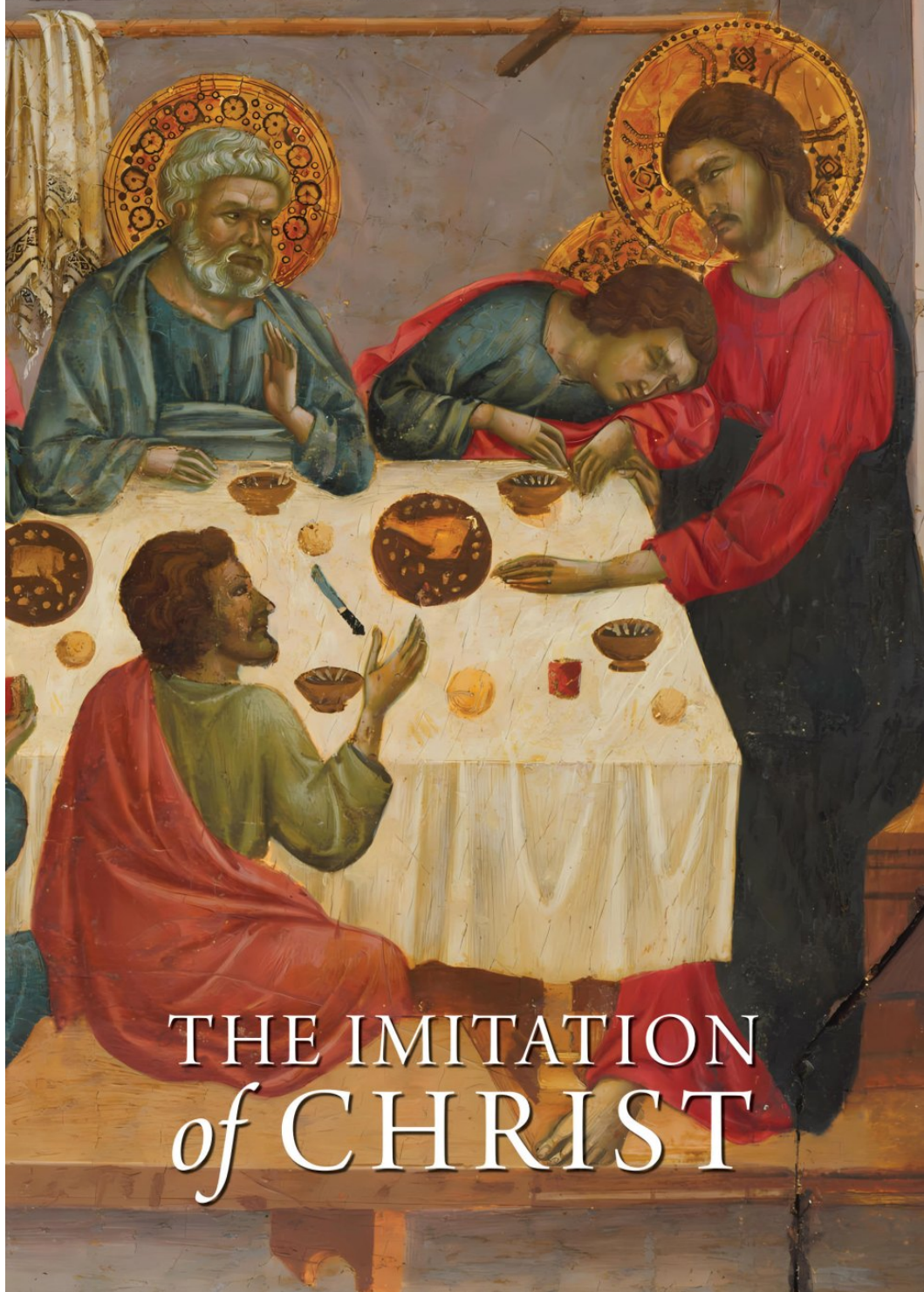


THOMAS À KEMPIS



THE IMITATION
of CHRIST

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The
IMITATION
of CHRIST

Imitatio Christi

THOMAS À KEMPIS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
JULIUS SCHNORR VON CAROLSFELD

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INTRODUCTION

THE AUTHOR¹

THOMAS À KEMPIS is the name by which the Augustinian canon and writer Thomas Hammerken is commonly known.

He was born in 1379 or 1380 in the town of Kempen, about 15 miles north-west of Dusseldorf, in one of the many patches of territory between the Meuse and the Rhine belonging to the archiepiscopal principality of Cologne.

‘Ego Thomas Kempis,’ he says in his chronicle of the monastery of Mount St Agnes, ‘scholaris Daventriensis, ex diocesi Coloniensi natus.’²

His father was a poor hard-working peasant; his mother ‘ad custodiam rei domesticae attenta, in opere alacris, in victu sobria, in potu abstemia, in verbo pauca, in factis pudica,’³ as her son fondly said, kept a school for the younger children of the town.

John and Gertrude Hammerken had two sons, John and Thomas, both of whom found their way to Deventer, and from there to Zwolle and to the monastery at Mount St Agnes. Thomas reached Deventer when he was barely twelve years old, and in a few months, to his great joy, he entered the classes of Florentius Radewyn.

After the fashion of the time, he was called ‘Thomas from Kempen,’ and the school title, as was often the case then, soon replaced the family name. Thomas Hammerken was forgotten; Thomas à Kempis has become known to the whole Christian world.

This school at Deventer had become famous long before Thomas was admitted to its classes. It had been founded by Gerhard Groot, a wealthy burgher who had been converted to pious living mainly through the influence of Ruysbroeck, the Flemish mystic.

It was at Deventer, in the midst of this mixture of mystical theology and hearty practical benevolence, that Thomas à Kempis was trained.

Gerhard Groot was his saintly ideal. Florentius Radewyn and Gerhard’s other early disciples were his heroes; their presence was his world, the measure of their lives was his horizon.

But he was not like them; he was not an educational reformer like Radewyn, nor a student of current affairs like Gerhard.

¹The material under the headings *The Author*, *The Brethren...*, and *The Imitation of Christ* is adapted from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edition, 1911.

²‘I, Thomas Kempis, a scholar from Deventer, born in the Diocese of Cologne.’

³He describes his mother as “attentive to the care of the household, diligent in work, moderate in food, abstinent in drink, restrained in speech, and chaste in actions.”



He liked books and quiet corners all his days, he says; and so, when conviction of sin and visions of God's Grace came to him (in the medieval fashion) as a dream of the anger and forgiveness of the Virgin, Florentius told him that a monk's life would suit him best. He advised him to join the Augustinian order, and sent him to Zwolle to the new monastery of Mount St Agnes, where his brother John was prior.

Thomas was received there in 1399. He professed the vows in 1407, received priest's orders in 1413, became sub-prior in 1425 and died on the 8th of August 1471, being 91 years old.

The monastery of Mount St Agnes was poor, and most of the monks had to earn money to support their household by copying manuscripts.

Thomas was a most diligent copyist: missals, books of devotion and a famous manuscript of the Bible – one of four which he produced – were written by him.

He also wrote a large number of original writings, most of them relating to the monastic life, which was the only life he knew.

He wrote a chronicle of the monastery, and several biographies – lives of Gerhard Groot, of Florentius Radewyn, of a Flemish lady St Louise, and also of Groot's original disciples.

He also produced a number of tracts on the monastic life – *The Monk's Alphabet*, *The Discipline of Cloisters*, *A Dialogue of Novices*, *The Life of the Good Monk*, *The Monk's Epitaph*, *Sermons to Novices*, *Sermons to Monks*, *The Solitary Life*, *On Silence*, and *On Poverty, Humility and Patience*.

He penned two tracts for young people: *A Manual of Doctrine for the Young*, and *A Manual for Children*; as well as books for edification – *On True Compunction*, *The Garden of Roses*, *The Valley of Lilies*, *The Consolation of the Poor and the Sick*, *The Faithful Dispenser*, *The Soul's Soliloquy*, and *The Hospital of the Poor*.

He also left behind him three collections of sermons, a number of letters, some hymns, and of course the *Imitatio Christi*, or *The Imitation of Christ*.

These writings allow us to see the man and his surroundings, and

contemporary records make him something more than just a shadow.

We see a real man – but a man helpless anywhere except in the study or in the monastery. He was a small man, with soft brown eyes, who had a habit of stealing away to his cell whenever the conversation became too lively; it is recorded that he stood upright when the psalms were chanted, and even rose on his tiptoes with his face turned upwards; he was genial, if shy, and occasionally given to punning, as when he said that he preferred *Psalmi* to *Salmones*. He perhaps led the most placid and uneventful life of anyone who ever wrote a book or scribbled letters.

It was not that he lived in uneventful times: it would be hard to select a stormier period of European history, or a period when the upheavals of the times made their way so thoroughly into the most obscure corners.

Bohemia, with Huss leading, was ablaze in revolt at one end of Europe; and first France and England, and then France and Burgundy, were at death-grips at the other. Two popes anathematized each other from Avignon and from Rome, and zealous churchmen were at their wit's end devising ways and means, by general councils of Constance and Basel and otherwise, to restore peace to a distracted church, and to discipline the clergy into decent living.

But Thomas knew nothing about all this. He was intent on his copying, on his books and tracts, and on his quiet conversations. The biographies that he produced are colourless. He had not even the common interest in the little world coming up to the monastery gate which most monks may be supposed to have.

His brethren made him *oeconomiae prefectus*,¹ but he was too 'simple in worldly affairs' and too absent-minded for the post, and they soon deposed him and made him the sub-prior once more.

It is this placid and kind old man who has come down to us as the author of *The Imitation of Christ*, which has been translated into more languages than any other book except the Bible, and which has moved the hearts of so many believers of all nations, all characters, and all conditions of life.

THE BRETHREN, OR 'MODERN DEVOTION'

The 'Brethren of the Common Life' was a religious community which existed widely in the medieval Catholic Church.

Towards the end of his career, the preacher Gerhard Groot (1340 – 1384) retired to his native town of Deventer, in the province of Overijssel and the diocese of Utrecht, where he gathered around him a number of followers who had been influenced by his preaching, and wished to place themselves under his spiritual guidance.

With the assistance of Florentius Radewyn, who resigned a canonry at Utrecht so that he could participate in the project, he was able to achieve his long-cherished goal of establishing a house in which devout men could live in

¹ 'Director of the household'

community without monastic vows. The first such community was established in 1380 at Deventer in the house of Florentius himself.

Thomas, who lived there from 1392 to 1399, has left a description of their lives:

“They humbly imitated the manner of the Apostolic life, and having one heart and mind in God, every man brought what was his own into the common stock, and receiving simple food and clothing, avoided taking thought for the morrow. Of their own will they devoted themselves to God, and all busied themselves in obeying their rector or his vicar. They laboured carefully in copying books, being continually in sacred study and devout meditation. In the morning having said Matins, they went to the church (for Mass)... Some who were priests and were learned in the Divine Law preached in the church.”

Other houses of the Brethren of the Common Life, who were also called the *Devotio Moderna* or ‘Modern Devotion,’ were in rapid succession established in the chief cities of the Low Countries as well as north and central Germany, so that there were soon more than of 40 houses for men; while those for women doubled that figure, the first having been founded by Groot himself at Deventer.

The fundamental idea was to reproduce the life of the first Christians as described in the Book of Acts. The members took no vows, and were free to leave when they chose; but for as long as they remained, they were bound to observe chastity, and to practise personal poverty, putting all their money and earnings into the common fund. They were to obey the rules of the house and the commands of the rector, and to exercise themselves always in self-denial, humility and piety.

The rector was chosen by the community and was not necessarily a priest, though in each house there were some priests and clerics. The majority, however, were laymen, of all kinds and degrees – nobles, artisans, scholars, students, and laboring men. The clerics preached and instructed the people, working chiefly among the poor; they also devoted themselves to the copying of manuscripts, in order to earn something for the common fund. Some of them taught in schools.

Of the laymen, the educated copied manuscripts, while the others worked at various handicrafts or at agriculture. After the religious services in the morning, the Brethren dispersed for the day’s work, the artisans going to the workshops in the city – for the idea was to live and work in the world, and not be separated from it, as monks are.

