. By seeing the Saints of all Ages we are present with them: by being present with them become too great for our own age, and near to our Saviour.

86

O Jesu, Thou King of Saints, whom all adore: and, the Holy imitate, I admire the perfection of Thy Love in every soul! Thou lovest every one wholly as if him alone. Whose soul is so great an Image of Thine Eternal Father, that Thou camest down from Heaven to die for him, and to purchase mankind that they might be His treasures. I admire to see Thy cross in every understanding, Thy passion in every

memory Thy crown of thorns in every eye, and Thy bleeding, naked wounded body in every soul. Thy death liveth in every memory, Thy crucified person is embalmed in every affection, Thy pierced feet, are bathed in every one's tears, Thy blood all droppeth on every soul: Thou wholly communicatest Thyself to every soul in all kingdoms, and art wholly seen in every saint, and wholly fed upon by every Christian. It is my privilege that I can enter with Thee into every soul, and in every living temple of Thy manhood and Thy Godhead, behold again, and enjoy Thy glory.

87

O how do Thine affections extend like the sunbeams unto all stars in heaven and to all the kingdoms in the world. Thine at once enlighten both hemispheres: quicken us with life, enable us to digest the nourishment of our Souls, cause us to see the greatness of our nature, the Love of God, and the joys of heaven melt us into tears, comfort and enflame us, and, do all in a celestial manner, that the Sun can do in a terrene and earthly. O let me so long eye Thee, till I be turned into Thee, and look upon me till Thou art formed in me, that I may be a mirror of Thy brightness, an habitation of Thy Love, and a temple of Thy glory. That all Thy Saints might live in me, and I in them: enjoying all their felicities, joys, and treasures.

88

O Thou Sun of Righteousness, eclipsed on the Cross; overcast with sorrows, and crowned with the shadow of death, remove the veil of Thy flesh that I may see Thy glory. Those cheeks are shades, those limbs and members clouds, that hide the glory of Thy mind, Thy knowledge and Thy love from us. But were they removed those inward excellencies would remain invisible. As therefore we see Thy flesh with our fleshly eyes, and handle Thy wounds with our bodily senses, let us see Thy understanding with our understandings, and read Thy love with our own. Let our souls have communion with Thy soul, and let the eye of our mind enter into Thine. Who art Thou who bleeding here causest the ground to tremble and the locks to rend, and the graves to open? Hath Thy death influence so high as the highest Heavens? That the Sun also mourneth and is clothed in sables? Is Thy spirit present in the temple, that the veil rendeth in twain at Thy passion? O let me leave Kings Courts to come unto Thee, I choose rather in a cave to serve Thee, than on a throne to despise Thee, O my Dying Gracious Lord, I perceive the virtue of Thy passion everywhere. Let it, I beseech Thee, enter into my Soul. and rent my rocky, stony heart, and tear the veil of my flesh, that I may see into the Holy of Holies! O darken the Sun of pride and vain-glory. Yea, let the sun itself be dark in comparison of Thy Love! And open the grave of my flesh, that my soul may arise to praise Thee. Grant this for Thy mercy's sake. Amen!

89

Is this He that was transfigured upon Mount Tabor? Pale, withered, extended, tortured, soiled with blood, and sweat, and dust, dried, parched! O sad, O dismal spectacle. All His joints are dissolved, all His blood is shed, to the last drop, all His moisture is consumed! What is here but a heap of desolations, a deformed carcase, a disfigured countenance! A mass of miseries and silence, footsteps of innumerable sufferings! Can this be a joy? Can this be an entertainment? Can this delight us? O Jesus, the more vile I here behold Thee, the more I admire Thee. Into what low abysses didst Thou descend, into what

depths of misery dost Thou now lie! Oh what confusions, what stripes and wounds, what desolations and deformities didst Thou suffer for our sakes! In all the depths of Thy humiliation I here adore Thee! I prize and desire always to see those stripes and those deformities. It is sweeter to be with Thee in Thy sufferings, than with princes on their Thrones, and more do I rejoice with, Thee in Thy misery, than in all their solemnities. I tremble also; to, see Thy condescensions, the great effects and, expressions of Thy love! Thou wast slain for me: and, shalt I leave Thy body in the field, O Lord? Shall I go away and be merry, while the Love of my soul, and my only Lover is dead upon the cross. Groans, here, in the sight and apprehension of Thy love are beyond all melody, and the solemn sorrows of a loving Soul, a faithful Friend, a tender Spouse, a deep and compassionate true Lover, beyond all the entertainments in the world. Thine O Jesus will I ever be while I have any Being.