They had to earn their livelihood, and not beg. This feature seemed a reflection on the mendicant orders, and the idea of a community life without vows, and not in isolation from everyday life, was looked upon by many as something new and strange – and even as being similar to the Beghards and other sects, who were at that time causing trouble to both the Church and the state.

And so opposition to the Brethren arose, and the controversy was brought before the legal faculty at Cologne University, which gave a judgment strongly

in their favour.

The question, for all that, was not finally settled until the council of Constance (1414), when their cause was triumphantly defended by Pierre d'Ailly and Gerson.

For a century after this, the Brethren flourished and spread, and its influence on the revival of religion in the Netherlands and northern Germany in the 15th century was wide and deep.

It has been the fashion to treat Groot and the Brethren of the Common Life as 'reformers before the Reformation'; but Gottlob Schulze is surely right in pronouncing this view as being quite unhistorical – except with regard to his suggestion that all interior spiritual religion is Protestant.

Groot shows that during the Reformation, hardly any of the Brethren embraced Lutheranism; only a single community is known to have converted as a body to the new religion.

During the second half of the 16th century, however, the Brethren gradually declined, and by the middle of the 17th century, all its houses had ceased to exist.

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

Imitatio Christi, or *The Imitation of Christ*, is the title of the famous medieval Christian devotional work which is still widely read by both Catholics and Protestants, and is generally ascribed to Thomas à Kempis.

The debate over the authorship of *The Imitation of Christ* is probably the most considerable and famous controversy that has ever been carried on concerning a purely literary question. It has been going on almost without respite for at least three centuries. In this article, nothing will be said on the history of the controversy, but an attempt will be made to summarize those results which can be regarded as definite and reliable.

Until quite recently, there were three candidates in the field – Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471), a canon of Mount St Agnes in Zwolle, in the diocese of Utrecht, of the Windesheim Congregation of Augustinian Canons; John Gerson (1363-1429), chancellor of the University of Paris; and an abbot, John Gersen, who was said to have been abbot of a Benedictine monastery at Vercelli in the 12th century.

Towards the end of the 15th century, *The Imitation* circulated under the names of the first two; but Gerson is an impossible author, and his claims have never found defenders except in France, where even there they are no longer supported. The Benedictine abbot Gersen is an absolutely mythical personage, a mere clone of the chancellor.

Consequently, the question is narrowed to a choice between either Thomas à Kempis, or an unknown author.



The following is a summary of the facts that may be accepted as settled.

1. The earliest known manuscript of *The Imitation* is dated 1424 – it contains only Book 1.

The earliest manuscript of the whole work that can be dated with certainty is from 1427. Probably some of the undated manuscripts are older; but it is the verdict of the most competent modern opinion that there is no palaeographical reason for suspecting that any known manuscript was created earlier than the first quarter of the 15th century.

2. A Latin letter by a Dutch canon named Johann van Schoonhoven exhibits such a close connexion with Book 1 that plagiarism on the one side or the other is the only possible explanation.

It is capable of demonstration that the author of the letter was the borrower, and that the opposite hypothesis is inadmissible. Now, this letter can be shown to have been written after 1382.

Therefore Book 1 was, without doubt, written between 1382 and 1424.

3. It is not asserted here that the four treatises formed a single work, or even that they are all by the same author; and the date of the other three books cannot be fixed with the same certainty.

But, on the one hand, before the beginning of the 15th century there is no trace whatever of their existence – a strong argument that they did not yet exist; but on the other hand, after 1424, nearly every year produces its quota of manuscripts, and other signs of the existence of these Books become frequent.

Moreover, as a matter of fact, the four treatises did commonly circulate together. The presumption is strong that Books 2, 3, and 4, like Book 1, were composed shortly before they were put into circulation.

It may then be taken as settled that *The Imitation* was composed between 1380 and 1425, and probably towards the end, rather than the beginning, of that period.

4. Having ascertained the date, we should now consider the birthplace. A number of idioms and turns of expression throughout the book show that its author belonged to some branch of the Teutonic race. Further than this, the argument does not lead; for when the dialects of the early 15th century are considered, it cannot confidently be said that the expressions in question are Netherlandic rather than German – as a matter of fact, they have all been traced to High German dialects.

5. Of 400 known manuscripts of *The Imitation*, 340 come from the Teutonic countries – another argument in favour of its Teutonic origin.

Again, 100 of them, including the earliest, come from the Netherlands. This number is quite disproportionate to the relative size of the Netherlands, and so points to Holland as the country in which *The Imitation* was first widely circulated, and presumably composed.

6. There is a considerable body of early evidence, traceable to before 1450, that the author was a canon regular.

7. Several of the manuscripts were written in houses either belonging to the Windesheim Congregation of canons regular, or in close touch with it.

Moreover there is a specially intimate literary and spiritual relationship between *The Imitation* and writings that emanated from what has been called the ‘Windesheim Circle’.

The indirect evidence points clearly to the conclusion that *The Imitation* was written by a Teutonic canon regular, probably a Dutch canon regular of the Windesheim Congregation, in the first quarter of the 15th century.

These points of data are all satisfied by accepting Thomas à Kempis as the author of *The Imitation*.

We pass now to the direct evidence, passing over those witnesses who had no special sources of information.

8. There can be no question that in the Windesheim Congregation itself there was already, during Thomas à Kempis's lifetime, a fixed tradition that he was the author of *The Imitation*.

The most important witness to this tradition is Johann Busch. It is true that the crucial words are missing in one copy of his *Chronicle*; but it is clear that there were two editions of the work, and there are no grounds whatever for doubting that the second, with its various enlargements, came from the hands of Busch himself. A copy of it containing the relevant passage was written in 1464, while both Busch and Thomas à Kempis were both still alive.

Busch passed a great part of his life in Windesheim, only a few miles from Mount St Agnes, where Thomas lived. It would be hard to find a more authentic witness.

Another witness is Hermann Rhyd, a German member of the Windesheim Congregation, who also had personally known Thomas.

Besides these, two or three other manuscripts originating in the Windesheim Congregation state or imply the same tradition.

9. More than this: the tradition existed in Thomas à Kempis' own monastery shortly after his death. John Mauburne became a canon in Mount St Agnes within a few years of Thomas's death, and he states more than once that Thomas wrote *The Imitation*.

10. The earliest biographer of Thomas à Kempis was an anonymous contemporary: the *Life* was printed in 1494, but it exists in a manuscript of 1488.

The biographer says he got his information from the brethren at Mount St Agnes, and he states in passing that Book 3 was written by Thomas. Moreover, he appends a list of Thomas's writings, 38 in total, and 5-8 are the four Books of *The Imitation*.

We do not need to point out that such a list is of far greater authority than those given by St Jerome or Gennadius in their *De Viris Illustribus*¹, and its rejection would, if consistently applied, involve methods of criticism that would wreak havoc in the history of early literature of all kinds.

The domestic tradition in the Windesheim Congregation, and in Mount St Agnes itself, therefore, has weight that cannot be legitimately avoided or evaded.

Indeed, the external authority for Thomas's authorship is stronger than that for the authorship of most truly anonymous books – such as those which neither themselves claim to be by a given author, nor have been claimed by anyone as being their own work.

¹Lit: Concerning illustrious men.



Many ancient writings, both ecclesiastical and secular, are assigned without question to writers on the basis of far less evidence than that which exists for Thomas's authorship of *The Imitation*.

Internal arguments have been raised against Thomas's authorship. It has been said that his certainly authentic writings are so inferior that *The Imitation* could not have been written by the same author.

But only if they were of the most certain and peremptory nature could such internal arguments be allowed to weigh against the clear array of facts that make up the external argument in favour of à Kempis.

And it cannot be allowed that the ‘internal difficulties’ qualify.

Let it be granted that Thomas was a prolific writer and that his writings vary in quality; let it also be granted also that *The Imitation* surpasses all the rest, and that some are indeed on a level far below it; still, when at their best, some of the other works are not unworthy of the author of *The Imitation*.

In conclusion, it is the belief of the present writer that the controversy is over and settled, and that Thomas à Kempis’ claims to the authorship of *The Imitation* have been established.

The best detailed account in English of the debate is that given by F. Cruise in his *Thomas à Kempis* (1887). Works produced before 1880 are in general, with the exception of those of Eusebius Amort, outdated, and deal in large measure with points no longer of any pertinent interest.

A pamphlet by Cruise – *Who was the Author of The Imitation?* (1898) contains sufficient information on the subject for all ordinary needs; it has been translated into French and German, and may be regarded as the standard reference on the subject.

It has been said that *The Imitation of Christ* has had a wider religious influence than any book except the Bible – and if the statement can be limited to Christendom, it is probably true.

The Imitation has been translated into over 50 languages, and is said to have appeared in more than 6,000 editions.

The other statement, often made – that it sums up all that is best of earlier Western mysticism; that in it “was gathered and centered all that was elevating, passionate, profoundly pious in all the older mystics” (Milman) is an exaggeration that is only partially true, for it depreciates unduly the older mystics, and fails to do justice to the originality of *The Imitation*.

The spiritual teaching of *The Imitation* is something quite different from the mysticism of Augustine in the *Confessions*, or of Bernard in his *Sermons on the Song of Songs*; it is different from the scholastic mysticism of Saint Victor or Bonaventure; and above all, it is different from the obscure mysticism, saturated with pseudo-Dionysian Neoplatonism, of the German school of Eckhart, Suso, Tauler and Ruysbroek.

Also, the theology of *The Imitation* is quite different from the later school of St Teresa and St John of the Cross, and from the introspective methods of what may be called the ‘modern school’ of spirituality.

The Imitation stands apart, and is unique, as the principal and most representative utterance of a special phase of religious thought – it is non-scholastic, non-platonic, positive and merely religious in its scope – reflecting faithfully the spirit of the *Modern Devotion* movement initiated by Gerhard Groot, and carried forward by the circles in which Thomas à Kempis lived.

In contrast with more mystical writings, it is of limpid clarity, every sentence being understandable by all whose spiritual sense is in any degree awakened.

No doubt it owes its universal power to this simplicity – to its freedom from intellectualism, its direct appeal to the religious sense, and to the extraordinary religious genius of its author.

Professor Harnack in his book *What is Christianity?* describes *The Imitation* as one of the chief spiritual forces in Catholicism: it “kindles independent religious life, and a fire which burns with a flame of its own”.

The best Latin edition of *The Imitation* is that of Hirsche (1874), which follows closely the text of 1441, and reproduces its rhythmical character.

Of the English translations, one that stands out is by John Wesley, under the title *The Christian’s Pattern* (1735).

PUBLISHER’S NOTE

This current (2023) edition of *The Imitation of Christ* is not a new translation. It is the result of combining and refining the texts of various English translations – texts consulted have included versions by Richard Challoner, William Benham, Richard Whytford and Wilfrid Raynals, Aloysius Croft and Harold Bolton, John Payne, and The American Tract Society’s edition.

The various translations consulted have no established convention with regard to the numbering of the verses. This edition divides the text by ‘thoughts’, or elements of the narrative, into discrete numbered verses. This has resulted in some short numbered passages, and other longer ones, depending on the context and the content.

The old tradition of capitalizing words associated with God has been adopted – so we have God’s Law, but human law; we have Heaven, and the heavens; and Divine Will, as opposed to human will. Words that belong to God, such as Holy, Grace, and Mystery, are capitalized unless the context requires otherwise.

References to thee, thine, and wilt have been replaced by You, Your, and will.

The third and fourth books are presented here as conversations between Christ and the Disciple, with appropriate headings for clarity. This is a convention used in some previous editions, such as that by John Payne, but it is by no means universal.

Bible verses are mostly from the Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (RSVCE), with a few being from the RSV2CE.

The illustrations used in this volume are by the German printmaker Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794 – 1872). He designed 240 engravings for his illustrated *Picture Bible*,¹ a project which arose from his visit to London in 1851, and which was executed between 1852 and 1860.

Feedback regarding errors, or suggestions for improvement in future editions, is welcome and can be directed to editorial@adistantmirror.com.

¹ German: *Bibel in Bildern*

BOOK 1

THE LIFE OF THE SOUL

*A pure, simple, and steadfast spirit is not
distracted even though it is engaged in many
works – for everything it does, it does to
glorify God.*

*Being at peace within itself, it does not seek
itself in anything that it does.*



1. Imitate Christ and Disdain all Vanities

¹“HE WHO FOLLOWS ME shall not walk in darkness,” says the Lord.¹

With these words of Christ, we are advised to imitate His Life and character if we seek true illumination, and deliverance from all blindness of heart.

Let it be our most earnest study, therefore, to study and meditate upon the Life of Jesus Christ.

²The teaching of Christ surpasses all the advice of Holy men, and those who possess the Spirit will find within it a hidden manna.²

Yet there are many, even though they hear the Gospel often, who care little for it because they do not have the Spirit of Christ.

If you desire to understand fully and with wisdom the words of Christ, you must endeavor to conform yourself entirely to the example of His Life.

¹John 8:12

²Revelations 2:17

³What good does it do to speak learnedly and profoundly about the Trinity, if you lack humility, and therefore displease God?

For it is not learning and great words that make a man Holy and just, but rather a good and virtuous life that makes him dear to God.

⁴I would rather feel contrition, than know how to define it.

For what does it profit us to know the entire Bible by heart, and the principles of all the philosophers, if we live without Grace and without the Love of God?¹

⁵Vanity of vanities – all is vanity,² except the desire to love God and serve Him alone.

This is the greatest Wisdom – to cast the world behind us, and to reach forward to the Kingdom of Heaven.

⁶It is vanity, therefore, to seek after riches that will perish, and to place our trust in them.

It is vanity, also, to strive after honor, and to hold ourselves up high.

It is vanity to follow the desires of the flesh, and be led by them, for this will lead only to misery.

It is vanity to desire a long life, and to care little about how you spend it.

It is vanity to be concerned only with the life that now is, and not to make provision for those things that are to come.

It is vanity to love what passes quickly, and not to hasten to where Eternal joy abides.

⁷Recall the proverb:

“All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it.

The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.”³

Strive, therefore, to withdraw your heart from the love of visible things. Turn yourself towards the invisible; for they who follow their own lusts defile their conscience, and lose the Grace of God.

¹ 1 Corinthians 13:1–2

² Ecclesiastes 1

³ Ecclesiastes 1:8

He who trusts in his riches will wither, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.

– PROVERBS 11:28



2. *On Humility*

¹ALL NATURALLY DESIRE KNOWLEDGE;¹ but what good is knowledge without the fear of God?

Indeed, a humble peasant who serves God is better than a proud philosopher who watches the stars, but neglects his own soul.

When you understand yourself well, you will be lowly in your own eyes, and have no regard for the praise of others.

If you know of all the things that are in the world and yet have no Charity, what help will it be to you before God, who will judge you according to your deeds?

²Shun an inordinate desire for knowledge, for in it there is only distraction and delusion.

Intellectuals love to appear learned before others, and to be called wise; yet there are many things the knowledge of which does little or no good to the soul.

¹ Ecclesiastes 1:13

*Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty,
but associate with the lowly; never be conceited.*

— ROMANS 12:16

If you concern yourself with anything other than that which works towards your salvation, then you are foolish beyond measure.

The use of many words does not satisfy the soul; but a good life eases the mind. A clean conscience inspires great confidence in God.

³The more you know and the better you understand, the more severely you will be judged, unless your life is also Holy.

Do not be lifted up into pride, therefore, because of your learning or your skill, but rather, let the knowledge given to you make you afraid.

⁴If you think you know many things and understand them, realize at the same time that there are many more things that you do not know.

Hence, do not affect wisdom and high-mindedness, but rather admit your ignorance.¹

⁵Why should you hold yourself above anyone else, when there are many who are more learned, and more skillful in Scripture, than you?

If you wish to know and learn anything profitably, then strive to be unknown, and considered as nothing.

⁶To know yourself truly, and to hold yourself in low esteem, is the highest and most perfect counsel.

It is great wisdom to think nothing of yourself, and always to think well and highly of others.

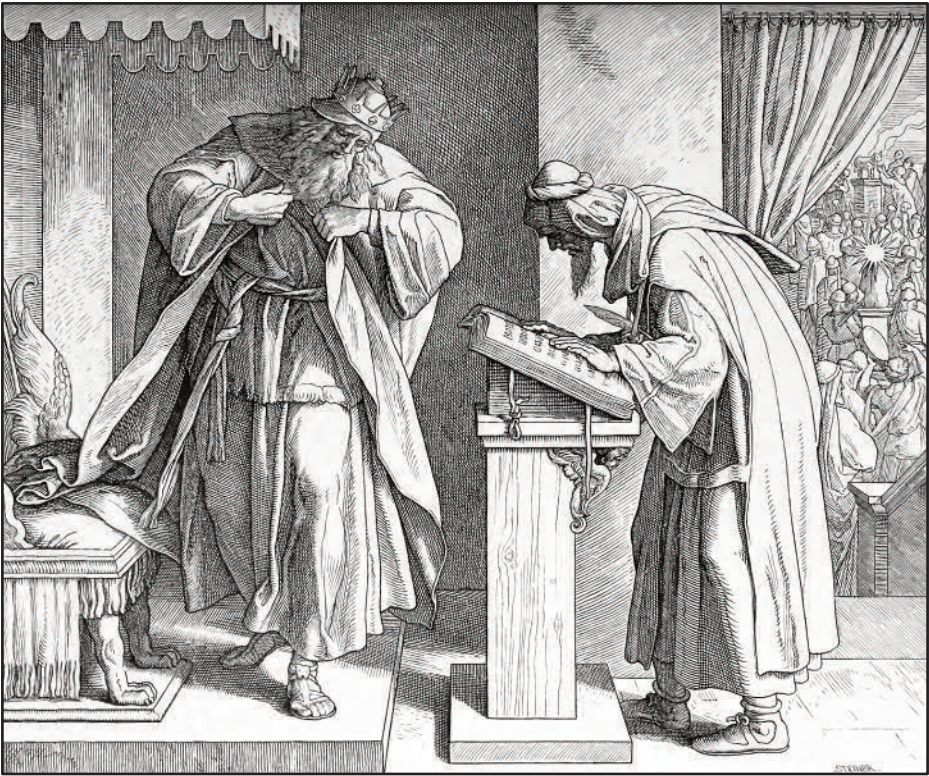
⁷If you see someone sin openly or commit a serious crime, do not consider yourself better, for you do not know how long you will keep your own integrity.

We are all frail, but you should see no one as being more frail than yourself.

¹Romans 12:16

And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that He might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His Commandments, or not.

— DEUTERONOMY 8:2



3. *The Doctrine of Truth*

¹WE ARE HAPPY WHEN TRUTH MANIFESTS ITSELF, not in signs and words that fade, but as it actually is.¹

Our own judgment and senses will often deceive us, and through them, we discern only little.

²What good is endless discussion of hidden and obscure matters,² when our ignorance of them will not be held against us on Judgment Day?

To neglect things which are profitable and necessary, and to give our minds to that which is curious and harmful, is grievous folly.

We may have eyes, yet we do not see.³

³What need, therefore, do we have for questions of philosophy, questions of science, of the material world, and its creatures?

¹ Psalm 94:12

² Ecclesiastes 3:9–11

³ Psalm 115:5

*Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord,
and whom You teach out of Your Law – PSALM 94:12*

⁴When the Eternal Word speaks to us, we are freed from countless theories, and from having a multitude of opinions.

For from this one Word come all things, and they all utter that one Word; and this is the Beginning, which also speaks to us.

Without this Word, we do not understand or judge anything correctly.

⁵The disciple to whom all things are One, and who traces all things to the One, and who sees all things in the One; this disciple will enjoy a quiet and steadfast spirit, and will remain at peace with God.¹

Lord, You who are the Truth, make me one with You in everlasting Love. I am often wearied by the many things that I hear and read, but in You is everything that I long for.

Let the learned and the teachers be still, let all creation be silent before You; may You alone speak to me.

⁶The more we have unity within ourselves, and the simpler of heart we are, the more understanding we will have of deep and sublime things; and this we will do without labor or striving, for we receive the light of understanding from above.²

A pure, simple, and steadfast spirit is not distracted even though it is engaged in many works – for everything it does, it does to glorify God.

Being at peace within itself, it does not seek itself in anything that it does.

⁷What gives us more trouble and affliction than the uncontrolled desires of our own hearts?

When we believe, and are devout, we arrange in our minds the works which we have to do, not according to the whims of our own selfish inclinations, but according to the rule of right reason.

Who has a harder battle to fight than those who strive to master themselves? This should be our endeavor, then: to conquer the self, to become stronger each day, and to advance towards perfection.

⁸Every perfection in this life is attended by some imperfection, and all knowledge that we hold contains the seed of some darkness.

The humble knowledge of the self is a surer path to God than the ardent pursuit of learning.

¹The author alludes here to Paul, in 1 Corinthians 2:2:

“I decided to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

²Matthew 11:25

⁹Yet learning itself is not to be blamed, nor knowledge of any thing, for that is good in itself, and is ordained by God; but a clean conscience and a virtuous life is always to be preferred.

Many err and accomplish nothing, because they love the pursuit of knowledge, rather than living well.

¹⁰If we applied as much energy to uprooting vices and planting virtues as we do to discussing problems and vain speculation, there would not be so much evil and scandal in the world, nor would there be such depravity in the houses of religion.

When the Day of Judgment comes, we will not be examined as to what we have read, but rather what we have done;¹ and not how well we have spoken, but how well we have lived.

¹¹Tell me, where now are all the masters and teachers with whom you were so well acquainted, and who were so famous, and so proud of their own learning?

Their places have been taken by others who do not give them a single thought. While they lived, they seemed to be something; but now no one speaks of them.

¹²How quickly the glory of the world passes away!²

If only their lives had kept pace with their learning, then all their study and reading would have been worthwhile.

How many there are who perish in the pursuit of vain knowledge of the world, and who care too little for serving God.

Because they choose to be great rather than humble, they become lost in their own conceits and imaginations.³

¹³Those who possess Charity are truly great.

Those who are nothing in their own eyes are also great, even though they have no regard for any notion of honor.⁴

The truly wise are those who regard all earthly things as worthless; in this, they will gain Christ. It is those who do God's Will, and renounce their own knowledge, who are the truly learned.

¹Matthew 25

²Ecclesiastes 2:11

³Romans 1:21

⁴Matthew 18:4

I called upon God, and the Spirit of Wisdom came to me. I preferred Her to scepters and thrones, and I accounted wealth as nothing in comparison with Her. Neither did I liken to Her any priceless gem because all gold is but a little sand in Her sight, and silver will be accounted as clay before Her. – WISDOM 7:7-9



4. *Wisdom and Prudence in our Actions*

¹DO NOT YIELD TO EVERY IMPULSE WITHIN YOURSELF or every suggestion from others, but carefully and patiently weigh everything in the light of God's Will.¹

²Often, alas, we are so weak that we choose to believe and speak evil of others, rather than good.

Those who are wise, however, do not readily believe every person who speaks to them, for they know that human frailty is prone to evil,² and is subject to error.³

³It is wise not to be rash in your actions, and not to cling obstinately to your own opinions and conceits.⁴

¹ 1 John 4:1

² Genesis 8:21

³ James 3:2

⁴ Proverbs 19:2

*The fear of the Lord is the instruction for wisdom,
and humility comes before honor. – PROVERBS 15:33*

*I have seen everything that is done under the sun;
and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.*

*What is crooked cannot be made straight,
and what is lacking cannot be numbered.*

*I said to myself, "I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing
all who were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has
had great experience of wisdom and knowledge."*

*And I applied my mind to know wisdom and to know
madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but
a striving after wind.*

*For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases
knowledge increases sorrow. - ECCLESIASTES 1:14-18*

*Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity
than a man who is perverse in speech, and is a fool.*

*It is not good for a man to be without knowledge,
and he who makes haste with his feet misses his way.*

*When a man's folly brings his way to ruin,
his heart rages against the Lord. - PROVERBS 19:1-3*

⁴Do not believe everything that people say, and do not spread as gossip what you have heard or believe.¹

Consult the wise and conscientious, and seek always the counsel of your betters, rather than following your own inclinations and inventions.²

⁵A good life makes you wise according to God,³ and gives you experience in many things.⁴

The more humble you are in yourself, and the more subject to God, the more wise and at peace you will be in all things.