90

This Body is not the cloud, but the pillar assumed to manifest His love unto us. In these shades doth this sun break forth most oriently. In this death is His love painted in most lively colours. God never shewed Himself more a God than when He appeared man; never gained more glory than when He lost all glory: was never more sensible of our sad estate, than when He was bereaved of all sense. O let Thy goodness shine, in me! I will love all, O Lord, by Thy grace assisting as Thou dost: And in death, itself, will I find life, and in conquest victory. This Sampson by dying killed all his enemies: and then carried the Gates of Hell and Death away, when being dead, Himself was borne to His grave. Teach me, O Lord, these mysterious ascensions. By descending into Hell for the sake of others, let me ascend into the glory of the Highest Heavens. Let the fidelity and efficacy of my love appear, in all my care and suffering for Thee.

91

O Jesu, Lord of Love and Prince of Life! who even being dead, art greater than all angels, cherubims, and men, let my love unto Thee be as strong as Death and so deep that no waters may be able to drown it. O let it be ever endless and invincible! O that I could really so love Thee, as rather to suffer with St. Anselm the pains of Hell than to sin against Thee. O that no torments, no powers in heaven or earth, no stratagems, no allurements might divide me from Thee. Let the length and breadth and height and depth of my love unto Thee be like Thine unto me. Let undrainable fountains, and unmeasurable abysses be hidden in it. Let it be more vehement than flame, more abundant than the sea, more constant than the candle in Aaron's tabernacle that burned day and night. Shall the sun shine for me; and be a light from the beginning of the world to this very day that never goeth out, and shall my love cease or intermit, O Lord, to shine or burn? O let it be a perpetual fire on the altar of my heart, and let my soul itself be Thy living sacrifice.

92

It is an inestimable joy that I was raised out of nothing to see and enjoy this glorious world: It is a Sacred Gift whereby the children of men are made my treasures, but O Thou who art fairer than the children of men, how great and unconceivable is the joy of Thy love! That I who was lately raised out of the dust, have so great a Friend, that I who in this life am born to mean things according to the world should be

called to inherit such glorious things in the way of heaven: Such a Lord, so great a Lover, such heavenly mysteries, such doings and such sufferings, with all the benefit and pleasure of them in Thy intelligible kingdom: it amazeth me, it transporteth and ravisheth me. I will leave my father's house and come unto Thee; for Thou art my Lord, and I will worship Thee, That all ages should appear so visibly before me, and all Thy ways be so lively, powerful, and present with me, that the land of Canaan should be so near; and all the joys in heaven and earth be so sweet to comfort me! This, O Lord, declareth Thy wisdom, and sheweth Thy power. But O the riches of thine infinite goodness in making my Soul an interminable Temple, out of which nothing can be, from which nothing is removed, to which nothing is afar off; but all things immediately near, in a real, true, and lively manner. O the glory of that endless life, that can at once extend to all Eternity! Had the Cross been twenty millions of ages further, it had still been equally near, nor is it possible to remove it, for it is with all distances in my understanding, and though it be removed many thousand millions of ages more is as clearly seen and apprehended. This soul for which Thou diedst, I desire to know more perfectly, O my Saviour, that I may praise Thee for it, and believe it worthy, in its nature, to be an object of Thy love; though unworthy by reason of sin: and that I may use it in Thy service, and keep it pure to Thy glory.

As my body without my Soul is a Carcase, so is any soul without Thy Spirit, a chaos, a dark obscure heap of empty faculties: ignorant of itself, unsensible of Thy goodness, blind to Thy glory: dead in sins and trespasses. Having eyes I see not, having ears I hear not, having an heart I understand not the glory of Thy works and the glory of Thy Kingdom. O Thou who art the Root of my being, and the Captain of my salvation, look upon me. Quicken me, O Thou lifegiving and quickening Seed. Visit me with Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me to Thy Holy Hill and make me to see the greatness of Thy love in all its excellencies, effects, emanations, gifts and operations; O my Wisdom! O my Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption; let Thy wisdom enlighten me, let Thy knowledge illuminate me, let Thy blood redeem me, wash me and clean me, let Thy merits justify me, O Thou who art equal unto God, and didst suffer for me.

Let Thy righteousness clothe me. Let Thy will imprint the form of itself upon mine; and let my will become conformable to thine: that Thy will and mine, may be united, and made one for evermore.