¹ Proverbs 17:9

² Proverbs 12:15

³ Proverbs 15:33

⁴ Ecclesiastes 1:16

*Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything
by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your
requests be made known to God. - PHILIPPIANS 4:6*



5. Reading the Holy Scriptures

¹TRUTH, NOT ELOQUENCE, is to be sought in reading the Scriptures; and every part should be read in the Spirit in which it was written.¹

²In the Scriptures we should seek advantage, rather than subtle arguments. Therefore, we should read plain and devout books as willingly as we read learned and profound ones.

We should not to be swayed by the authority of the writer, and whether he is a great literary light or an insignificant person; but let the love of simple Truth inspire you to read.²

We ought not to ask who is speaking, but should attend to what is being said.

¹ Romans 15:4

² 1 Corinthians 2:4

*Heaven and Earth will pass away,
but my Words will not pass away.* - LUKE 21:33

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. – ROMANS 15:4

... and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the Power of God – 1 CORINTHIANS 2:4-5

³Men pass away, but the truth of the Lord remains forever.¹

God speaks to us in many ways, without regard for persons.

Our curiosity often hinders our reading of the Scriptures.

Sometimes, we wish to understand and mull over words which we should simply read, and then move on.

⁴If you would profit from the Scriptures, therefore, read with humility, simplicity, and Faith, and do not seek a reputation for being learned.

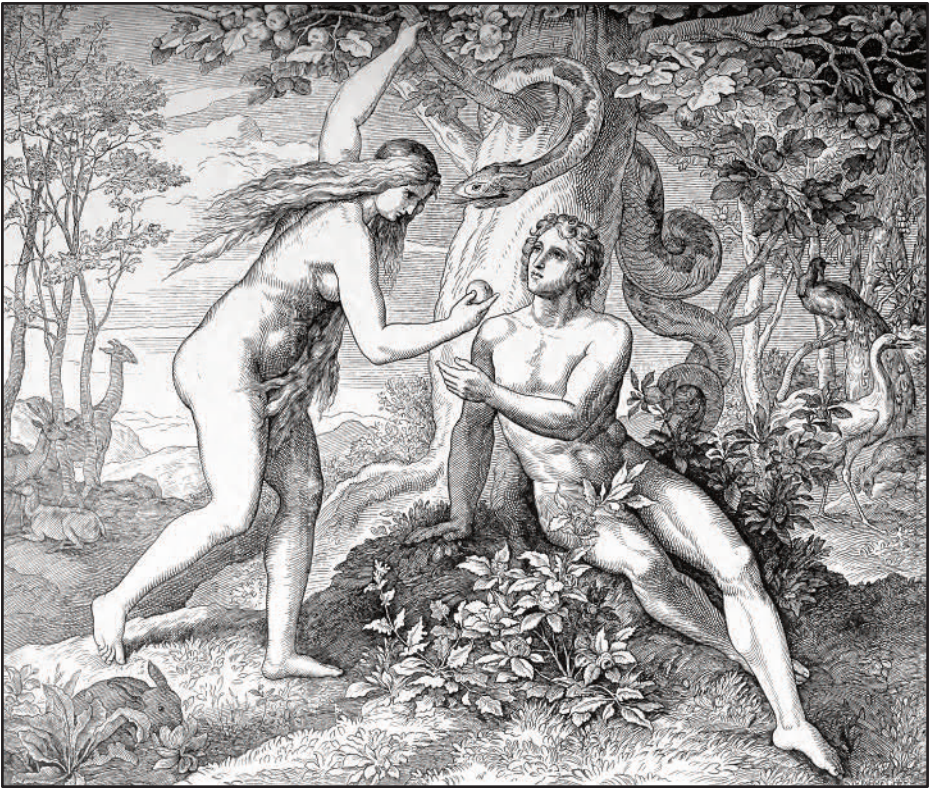
Seek willingly, ask freely, and listen attentively to the words of the Saints. Do not be scornful of the parables of the ancients, for they were written down for a reason.²

¹ Psalm 117:2,
Luke 21:33

² Proverbs 1:6,
Ecclesiastes 12:9

That men may know wisdom and instruction, understand words of insight, receive instruction in wise dealing, righteousness, justice, and equity; that prudence may be given to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth – the wise man also may hear and increase in learning, and the man of understanding acquire skill, to understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. – PROVERBS 1:2-7



6. *Unbridled Affection*

¹WHEN WE DESIRE A THING TOO MUCH, we become ill at ease. The proud and avaricious can never rest, while those who are humble live in peace.

²Those who are not self-aware succumb easily to trivial temptations. It is hard for those whose spirit is weak, and who are still carnal and sensual, to withdraw from earthly desires. It distresses them to live without material pleasure, and they are quick to anger if any oppose their will.

³Yet if they satisfy their desires, remorse of conscience soon overwhelms them, for even though they followed their passions, still it did not lead to the peace that they sought.

⁴True peace of heart is found in resisting passions, not in being enslaved by them. There is no peace in the heart of a carnal person, nor of those given to vain attractions and outward things; but there is peace in the heart of one who is loyal to God, and who lives the Life of the Spirit.



7. *Avoid False Hope and Pride*

¹THEY ACT IN VAIN who put their trust in men, or in any created thing.¹

Do not be ashamed to serve others out of love for Jesus Christ, nor to be poor in this world.

Presume not upon yourself, but put your trust in God.²

²Do what lies in your power, and God will assist you, on account of your good will.

Put no trust in your own learning,³ nor in the cleverness of any person, but rather in the Grace of God, for He helps the humble, and humbles the proud.

³If you have wealth, do not glory in it, nor in your friends because they are powerful, but glorify God, who gives all things, and who desires above all to give Himself to you.

¹Jeremiah 17:5

²Psalms 31:1

³Jeremiah 9:23

Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast Love, justice, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight," says the Lord. - JEREMIAH 9:23-24

In You, Lord, do I seek refuge; let me never be put to shame; in Your righteousness deliver me! - PSALM 31:1

⁴Do not boast of your stature or your physical beauty, for with only a slight sickness or the passing of time, they will wither and fall away.

Do not take pride in your good works or abilities, lest you displease God; for all the natural gifts that you have are given by Him.

⁵Do not think yourself better than others, lest you be accounted worse in the sight of God, for He knows what is in you.

Do not take pride in your good deeds, for God's judgments differ from those of men, and what pleases the world often displeases God.¹

⁶If there is good in you, see even more good in others, so that you remain humble.

It does you no harm to esteem yourself less than anyone else, but it is always harmful to place yourself above even one person.

Peace is always with the humble, but in the hearts of the proud there is envy and wrath.

¹Job 9:20

*The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life,
but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.
Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.
On the lips of him who has understanding wisdom is found,
but a rod is for the back of him who lacks sense.
Wise men lay up knowledge, but the babbling of a fool
brings ruin near.* - PROVERBS 10:11-14



8. *Familiarity is to be Avoided*

¹DO NOT OPEN YOUR HEART TO EVERY PERSON, but discuss your affairs only with those who are wise, and who fear God.¹

Do not keep company with young people and strangers.²

Do not fawn upon the rich, and do not seek the company of the great.

²Associate only with the humble and the single-hearted, with the devout and virtuous, and speak with them of edifying things.

Do not be familiar with any woman, but commend all good women to God.

Seek only the company of God and His angels, and avoid men.

³Have love for all, but to be close with everyone is not helpful.

It can happen that on account of talk and gossip, you might enjoy a good reputation among those who do not know you, but you might be held in only slight regard by those who are closer to you.

We might think that we are pleasing others with our company and intimacy, but actually, we might displease them, on account of the faults they see in us.

¹ Ecclesiastes 8:12

² Proverbs 10

9. Obedience and Subjection

¹IT IS A GOOD THING TO OBEY, to live under a superior, and not be one's own master. It is much safer to live in a state of surrender than it is to be in a position of authority.

²Many live in obedience out of necessity, not out of love.

Because of this, they become discontented and dejected for the slightest reason.

They will never gain peace of mind, unless they subject themselves wholeheartedly to the Love of God.

³Although they run here and there, they will never find rest, except in humble obedience to the rule of one who is set over them.

Many have deceived themselves, imagining and dreaming of the happiness that they hope to find in change.

⁴Everyone wants to follow their own inclinations, and so they become most attracted to those who agree with them.

But if Christ is among us, we can give up our own opinions for the sake of peace.

⁵Furthermore, is there anyone who is so wise that they can fully know all things?

Do not be too confident in your own opinions, but be willing to listen to others.

⁶If, even though your own opinion might be good, you accept the opinion of another out of love for God, you will gain much more merit; for it is safer to listen to advice than to give it.

It can happen, too, that while one's own opinion might be valid and fair, refusal to agree with others when reason and occasion require it is a mark of pride and obstinacy.

Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you. - HEBREWS 13:17

10. Avoid Idle Talk

¹AS MUCH AS YOU CAN, avoid the gossip and tumult of the world.¹
The discussion of worldly affairs, even though it might be sincere, is a great hindrance, for we are quickly ensnared and captivated by vanity.

²Many a time, I could wish that I had held my peace rather than spoken, and had not associated with others.

Why, indeed, do we converse and gossip among ourselves, when we so seldom return to silence without a troubled conscience?

³We do so because we seek comfort from conversation, and we wish to ease our minds when they are wearied by many diverse thoughts.

Hence, we talk and think fondly of things we like most, but we also talk about the things that we most dislike.

⁴We often talk vainly and to no real purpose, and this seeking of comfort in outward things causes us loss of inner and Divine consolation.

Therefore we must watch and pray, so that our time is not wasted.

⁵When the right and opportune moment comes for speaking, say something that will edify. Bad habits and indifference to our growth in Grace remove the guard from our speech.

⁶But on the contrary, devout conversation on spiritual matters is a great aid to our progress, especially when people of the same mind and spirit are gathered together in fellowship with God.²

May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. - ROMANS 15:5-6

¹Matthew 4:1, 14:23;
John 6:15
²Acts 1:11-14;
Romans 15:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths. - PROVERBS 3:5-6



11. On Acquiring Peace, and Growth in Grace

¹WE WOULD ENJOY MUCH PEACE if we did not concern ourselves with the sayings and deeds of others, for these are no concern of ours.

When we meddle in affairs that are not our own, when we seek external distractions, when we do not pay heed to the self within, how can we live in peace?

Blessed are the single-hearted, for they enjoy an abundance of peace.

²Why were some of the Saints so perfect, and so given to contemplation of the Divine?

It is because they made themselves insensible to all earthly desires, and were able to attach themselves to God with all their hearts.

Thus, they were free to retire from the world, and concentrate their innermost thoughts on Him.

³We are too occupied with our own wants and affections, and too taken up with transitory things.

Rarely do we completely conquer even a single vice.

Often we have no real desire to grow in Grace every day, and so we remain lukewarm and tepid.

⁴If we were to be perfectly watchful of our hearts, and allowed no distractions to entangle our minds, we might have Wisdom born of Salvation, and would experience the fruits of Heavenly contemplation.

The greatest obstacle – indeed, the *only* obstacle – is when we are in the grip of passions and lust, and do not strive to follow the way of the Saints.

When we encounter some slight adversity, we are too easily dejected and turn away to the world, to seek consolation among material things.

⁵If we would strive to stand as brave men do in battle, the help of God in Heaven will surely sustain us. For if God calls us to fight, He is always ready to help us when we strive and trust in Him. He provides us with occasions for work, so that we might win the victory.

⁶If we let our progress in religious life depend on outward observances and forms alone, our devotion will quickly come to an end.

Let us, then, lay the axe to the root, so that we might be freed from our affections and passions, and thus have peace of mind.

⁷If we were to uproot just a single vice each year, we would soon become perfect.

The contrary, however, is often the case. Often, we feel that we were better and more pure in the first fervor of our conversion, than we are after many years in the practice of our Faith.

⁸We should progress day by day; yet it is now considered an accomplishment if we can retain even just a portion of our first fervor.

If we were to put more stress on ourselves at the outset, we would afterward be able to do all things with ease and delight.

⁹It is hard to break old habits, but harder still to go against our will.

If you do not overcome small, trifling things, how can you hope to overcome the greater obstacles?

Resist your temptations and affections at the outset, and unlearn evil habits because they will, little by little, draw you into greater difficulty.

¹⁰If you consider what peace a good life will bring to you, and what joy it will give to others when you behave well, you will be more careful about your spiritual progress.



12. *The Value of Adversity*

¹IT IS GOOD FOR US TO HAVE TRIALS AND TROUBLES, for they cause us to look inwards, and recognize that we are here as travelers and strangers in the world, and that we should not place our trust in any worldly thing.

It is good for us sometimes to suffer contradiction, or to be misjudged by others, even though we do well and mean well. These things help us to be humble, and protect us from conceit and pride.

When the world gives us no credit, when men do not think well of us, then we are more inclined to seek God, Who sees into our hearts.

²Therefore, you should establish yourself so firmly in God that you do not need the consolations of the world, nor seek comfort from it.

When you are of good will, yet you find yourself afflicted, tempted, and tormented by evil thoughts, you then realize clearly that your greatest need is God, without Whom you can do nothing good.

³Then, saddened by your miseries and sufferings, you lament and pray.

You might grow weary of living, and even wish for death, so that you can depart from the world, and be with Christ.

⁴Then you will understand fully that perfect security and complete peace cannot be found on Earth.

13. Resisting Temptation

¹IT IS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF JOB that for as long as we live in this world, we cannot escape trial and temptation.¹

You must, therefore, guard against temptation, and watch in prayer lest the Devil – who never sleeps, but continually goes about seeking victims to devour – should find occasion to deceive you.

No one is so perfect and Holy that they are never tempted; no one can be totally free from temptation.

²Yet temptations, though they can be troublesome and severe, are often useful to us, for in them we are humbled, purified, and instructed.

The Saints all passed through and resisted many temptations and trials to their benefit, while those who cannot resist become abject sinners and fall away. There is no position so sacred, nor any place so secret, that temptations and trials will not appear.

³We are never safe from temptation for as long as we live, for it comes from within us; we were born in a state of sin.

When one temptation or trial passes, another comes; and we shall always have something to suffer, because we have lost the state of our original blessedness.

Many people try to escape temptations, only to fall more deeply into them. We cannot conquer simply by fleeing, but through patience and true humility, we become stronger than all our enemies.

⁴If you only shun temptations outwardly, and do not pull them out by the root, you will make little progress; indeed temptations will quickly return, and you will find yourself in a worse state.

But little by little, through patience and long-suffering, you will overcome them with the help of God, rather than through severity, violence, and your own rash actions.

Take counsel often when you are tempted; and do not be harsh with others who are tempted, but console them, as you yourself would wish to be consoled.

¹Job 7:1

Has not man a hard service upon Earth, and are not his days like the days of a hireling? – JOB 7:1



⁵The beginning of all temptation lies in a wavering mind and uncertain trust in God.

Just as a rudderless ship is tossed to and fro by the waves, when you are careless and irresolute, you are tempted in many ways.

Fire tempers iron, and temptation steels the just. Often we do not know what we can withstand, but temptation shows us what we are.

⁶Above all, we must be especially alert against the beginnings of temptation, for the Devil is more easily conquered if he is refused admittance to the mind and is kept out, beyond the threshold, when he first knocks.

The longer we delay our resistance, the weaker we grow, and the stronger grows the enemy.

It has been said:

“Resist the beginnings; remedies come too late,
when by long delay the evil has gained strength.”¹

¹ Ovid, *Remedia Amoris* (*The Cure for Love*).

... let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. – I CORINTHIANS 12-13

⁷First, a mere thought comes to mind, then strong imagination, followed by pleasure, evil delight, and consent.

Thus, because he is not resisted in the beginning, Satan gains entry.

And the longer you delay in resisting, so much the weaker do you become each day, while the strength of the enemy grows against you.

⁸Some suffer great temptations in the beginning of their conversion, and others toward the end, while some are troubled almost constantly throughout their life.

Others, again, are tempted only lightly, according to the Wisdom and Justice of God, Who weighs the status and merit of each person, and orders all things for the salvation of His elect.

⁹We should not despair, therefore, when we are tempted, but rather we should pray to God all the more fervently that He may see fit to help us, for according to the word of Paul, He will create a way for us to escape the temptation, so that we might be able to bear it.¹

Let us, therefore, humble our souls before God in every trial and temptation, for He will save and exalt the humble in spirit.

¹⁰In temptations and trials, our progress is measured; in them opportunity for merit and virtue is made more manifest.

Nor is it a great thing if we are devout and zealous only when we suffer no affliction; but if we bear up with great patience when we are confronted by adversity – then, there is hope of great progress.

¹¹Some are kept safe from great temptations, but are overtaken in those which are small and common, so that the humiliation might teach them not to trust in themselves in great matters, since they are weak even in small things.

¹ 1 Corinthians 10:13



14. Avoiding Rash Judgment

¹TURN YOUR ATTENTION UPON YOURSELF.

Do not judge the deeds of others.¹

When you judge others, your work is in vain.

You will often make mistakes, and will easily sin;² but when you judge and examine yourself – then your actions will bear fruit.

²We often believe that things are as we want them to be – but our personal feelings and views will deprive us of true perspective and correct judgment.

If God were the sole object of our desire, we would not be so easily disturbed by the errors in our judgments and opinions.

¹Matthew 7:1,

Romans 15:1

²Ecclesiastes 3:16

For wisdom is a kindly spirit and will not free a blasphemer from the guilt of his words; because God is witness of his inmost feelings, and a true observer of his heart, and a hearer of his tongue. – WISDOM 1:6

Judge not, that you be not judged.

For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.

Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye?

You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Do not give dogs what is Holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn to attack you. - MATTHEW 7:1-6

³Often something lurks within us, or happens in the world around us, which draws us along after it.

Many seek themselves in the things that they do, but they are not aware of doing it.

⁴They might have peace of mind so long as things happen according to their own will and judgment, but if their desires are frustrated, they are soon disturbed, and become troubled.

Differences of feeling and opinion often cause dissension between friends, between countrymen, and even between those who are religious and devout.¹

⁵An old habit is hard to break,² and no one is willing to be led farther than they can see.

If you rely more upon your own reasoning or industry than upon the power of submission to Jesus Christ, it will be a long time before you become illuminated, if at all; for God wants us to be completely subject to Him and, through His Love, to rise above the narrow limits of human wisdom.

¹Matthew 12:25; Luke 12:51

²Jeremiah 13:23



15. Works Done out of Love and Charity

¹NEVER DO EVIL FOR THE SAKE OF ANYTHING IN THE WORLD, nor out of love for any person.¹

For a person who is in need, however, a good work may at times be left undone, or deferred for a better one; in these cases, the work of Charity is not destroyed, but improved.

²Without Charity, external works are of no value² – but if anything is done as an act of Charity, even if it is small and trivial in the sight of the world, it is still fruitful, for God weighs the love with which an action is performed, rather than the deed itself.

¹ Matthew 18:8

² 1 Corinthians 13:3; Luke 7:47

Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little. – LUKE 7:47

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not Love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not Love, I am nothing.

If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not Love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; Love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. – 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-7

³When you do a thing well, you do much. You do well when you serve the common good, rather than your own interests.

Often, that which might seem to be a work of Charity is rather a work of the flesh; for it springs from our own inclination, our own will, our hope of reward, and our self-interest – and these are all motives that are seldom absent.

⁴On the contrary, when you have true and perfect Charity, you seek yourself in no thing,¹ but desire only that the Glory of God be exalted in all things.

Moreover, you envy no person, because you desire no personal gain, nor do you wish to rejoice in yourself; rather, you desire the greater Glory of God above all things.²

⁵Ascribe to man nothing that is good, but attribute it wholly to God, from Whom all things proceed as from a fountain, and in Whom all the blessed shall rest with peace and joy.

⁶If you have but a spark of true Charity, you will surely see that all the things of the world are full of vanity.

¹ 1 Corinthians 13:5

² Psalm 17:15; 24:6



16. Bearing the Faults of Others

¹UNTIL GOD ORDAINS OTHERWISE, you should bear patiently whatever you cannot correct either in yourself or in others.

Consider it rather as a way to try your patience and to test you, for without such patience and trial, your merits are of little account.

Nevertheless, under such difficulties, you should pray that God will help you bear your trials calmly and correctly.¹

²If, after being admonished once or twice, a person does not amend their ways, do not argue with him, but commit the whole matter to God, that His will be done² and honor may be furthered in all His servants, for God knows well how to turn evil to good.

¹ Matthew 6:13;
Luke 11:4

² Matthew 6:10

As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is self-condemned. - TITUS 3:10-11

But we beseech you, brethren, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. – 1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-15

³Bear patiently the defects and infirmities of others, whatever they may be, because you yourself have many faults which others must endure.¹

If you cannot make yourself as you would wish to be, how then can you bend others to your liking?

We want those around us to be perfect, yet we will not correct our own faults.

⁴We might wish that others could be severely corrected, yet we do not appreciate being corrected ourselves.

The great liberty that others possess can displease us, yet we do not want to be denied what we ask for ourselves.

We would have others bound by laws, yet we will not allow ourselves to be restrained.

Thus it is clear how seldom we weigh others with the same balance that we use to weigh ourselves.

⁵But if everyone was perfect, what would we suffer from others for God's sake?

God has made it this way so that we learn to bear with one another's burdens.² There is no person who is without fault, no person without burden, no person who is sufficient to judge themselves; nor is anyone wise enough as a result of just their own efforts.

⁶Hence we must support one another, console one another, and help, counsel, and advise each other.³

The measure of your virtue and strength is best revealed in times of adversity; for adversity and hard times do not weaken you, but rather show you what you actually are.

¹ 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Galatians 6:1

² Galatians 6:2

³ 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 1 Corinthians 12:25

17. Monastic Life

¹IF YOU WISH TO HAVE PEACE and concord with others, you must learn to renounce your own will in many things.¹

To live in a monastery or religious community, to remain there without complaint, and to persevere faithfully until death – this is no small matter.²

Blessed indeed is the disciple who lives a good life there, and ends his days in happiness.

²If you would stand firm and grow as you should, you must consider yourself a pilgrim, an exile, and a stranger on earth.³

If you would lead a religious life, you must be content to be seen by the world as a fool for the sake of Christ.

³Dress and tonsure matter only little; it is the change of life, and the complete mortification and negation of your passions, that make you a truly religious person.

If you seek anything other than God alone and the salvation of your soul, you will find only trouble and sorrow.⁴

If you do not strive to become the lowest, and the servant of all, you will not remain for long at peace.

⁴You have come to serve, not to rule.⁵

You must understand, too, that you have been called to suffer and to work, not to be idle and spend your time in talk.

Here, therefore, you are being tried as gold in a furnace is tried.

Here you cannot stand, unless you desire with all your heart to humble yourself before God.

¹Galatians 6:1

²Luke 16:10

³1 Peter 2:11

⁴Ecclesiastes 1:17-18

⁵Matthew 20:26

Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the Law of Christ. For if any one thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each man will have to bear his own load. – GALATIANS 6:2-5



18. *The Example of the Holy Fathers*

¹CONSIDER THE EXAMPLES SET FOR US by the Holy Fathers, in whom the light of true perfection and religion shone,¹ and you will see how little we do these days. It is almost nothing.

²Alas, what is our life compared to theirs?

The Saints and friends of Christ served the Lord in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in work and weariness, in vigils and fasts, in prayers and Holy meditations, faced with many persecutions and reproaches.

³How many and severe were the trials they suffered – the Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, and all the rest who endeavored to follow in the footsteps of Christ; they spurned their lives on Earth so that they might have Eternal Life.²

¹ Hebrews 11

² John 12:25

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it, the men of old received Divine approval. – HEBREWS 11:1-2

⁴How strict and detached were the lives that the Holy Fathers led in the desert!¹

What long and grave temptations they suffered, how often they were beset by the enemy.

⁵The frequent and ardent prayers they offered to God, and the rigorous fasts they observed! Their zeal and their love for spiritual perfection was great. They fought bravely to master their lusts and vices.

Their intention to approach God was pure and straightforward.

By day they labored, praying all the while, and the nights they also spent in continual prayer.

⁶They used all their time profitably; every hour spent serving God seemed too short.

So strong was their desire to live in contemplation that they would forget food and drink, and the care of their own bodies.

They renounced all riches, dignities, honors, friends, and kinsfolk.² They desired nothing of the world.