94

Thy will, O Christ, and Thy Spirit in essence are one. As therefore Thy human will is conformable to Thy Divine; let my will be conformable to Thine. Thy divine Will is all wisdom, goodness, holiness, glory, and blessedness. It is all light and life and love. It extendeth to all things in heaven and earth. It illuminateth all eternity, it beautifies the omnipresence of God with glory without dimensions. It is infinite in greatness and magnifieth all that are united to it. Oh that my will being made great by Thine, might become divine, exalted, perfected! O Jesu, without Thee I can do nothing. O Thou in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth, I desire to learn of Thee, to become in spirit like unto Thee, I desire not to learn of my relations, acquaintance, tradesmen, merchants or earthly princes to be like unto them; but like unto Thee, the King of Glory, and to those who are Thy sons and friends in another World. Grant therefore, O Thou of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that being strengthened with might by Thy spirit in the inner man, I may be able to comprehend with all Saints, what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know that Love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that I may be filled with all the fulness of God.

95

O Thou who ascendedst up on high, and ledst captivity captive, and gavest gifts unto men, as after Thy ascension into heaven Thou didst send Thy Holy Spirit down upon Thine Apostles in the form of a rushing mighty wind, and in the shape of cloven fiery tongues; send down the Holy Ghost upon me: Breathe upon me, inspire me, quicken me, illuminate me, enflame me, fill me with the Spirit of God; that I may overflow with praises and thanksgivings as they did. Fill me with the riches of Thy glory, that Christ may dwell in my heart by faith, that I being rooted and grounded in Love may speak the wonderful Works of God. Let me be alive unto them: let me see them all, let me feel them all, let me enjoy them all: that I may admire the greatness of Thy love unto my soul, and rejoice in communion with Thee for evermore. How happy, O Lord, am I, who am called to a communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in all their works and ways, in all their joys, in all their treasures, in all their glory! Who have such a Father, having in Him the Fountain of Immortality, Rest and Glory, and the joy of seeing Him creating all things for my sake! Such a Son, having in Him the means of peace and felicity,

and the joy of seeing Him redeeming my soul, by His sufferings on the cross, and doing all things that pertain to my salvation between the Father and me: Such a Spirit and such a Comforter dwelling in me to quicken, enlighten, and enable me, and to awaken all the powers of my soul that night and day the same mind may be in me that was in Christ Jesus!

96

O Thou who hast redeemed me to be a Son of God, and called me from vanity to inherit all things, I praise Thee, that having loved me and given Thyself for me, Thou commandest us saying, As I have loved you, so do ye also love one another. Wherein Thou hast commanded all men, so to love me, as to lay down their lives for my peace and welfare. Since Love is the end for which heaven and earth was made, enable me to see and discern the sweetness of so great a treasure. And since Thou hast advanced me into the Throne of God, in the bosom of all Angels and men; commanding them by this precept, to give me an union and communion with Thee in their dearest affection; in their highest esteem; and in the most near and inward room and seat in their hearts; give me the grace which Saint Paul prayed for, that I may be acceptable to the Saints, fill me with Thy Holy Spirit, and make my soul and life beautiful, make me all wisdom, goodness and love, that I may be worthy to be esteemed and accepted of them. That being delighted also with their felicity, I may be crowned with Thine, and with their glory.

97

O Jesu, who having prepared all the joys in heaven and earth for me, and redeemed me to inherit Thy Father's treasures; hast prepared for me the most glorious companions, in whose presence and society I may enjoy them: I bless Thee for the communion of Saints: and for Thy adorning the same, with all manner of beauties, excellencies, perfections, and delights. O what a glorious assembly is the Church of the first-born, how blessed and divine! What perfect lovers! How great and honorable! How wise! How sweet and delightful! Every one being the end, every one the King of Heaven; every one the Son of God in greatness and glory; every one the entire and perfect friend of all the residue; every one the light and ornament of Thy Kingdom; every one Thy peculiar friend, yet loving every one as Thy peculiar friend: and rejoicing in the pleasures and delights of every one! O my God, make me one of that happy assembly. And let me love every one for whom Christ died, with a love as great and lively as His, That I may dwell in Him, and He in me: and that we all may be made perfect in me, even as Thou, O Jesus, art in the Father, and the Father is in Thee: that Thy love may be in us, and Thou in me for evermore.