They scarcely allowed themselves the necessities of life, and to care for their bodies, even when necessary, was irksome to them.

Although they were poor in earthly things, they were rich in Grace and virtue. Outwardly they were destitute, but inwardly they were full of Grace and Divine consolation.

⁷They were strangers to the world, they were close and intimate friends of God.³ They saw themselves as nothing, and they were despised by the world, but in the eyes of God they were precious and beloved.

⁸They lived in true humility and simple obedience; they walked in Love and patience, making progress daily on the pathway of their spiritual lives, and obtaining great Grace in God's sight.

Their lives are examples for all religious people, and their power to inspire us to perfection should be greater than that of the lukewarm who tempt us into laxity and carelessness.

¹ Matthew 7:14

² Matthew 19:29

³ James 4:4

Every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for My Name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many that are first will be last, and the last first. – MATTHEW 19:29-30



⁹These religious people possess great fervor in their life in the Holy communities. How great is their devotion in prayer, and their desire to excel in virtue!

What splendid and strict discipline flourished among them!

With great reverence and obedience, they observed every rule and requirement, and flourished under the rule of a superior.

¹⁰The footsteps they left behind still bear witness that they indeed were Holy and perfect souls who fought bravely and conquered the world, treading it under their feet.

Today, disciples who are not transgressors, and who can bear patiently the duties which they have taken upon themselves, are the great ones.

¹¹How lukewarm and negligent we can be!

We lose our original fervor so quickly, and through our laziness and lukewarm spirit, life can become tedious to us.

Pray to God that you do not fall asleep in the pursuit of virtue, when you have been given so many examples in the devout and faithful lives of the Saints.



19. *On Being a Religious Person*

¹YOUR LIFE AS A RELIGIOUS PERSON should excel in every virtue, so that you are inwardly just as you appear to others to be.¹

With good reason, there should be much more within us than appears on the outside; for God sees within us,² and we should approach Him with reverence and awe wherever we are.

In His sight we should strive to walk in purity,³ as do the angels.

²Each day we should renew our vows and resolutions, and stir our hearts to fervor, as though it was the first day of our religious life.

We should pray: “Help me, Lord God, in my purpose and resolution, and in Your Holy service. Grant that now, this very day, I might make a good beginning, for thus far, Lord, I have done nothing.”

¹ Matthew 5:48

² Psalm 33:13-18; Hebrews 4

³ Psalm 15:2

Before Him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. – HEBREWS 4:13

³As our intention is, so also will be our progress and the success of our spiritual efforts; so if you desire to make good progress, you must be diligent.

If even the strong-willed fail frequently, what will become of you, when you resolve yourself only seldom, or half-heartedly?

There are many ways of failing in our resolutions; even the slightest omission in our religious practice creates a loss of some kind.

⁴In whatever task they take in hand, the just and righteous depend on the Grace of God, rather than on their own wisdom.

In Him they confide every undertaking; for man might propose, but it is God who disposes.¹ Your way is not in yourself.

⁵If out of piety or for the sake of another, a usual practice is omitted, it can easily be performed later. But if it is abandoned carelessly, through distaste or laziness, then the fault is great, and will prove harmful.

⁶Much as we try, we can still fail too easily in many things.²

Yet we must always have fixed and distinct resolutions, especially against those sins which assail us the most.

Both our outward and inward lives must be closely watched and set in order, for both are important to our spiritual progress.

⁷If you cannot recollect yourself continuously, then do so twice a day at least – in the morning and in the evening.

In the morning make your resolutions, and in the evening examine yourself on how you have behaved during the day in word, deed, and thought,³ for in these things, you might well have offended either God, or those around you.

⁸Arm yourself like a warrior against the assaults of the Devil.

Control your appetites, and you will soon be able to curb every carnal inclination of the flesh.

Never be completely unoccupied. Be either reading or writing or praying or meditating, or working at something for the common good.

Physical exercise, however, should be undertaken with discretion, and is not to be practiced indiscriminately by everyone.

¹ Proverbs 16:9

² Ecclesiastes 7:20

³ Deuteronomy 4

A man's mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. The highway of the upright turns aside from evil; he who guards his way preserves his life. – PROVERBS 16

⁹Devotions and duties not common to all are not to be displayed in public, for such personal things are better performed in private.

Furthermore, beware of becoming indifferent to community prayer because you have more love for your own devotions.

If, however, after doing completely and faithfully all that you are bound and commanded to do, and you still have time remaining, you may use it as your personal piety suggests.

¹⁰Not everyone can perform the same spiritual devotions.

One practice suits this person, another practice suits another.

Different activities, likewise, are suitable for different times; some are better for feast days, and some for common or working days.

In a time of temptation, we might need certain devotions, and for days of rest and peace, others will be more suitable.

Some devotions are appropriate when we are pensive, and others when we are joyful in the Lord.

¹¹At the time of festivals, the necessary devotions should be renewed fervently, and the intercession of the Saints implored.

From one festival day to the next, we should fix our purpose as though we are about to pass from this world, and be taken to the everlasting festival in Heaven.

At these Holy times, therefore, we should prepare ourselves carefully.

We should live devout lives, and observe each rule more strictly, as though we were about to receive from the hand of God the reward for our labors and our Faith.

¹²If this reward is to be deferred, then let us admit that we are not well prepared, and that we are not yet worthy of the great Glory that shall be revealed to us in time.¹

Let us, therefore, prepare ourselves for our departure from this fallen world.

¹³“Blessed is that servant,” says Christ, “whom the master finds doing his job when he comes. Truly I tell you, he shall put him in charge of all his possessions.”²

¹Romans 8:18

²Luke 12:43-44,
Matthew 24:46-47

When we cry, ‘Father!’ it is the Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. – ROMANS 8:15-17



20. *The Love of Solitude and Silence*

¹SEEK A SUITABLE TIME¹ FOR YOUR MEDITATIONS, and reflect often on the Mercies that God has shown to you.

Do not meddle with curious questions; it is better to study matters that bring compunction to the heart, rather than those which occupy and amuse your mind.

²If you withdraw yourself from unnecessary talking, and idle activities, and from listening to gossip and rumors, you will find that you have enough time for meditation and prayer.

The greatest Saints avoided the company of men² wherever possible, and instead chose to live apart, serving God.

¹ Ecclesiastes 3:1

² Hebrews 11:38

... the report went abroad concerning Him; and great multitudes gathered to hear and to be healed of their infirmities. But He withdrew to the wilderness and prayed. - LUKE 5:15-16

³“As often as I have gone among men,” wrote Seneca, “I have returned less a man.”¹

This is especially true when we indulge ourselves in long conversations. It is easier to be silent altogether, than to resist speaking too much.

Also, it is easier to remain at home, than to keep sufficient guard on yourself while you are out in the world.

⁴If you wish to live the inner spiritual life, you must walk with Jesus, and take yourself away from the multitude.²

You cannot appear in safety before the public eye unless you first learn to relish obscurity.

You cannot be safe in speaking unless you first love to hold your peace and remain silent.³

You cannot safely rule unless you are first willing to be ruled.

You cannot command safely unless you have learned well how to obey.

⁵No one can rejoice safely unless they have within them the testimony of a good conscience.

More than this, the security of the Saints was always full of the fear of God. Neither were they less cautious and humble in themselves, even though they shone radiantly with virtue and Grace.

⁶But the security of the wicked, on the contrary, springs from pride and presumption, and ends in their own deception.

Even though you might seem to be a good religious person, or a devout hermit, you can never promise yourself security in this life.

⁷Those whom the world esteems most highly often fall all the more grievously, on account of their excessive confidence and pride.

Hence, for many it is better not to be too free from temptations, but rather to be tried often, lest they become too secure, too filled with pride, and too ready to fall back upon worldly comforts.

¹ Seneca, *De Tranquillitate Animi*
(On the Tranquility of Mind)

² Matthew 5:1

³ Ecclesiastes 3:7

He who restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent. - PROVERBS 17:27-28

I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping. My eye wastes away because of grief, it grows weak because of all my foes. Depart from me, all you workers of evil; for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping. The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord accepts my prayer. – PSALM 6:6-9

⁸If you were never to chase after fleeting joys, or to entangle yourself in worldly affairs, what a good conscience you would have.

What great peace and tranquility you could have if you were to separate yourself from all vain and meaningless anxiety, and instead were to think only of healthy and Divine things, things helpful to your soul, and put all your trust and hope in God.

No one is worthy of Heaven who does not persistently apply themselves in Holy repentance and penitence.

⁹If you truly desire contrition within your heart, seek the privacy of your chamber, and shut out the tumult of the world, for it is written:

“Commune with your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.”¹

Retired there, you will find what you too often lose in the world.

Your chamber will become dearer to you the more you remain in it; but the less time you spend in it, the more wearisome it will become.

If from the beginning of your religious life, you live within your chamber and keep to it, it will soon become a special friend, and a very great comfort.

¹⁰It is in silence and quiet that the devout soul advances in virtue, and learns the Mysteries of Scripture.

It is there that you will find a river of tears in which to bathe and cleanse yourself nightly, so that you might draw closer to your Creator as you withdraw from the tumult of the world.²

God and His Holy angels will draw nearer to you as you withdraw from friends and acquaintances.

¹ Psalm 4:4

² Psalm 6:6

Be angry, but sin not; commune with your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. – PSALM 4:4

¹¹It is better for you to be obscure and to attend to your salvation, than to neglect yourself, even though you might work wonders in the world.

It is commendable for a religious person seldom to go about in the world, to avoid the sight of other people, and to have no wish to see them, or be seen by them.

¹²Why would you wish to see what you are not able to have?

For it is written: “The world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the Will of God abides forever.”¹

Sensual craving entices you to wander around, but when the moment is past, what do you bring back with you, other than a disturbed conscience and a heavy heart?

¹³A happy going often leads to a sad return, and a joyful evening to a mournful dawn.² Thus all carnal joy begins sweetly, but in the end it bites, and stings to death.

What can you find elsewhere that you cannot find where you already are?³ Behold, Heaven and Earth are here, and all the elements, and from these, all things are made.

¹⁴What can you see anywhere that will remain long under the sun ?

You might think that you will completely satisfy yourself, but you will never attain true satisfaction. If you should see all things before you at once, what would that be, but an empty and vain vision?⁴

¹⁵Raise your eyes to God in Heaven, and pray that your sins and shortcomings be forgiven.⁵

Leave vanity to the vain, and apply yourself to the things which God has set before you. Close your door, and call to Jesus, your Beloved.⁶

Remain with Him in your room, for nowhere else will you find such great peace.

¹⁶If you had not gone out into the world, and had not listened to idle gossip and vain talk, you would have remained in peace.

But there are times that it delights you to hear of new things; it is for this reason that you suffer from sorrow of heart.

¹ 1 John 2:17

² Proverbs 14:13

³ Ecclesiastes 1:10

⁴ Ecclesiastes 3:2

⁵ Psalm 121:1-2

⁶ Matthew 6:6

Even in laughter the heart is sad, and the end of joy is grief. A perverse man will be filled with the fruit of his ways, and a good man with the fruit of his deeds. – PROVERBS 14:13-14



21. *On Sorrow of the Heart*

¹IF YOU WISH TO PROGRESS IN GODLINESS, live in fear and awe of God.¹

Restrain your senses, and do not give yourself over to foolish mirth.

²If you give yourself to repentance and sorrow of the heart, you will gain much in devotion.

Heartfelt repentance opens the door to many good things, which dissoluteness will quickly destroy.

³It is a wonder that anyone can ever be perfectly happy in this life, if they just consider and meditate on their exiled state, and the many perils which surround their soul.

⁴Through levity of heart, and lack of attention to our defects, we fail to recognize the real sorrows of our souls, so that we often indulge in empty laughter, when actually we have good cause to weep.

¹Proverbs 19:23

The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. - PSALM 51:17

⁵No liberty is true, and no joy is genuine, unless it is founded in the fear and awe of God, and a good conscience.

You will be happier if you can throw off the weight of cares and distractions, and recollect yourself in Holy communion and repentance.

⁶Happy is the one who casts away all that defiles or burdens the conscience.

Strive manfully. Habit is overcome by habit, custom by custom.

⁷If you leave others alone in their matters, they will likewise not interfere in yours. Do not busy yourself about the affairs of others, and do not become entangled in the business of your superiors.

Keep an eye primarily on yourself, not others.

Instead of advising your friends, advise yourself.

⁸If you do not enjoy the favor of others, do not let it sadden you.¹

Rather, consider it a serious matter if you do not conduct yourself as well or as carefully as is appropriate for a servant of God and a devout religious person.

⁹It is often better and safer for us to have few consolations and comforts in this life,² especially those of the flesh.

Yet if we do not have Divine consolation at all, or experience it only rarely, the fault is ours, because we do not seek after repentance and compunction of the heart, nor do we forsake vain and worldly comforts.

¹⁰Consider yourself unworthy of Divine consolation, and think instead that you deserve tribulation.

When you are perfectly contrite, the whole world will be bitter and wearisome to you.³

¹ Galatians 1:10

² Psalm 76:5

³ Judges 2:4, 20:26;

2 Kings 13

Am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ. - GALATIANS 1:10

¹¹A good person will always find reason to mourn and weep; for whether you think of your own or your neighbor's estate, you know that no one lives there without suffering, and the closer you examine, the more you will grieve.

It is a matter of repentance and remorse that the sins and vices in which we are so entangled prevent us from applying ourselves to the contemplation of Heavenly things.

¹²You strive more earnestly if you keep in mind your death, rather than a long life.¹

And if you ponder in your heart the pains of Hell, you will willingly endure toil and sorrow in this world, and you will fear no hardship or adversity.²

But if these thoughts never pierce your heart, and if you are seized only by pleasant things that delight you, you will remain cold and indifferent, and dull in matters of religion.

¹³It is often our lack of spirituality which leads our wretched bodies to complain so easily.

Pray humbly to the Lord, therefore, that He may give you the spirit of repentance. Say with the Prophet: "Feed me, Lord, with the bread of mourning, and give me as my drink tears, in full measure."³

¹ Ecclesiastes 7:1-4

² Matthew 25:41-46

³ Psalm 80:5

A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death, than the day of birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting; for this is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of countenance the heart is made glad. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. - ECCLESIASTES 7:1-4

22. On the Misery of Humanity

¹WHEREVER YOU ARE, WHEREVER YOU GO, YOU ARE MISERABLE, unless you turn to God.

Why are you dismayed when things do not turn out as you wish?

Is there anyone alive who has everything they wish for?¹

No, there is not. Not I, or you, or any person on earth.

There is no one in the world, be he Pope or king, who does not suffer trial and anguish.

Who is better off then?

Surely, it is the one who is prepared to suffer for the sake of God.

²Many weak and infirm people say: “See how well that man lives, how rich, how great he is, how powerful and mighty.”²

But lift up your eyes to the riches of Heaven, and you will realize that the material things of the world are nothing. They are uncertain and burdensome, for they are never possessed without anxiety and fear.

Your happiness does not rely on the possession of temporal things;³ to have just a moderate portion is enough.

³Living in this world is truly a wretched misery.⁴

The more that you desire to live a spiritual life, the more bitter this world will become to you, for you will see more clearly, and perceive more accurately, the defects and corruption of human nature.

To eat and drink, to sleep, to rest, to work, and to be bound by all the human necessities is surely a cause of misery and affliction to the devout seeker, who desires only to be released, and freed from all sin.

⁴The seeker of truth is greatly burdened in this world by the necessities of the body, and the duties of daily life.

Thus it is written: “From my necessities, Lord, deliver me.”⁵

¹ Ecclesiastes 6:2

² Luke 12:19

³ Proverbs 19:1

⁴ Job 14:1,
Ecclesiastes 2:17

⁵ Psalm 25:17-18

Of the wise man as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise man dies just like the fool!

So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me; for all is vanity and a striving after wind. – ECCLESIASTES 2:16-17



⁵But woe to those who do not recognize their own misery, and even greater woe to those who love this miserable and corrupt life.¹

Yet there are some who, even though they can scarcely procure the necessities of life through either work or begging, nevertheless still love this worldly life so much that, if they could live here forever, they would care nothing at all for the Kingdom of God.

⁶How senseless and unbelieving in heart are those who are so engrossed in earthly things that they relish nothing but things of the flesh!²

They are miserable indeed, for in the end they will see, to their cost and their sorrow, just how cheap and worthless were the worldly things that they loved.

¹Romans 8:22

²Romans 8:5

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's Law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. - ROMANS 8:6-8

⁷The Saints of God and all devout friends of Christ did not seek after what pleases the flesh, nor after the things that are admired by the world.

Instead, they longed, with all their hope and effort, after the everlasting riches of Heaven.¹

Their desire was directed upwards, to the everlasting and invisible realm, so that the love of what is visible in the world would not drag them down to lower things.

⁸Do not lose heart, then, in pursuing your spiritual life!

There is yet time, and your hour is not yet past.²

Why delay in your purpose? Arise! Begin at once, and say:

“Now is the time to act, now is the time to fight, and now is the proper time to change my life.”

⁹When you are troubled and afflicted – that is the time to gain merit, that is when you are closest to a blessing.

You must pass through water and fire³ before you can hope to come to rest, and find peace. Unless you can inflict this hardship on yourself, you will never achieve your victory over sin.

¹⁰As long as we carry about this fragile body, we can neither be free from sin, nor will we live without weariness, sorrow, and pain.

We would gladly have respite from all misery; but when we lost our innocence through sin, we also lost our true happiness.⁴

Therefore, we must have patience and await the mercy of God, until this tyranny is overcome, until mortality is swallowed up by Life.⁵

¹¹How frail is human nature, how prone to evil!⁶

Today you confess your sins, yet tomorrow, you will again commit the very sins to which you confessed.

One moment you resolve to be careful, and yet an hour later, you act as though you had made no resolution.

¹ 1 Peter 1:4, Hebrews 11:26

² Romans 13:11,
Hebrews 10:35

³ Psalm 46

⁴ Romans 7:24, Genesis 3:17

⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:4

⁶ Genesis 6:5, 8:21

*We will not fear though the earth
should change, though the mountains
shake in the heart of the sea.*

*The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
He utters His voice, the earth melts.*

*The Lord of hosts is with us; the God
of Jacob is our refuge. – PSALM 46:2, 6-7*



¹²For this reason, because of our frailty and feebleness, we should humble ourselves, and never think anything great of ourselves.

Through neglect, we quickly lose those things, which by the Grace of God, we have acquired through long and hard labor.

¹³What, eventually, will become of us, when we so quickly grow lukewarm in our Faith? Woe to us if we presume that we have peace and security, when actually, there is no true Holiness in our hearts or actions.

¹⁴It would be beneficial for us if, like good novices, we were to be instructed once more in the principles of a good life, so that we can have some hope of change, and greater spiritual progress.

Then it was that, broken in spirit, he began to lose much of his arrogance and to come to his senses under the scourge of God, for he was tortured with pain every moment.

And when he could not endure his own stench, he said:

“It is right to be subject to God, and no mortal should think that he is equal to God.” - 2 MACCABEES 9:11

23. Meditations on Death

¹VERY SOON, YOUR LIFE HERE WILL COME TO AN END;¹
consider, then, what could be in store for you in the other world.

Today we live, and yet tomorrow we die and vanish; and when we are out of sight, we will soon be out of mind.

Consider the dullness and hardness of a heart which looks only to the present, instead of preparing for what is to come!

²Therefore, in every deed and every thought, act as though you might die this very day.²

When you have a good conscience, you need not fear death.³

It is better to avoid sin than to escape death.⁴

If you are not prepared today, how will you be prepared tomorrow?⁵

Tomorrow is an uncertain day; how do you know you will even be alive?

³What good is it to live a long life, when we advance so little?

Indeed, a long life does not always benefit us, but on the contrary, it can just add to our sin and guilt.

If only we could spend just one day in this world living well!

⁴There are many who count up the years that have passed since their conversion, yet the changes in their lives are still only as small as meager fruit. If you think it is so dreadful to die, consider that to live longer might be even more dangerous.

You are blessed if you keep the moment of your death always before your eyes,⁶ and prepare for it every day.

If you have ever seen a man die, remember that you also will travel the same path.

⁵In the morning, consider that you may not live till evening; and when evening comes, do not dare to promise yourself the coming dawn.

Be always ready, therefore, and lead your life so that death will never take you unprepared.⁷

¹Job 9:25-26, 14:1-2; Luke 12:20; Hebrews 9:27

²Matthew 25:13

³Luke 12:37

⁴Wisdom 4:16

⁵Matthew 24:44, 25:10

⁶Ecclesiastes 7:1

⁷Luke 21:36

*My days are swifter than a runner;
they flee away, they see no good.*

*They go by like skiffs of reed, like
an eagle swooping on the prey. – JOB 9:25-26*



Many die suddenly and unexpectedly, for it is in the unexpected hour that the Son of Man will come.¹

When your last moment arrives, you will begin to have a very different opinion of your life and how you spent it, and you will regret that you were so careless and remiss.

⁶Strive to live your life as you would wish to be found in the hour of your death; then you will be happy and prudent.

A perfect disdain for the world,² a lively desire to advance in virtue, a love for discipline and works of penance, readiness to obey, self-denial, and the endurance of every adversity for the love of Christ; all of these will give you confidence that you will have a good death.

¹Matthew 24:44;

Luke 12:40

²Sirach 41:1

O death, how bitter is the reminder of you to one who lives at peace among his possessions, to a man without distractions, who is prosperous in everything, and who still has the vigor to enjoy his food! – SIRACH 41:1

⁷You can perform many good works when in good health, but what can you do when you are ill? Few are made better by sickness.

Also, those who undertake many pilgrimages seldom become Holy on that account.

⁸Do not put your trust in friends and relatives, and do not put off the care of your soul until later, for the world will forget you more quickly than you think.

It is better to act now, and send some good ahead of you, than to rely on the help of others.¹ For if you do not care for your own welfare now, who will care when you are gone?

⁹The present is precious. Today is the day of salvation; now is the time.

It would be sad if you were to waste the time which you could use to gain Eternal Life.

The time will come when you will want just one more day, just one more hour, in which to make amends. How can you be sure that you will be granted it?

¹⁰Keep in mind, then, the great danger from which you can free yourself, and the great fear from which you can be saved, if you are always wary and mindful of death.

Try now to live in such a manner, so that at the moment of death you can be glad, and not fearful.

¹¹Learn to die to the world now, so that you can begin to live with Christ.² Learn to spurn all things now, so that you may freely go with Him.³

Chastise yourself with penance now, so that you might have the confidence born of certainty.⁴

¹²Are you such a fool that you plan to live a long life, when you cannot be sure of living even one more day?⁵

How many have been so deceived, and suddenly snatched away!

¹ Isaiah 30:5, 31:1;
Jeremiah 17:5, 48:7;
Matthew 6:20

² Romans 6:1

³ Luke 14:33

⁴ 1 Corinthians 9:27

⁵ Luke 12:20

And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.'

But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' - LUKE 12:19-20



¹³How often have you heard of people being killed by drowning, by falling from high places, or dying at meals, at play, in fires, by the sword, from disease, or being slain by thieves!

Death is the end of everyone, and your life will quickly pass away like a shadow.¹

¹⁴Who will remember you when you are dead? Who will pray for you?

Do now what you can, because you do not know when you will die, nor do you know what your fate will be after death.

¹⁵Now, while you have time, gather to yourself the riches of immortality.²

Think of nothing but your salvation; care only for the things of God.

¹⁶Honor the Saints of God, and imitate their actions, so that when you depart this world, they will receive you into Eternal Life.³

Keep yourself as a stranger here on Earth.

You are a pilgrim, and the affairs of the world do not concern at all.⁴

¹⁷Keep your heart free and raise it up to God, for this world has no lasting home for you.⁵

To God direct your prayers, your sighs and your tears, so that your soul might be found worthy to pass in happiness to the Lord.

¹Job 14:2

²Matthew 6:20; Luke 12:33

³Luke 16:9; Hebrews 11

⁴1 Peter 2:11

⁵Hebrews 13:14

Therefore let us go forth to Him outside the camp, bearing abuse for Him. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come. – HEBREWS 13:13-14



24. Judgment and the Punishment of Sin

¹IN ALL THINGS, CONSIDER THE END. How will you stand before the Judge¹ from whom nothing is hidden, who cannot be bribed, and who accepts no excuses? He will deliver judgment according to what is right.