98

Wisely, O Jesu, didst Thou tell Thy disciples, when Thou promisedst them the Comforter, that the world cannot receive the Spirit of Truth: because it seeth Him not neither knoweth Him. But ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. O let the Spirit of Truth dwell with me, and then little matter for any other comforter. When I see myself beloved of the Father; when I know the perfection of thy love, when the Father and the Son loveth me, and both manifest themselves unto me; when they are near unto me and abide with me for ever and ever, little harm can death do, or sickness and poverty. I can never be alone because the Father and Son are with me. No reproaches can discomfort me, no

enemies can hurt me. O let me know Thee Thou Spirit of Truth, be Thou always with me, and dwell within me. How is it possible, but Thou shouldst be an infinite Comforter; who givest me a being as wide as eternity; a well-being as blessed as the Deity; a temple of glory in the omnipresence of God, and a light wherein to enjoy the New Jerusalem! An immovable inheritance, and an everlasting Kingdom that cannot be shaken! Thou art He who shewest me all the treasures in heaven and earth, who enablest me to turn afflictions into pleasures, and to enjoy mine enemies: Thou enablest me to love as I am beloved, and to be blessed in God: Thou sealest me up unto the Day of Redemption, and givest me a foretaste of heaven upon earth. Thou art my God and my exceeding joy, my Comforter and my strength for evermore. Thou representest all things unto me which the Father and the Son have done for me. Thou fillest me with courage against all assaults, and enablest me to overcome in all temptations; Thou makest me immovable by the very treasures and the joys which Thou showest to me. O never leave me nor forsake me, but remain with me, and be my comfort forever!

99

Wisely doth St. John say, We are the Sons of God; but the world knoweth us not because it knew Him not. He that knoweth not the Spirit of God, can never know a Son of God, nor what it is to be His child. He made us the sons of God in capacity by giving us a power to see Eternity, to survey His treasures, to love His children, to know and to love as He doth, to become righteous and holy as He is. The Holy Ghost maketh us the Sons of God in act, when we are righteous as He is righteous, and Holy as He is holy. When we prize all the things in Heaven and Earth, as He prizeth Him, and make a conscience of doing it as He doth after His similitude; then are we actually present with them, and blessed in them, being righteous and holy as He is. Then the Spirit of God dwelleth in us, and then are we indeed the Sons of God, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an Holy nation, a peculiar people, zealous of good works, shewing forth the praises of Him, who hath called us out of Darkness, into His marvellous Light.

100

Christ dwelling in our hearts by Faith is an Infinite Mystery, which may thus be understood: An object seen, is in the faculty seeing it, and by that in the Soul of the seer, after the best of manners: Whereas there are eight² manners of inbeing, the inbeing of an object in a faculty is the best of all. Dead things are in a room containing them in a vain manner; unless they are objectively in the Soul of a seer. The pleasure of an enjoyer is the very end why things placed are in any place. The place and the thing placed in it, being both in the understanding of a spectator of them. Things dead in dead place effect nothing. But in a living Soul, that seeth their excellencies, they excite a pleasure answerable to their value, a wisdom to embrace them, a courage not to forsake them, a love of their Donor, praises and thanksgivings; and a greatness and a joy equal to their goodness. And thus all ages are present in my soul, and all kingdoms, and God blessed forever. And thus Jesus Christ is seen in me, and dwelleth in me, when I believe upon Him. And thus all Saints are in me, and I in them. And thus all Angels and the Eternity and Infinity of God are in me for evermore. I being the living temple and comprehensor of them. Since therefore all other ways of In-being would be utterly vain, were it not for this: And the Kingdom of God (as our Saviour saith) is within you, let us ever meditate and think on Him, that His

conception, nativity, life and death may be always within us. Let heaven and earth, men and angels, God and His creatures be always within us, that is in our sight, in our sense, in our love and esteem: that in the light of the Holy Ghost we may see the glory of His Eternal Kingdom, and sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints.

Source: Centuries of Meditations, ed. Bertram Dobell. London, 1908 (first publication from Traherne's manuscript). Text via Christian Classics Ethereal Library, ccel.org.

Extracted via browser navigation from CCEL (ccel.org/ccel/traherne/centuries/centuries.i_1.html) — CCEL's content is JS-rendered and not reachable by a plain HTTP fetch, so this was pulled by loading the page in a real browser and reading the rendered text. Accessed July 2026. This is Part 1 (The First Century) of a 5-part work; only this part has been prepared so far. A handful of bare page-number artifacts from CCEL's original pagination (e.g. a stray digit mid-sentence) remain in the body text below, left in place rather than risk mis-stripping an actual meditation-number marker, since both look identical in isolation — worth a light copyedit pass before publishing.

Translation: Original English composition, not a translation. Traherne (1637-1674) and first editor Bertram Dobell (1842-1914) are both long public domain.

<https://www.thestromata.com/texts/centuries-of-meditations-first-century>