²And you, a miserable and wretched sinner, who fears even the gaze of an angry man, what answer will you have for God, who knows all your sins?²

Why do you not provide for yourself³ against the Day of Judgment? There will be no one to excuse or defend you, because everyone else will have enough to do; they will be answering for themselves.

¹Hebrews 10:31

²Job 9:2

³Luke 16:9

But how can a man be just before God?

If one wished to contend with Him, one could not answer Him once in a thousand times.

He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength – who has hardened himself against Him, and succeeded?

– JOB 9:2-4

³Your work and pain in this life are of benefit to you.

Your tears are acceptable,¹ your sighs will be heard, and sorrow will bring you peace and cleanse your soul.

You experience a great and healing purgatory² when you grieve more over the malice of others than for your own injury; when you pray readily for your adversaries³ and forgive their offenses from your heart; when you do not hesitate to ask pardon of others; when you are more easily moved to pity than to anger; when you do not spare yourself from hardship, and when you strive to bring your body under the control of the spirit.

It is better to atone for sin now, and to deal with your vices, than to keep hold of them, and be judged on their account in the hereafter.

⁴In truth, we deceive ourselves with our love of the flesh.

What will the fires of Hell feed on, other than our sins?

The more we spare ourselves any hardship now, and the more we satisfy the demands of the flesh, the harder will the reckoning be, and the more we keep for the burning; for you will be more grievously punished for the things in which you have sinned.

⁵In Hell, the lazy will be driven with burning prongs, and gluttons will be tormented with unspeakable hunger and thirst.

Those who are wanton and addicted to lust will bathe in burning pitch and foul brimstone, and the envious will howl in grief, like mad dogs.

Every vice will have its own proper punishment.

The proud will be filled with every confusion, and the greedy and covetous will be afflicted with the most abject want and poverty.

One hour of pain in the afterlife will be more grievous than a thousand years of the most bitter penance in this world.

⁶In this life we can sometimes rest from work, and enjoy the comfort of friends – but the damned will have no rest or consolation.⁴

You must, therefore, take care and repent of your sins now, so that on the Day of Judgment, you may rest secure with the blessed.

¹2 Corinthians 6:4

²James 1:4

³Luke 23:34;

Acts 7:60

⁴Job 40:12; 41.

As servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, and tumults. – 2 CORINTHIANS 6:4-5

For on that day, the just will stand firm against those who tortured and oppressed them, and those who now submit in humility to the judgment of others will arise, and will pass judgment upon them.¹

⁷Then will the poor and humble possess great confidence, while the proud will be surrounded by fear on every side.

Then it will be seen that the wise are those who learned to be fools in this world, and to be scorned for Christ.

⁸In that day, every trial borne in patience will be the source of delight for us, and the mouth of all iniquity will be stopped.²

Then will the devout rejoice, and the profane and irreligious mourn.

And the mortified flesh will rejoice far more than that which has been pampered with every pleasure.³

Then will the cheapest garment shine with splendor, and the precious robe seem faded, vile, and contemptible.

The poor cottage will be more praised than the gilded palace.

In that day, perseverance and patience will count more than all the power in this world.

Simple obedience will be exalted above all worldly wisdom and cleverness.⁴

⁹A good and clear conscience will gladden your heart far more than any philosophy or learning.

Contempt for riches will be more valuable than every treasure on earth.

You will find more consolation in having prayed devoutly than in having fared daintily, or in comfort and wealth.

¹⁰You will be happy that you preferred silence to gossip and using many fine words.

Your good and Holy works will be of greater value than all the clever words in the world.

For you to have led a disciplined life and undergone strict penances will be more pleasing than any earthly delights.

¹Wisdom 5:1-14

²Psalms 107:42

³2 Corinthians 4:17

⁴Isaiah 29:19

The hope of the ungodly man is like chaff carried by the wind, and like a light hoarfrost driven away by a storm; it is dispersed like smoke before the wind, and it passes like the remembrance of a guest who stays but a day. - WISDOM 5:14



¹¹Learn, then, to suffer small things now, so that you will not have to suffer greater pain in Eternity.

Prove first here, in this world, what you can bear hereafter.

If you can endure so little hardship now, how do you think you will cope with endless torment in the hereafter? If just a little suffering makes you impatient now, what will the fire of Hell do to you?

¹²In truth, understand that you cannot have two joys: you cannot take your fill of the pleasures of this world, and then afterwards reign with Christ.

If your life until now had been full of honors and pleasures, what good would it do if you were to die at this moment?¹

¹³All is vanity, therefore, except to love God and to serve Him alone.

If you love God with all your heart, you need not fear death, or punishment, or judgment, or Hell, because perfect Love assures access to God.²

¹⁴Is it any wonder that those who delight in sin fear death and judgment?

It is good, however, that even if love does not as yet restrain you from evil, at least the fear of Hell does.

Those who cast aside the fear of God cannot continue long in goodness, but will quickly fall into the snares of the Devil.

¹Luke 12:20

²Romans 8:39

25. Changing our Lives

¹BE WATCHFUL AND DILIGENT AS YOU SERVE GOD,¹ and think often of why you have renounced the world. Was it not so that you might live for God, and become a more spiritual person?

Strive earnestly, then, for perfection,² because in a short time you will receive the reward of your labor, and neither fear nor sorrow shall come near you.³

²Labor a little now, and soon you shall find great rest, and in truth, Eternal joy.⁴ If you continue to be faithful and diligent in your work, God will be faithful and generous in rewarding you.⁵

Continue to have hope of gaining salvation,⁶ but do not act as though you are certain of it, so that you do not grow indolent or proud.

³One day, a man who wavered often and anxiously between hope and fear was struck with sadness.

He went before the altar of a church, and knelt in prayer.

While meditating on his problems, he said: "Oh, if only I knew whether I should persevere to the end!"

Instantly he heard within him the Divine answer: "If you knew this, what would you do? Do at once what you would do then, and you will be secure."

Immediately consoled and comforted, he surrendered himself to the Divine Will, and all his anxious uncertainty and fear ceased.

His curiosity no longer sought to know what the future held for him, and instead he sought only to find the perfect and acceptable Will of God,⁷ in the beginning and the end of all of his works and actions.

¹ 2 Timothy 4:5

² Matthew 5:48

³ Revelation 21:4, 22:3

⁴ Sirach 51:27

⁵ Matthew 25:23

⁶ Romans 5:5

⁷ Romans 7:2

The time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears; they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths.

As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. – 2 TIMOTHY 4:3-4



⁴“Trust in the Lord and do good,” says the Prophet.

“So shall you dwell in the land, and you will be sustained.”

Many are deterred from zealously improving their lives, because they fear the difficulty and the toil of battle.

Certainly those who work bravely to overcome the most difficult and unpleasant obstacles excel in the pursuit of virtue.

You make the most progress, and merit the most Grace, precisely in those matters in which you gain the greatest victories over yourself, and in which you most effectively control your will.

⁵Each of us has our own difficulties to overcome and conquer.

Yet when you are diligent and sincere, you will make greater progress, even though you might have more passions than one who is more even-tempered than you are, but who is less concerned with virtue.

*Fret not because of the wicked, be not envious of wrongdoers!
For they will soon fade like the grass, and wither like the green
herb. Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires
of your heart. - PSALM 37*

⁶Two things will particularly further your improvement: to withdraw yourself forcibly from those vices to which nature is strongly inclined; and to work fervently for those Graces which you most need.

Study also to avoid and overcome in yourself those faults which displease you when you see them in others.

⁷Make the best of every opportunity, wherever you are, so that when you see or hear any good example, you strive to imitate it.

On the other hand, take care that you are not guilty of those things which you consider reprehensible, and if you have ever been guilty of them, correct yourself as soon as possible.

⁸As you see others¹ – so they see you.

How pleasant and sweet it is to behold brethren who are fervent and devout, who are well mannered and disciplined!²

Yet how sad and painful it is to see them wandering in dissolution, disordered, and not practicing the things to which they have been called.

How hurtful it is when our brethren neglect the purpose of their vocation, and attend instead to things that are not their business.

⁹Remember always the purpose that you have committed yourself to, and keep in mind the image of your Crucified Savior.

Even though you may have walked for many years on the path to God, you can well be ashamed if, even though you have the image of Jesus Christ before you, you do not strive to make yourself as He is.

If you concern yourself intently and devoutly with our Lord's most Holy Life and Passion, you will find there an abundance of things that are both useful and necessary.

You need not seek after anything better than Jesus.

If the Crucified Christ should come into our hearts, how quickly and abundantly we learn!³

¹⁰When you are fervent in your religion, you will accept all that is commanded of you, and you will perform your work well.

But if you are negligent and lukewarm, you will have trial upon trial, and you will suffer anguish from every side, because you will have no consolation within, and will be unable to seek it from without.

¹Matthew 7:3

²Ephesians 5; 1 Corinthians 12:18; Ecclesiastes 3:1

³Galatians 2:20, 6:14



¹¹If you claim to be religious but do not live according to the discipline which you proclaim, you expose yourself to dreadful ruin.

Those who wish to be free, without discipline and unrestrained, will always be in trouble, and will experience endless disquiet, for there will always be something that will displease them.

¹²How do so many other religious people who are confined in cloistered discipline live?

They rarely go out, they live in contemplation, their food is plain and simple, their clothing is coarse, they work hard, and they seldom speak.

They keep long vigils, rise early, pray continually, read frequently, and subject themselves to all sorts of discipline.

Think of the Carthusians and the Cistercians, the monks and nuns of different orders, and how every night they rise to sing praise to the Lord.

It would be a shame if you were to grow lazy in your Holy duties, when so many seekers rejoice in God with such dedication.

¹³If you had nothing else to do but praise the Lord God with all your heart and voice – if you never had to eat, or drink, or sleep, but could praise God always and occupy yourself solely with spiritual pursuits, how much happier you would be than you are now – a slave to every necessity of the body!

Would that there were no such needs, but only the spiritual refreshments of the soul which, it is sad to say, we taste too seldom!

¹⁴When you reach the point where you seek no solace from any created thing – only then will you begin to relish God perfectly.

Then also you will be content, no matter what might happen to you.

Neither rejoice over great things, nor grieve over small ones, but place yourself entirely and confidently in the hands of God.

To you, let God be everything,¹ God to Whom nothing ever perishes or dies, for Whom all things live, and Whom all things serve.

¹⁵Always remember your end,² and never forget that time that is lost and wasted can never be recovered.

Without care and diligence, you will never acquire virtue.

When you begin to grow lukewarm,³ you are falling into the beginning of evil.

But if you surrender yourself to the work of the Spirit, you will find much peace, and you will experience less hardship on account of God's Grace and love of virtue.

¹⁶If you are fervent and diligent, you will be ready for all things.

It is harder work to resist vices and passions than it is to toil at physical tasks.

If you do not overcome small faults, you will fall, little by little, into greater ones.⁴

¹⁷If you have spent the day profitably and well, you will always be more content in the evening.

Watch over yourself, stir yourself, warn yourself, and, regardless of what becomes of others, do not neglect yourself.

The more that you require of yourself, the more progress you will make.

¹ Romans 40:36; 1 Corinthians 8:6, 12:6, 15:28

² Sirach 7:36

³ Revelation 3:16

⁴ Sirach 19:1

BOOK 2

THE INNER LIFE

If you see life as it really is, and not as the world around you says or thinks it is, then you are indeed wise with the Wisdom of God, rather than that of the world.

If you learn to live the inner life, you will take little account of outward things, and you will not need to seek special places or times to perform your spiritual devotions.



1. *The Inner Life*

¹“THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU,” SAYS THE LORD.¹

Turn to God, then, with all your heart.²

²Forsake this wretched world, and your soul will find rest.

Learn to disdain external things, to devote yourself to those that are within, and you will see the Kingdom of God realized within you.

That Kingdom is the Divine peace and joy of the Holy Spirit,³ a gift not given to the unholy.

³Christ will come to you offering His consolation, if you prepare a dwelling worthy of Him in your heart. Only then will Christ’s beauty and Glory, in which He takes His delight, take root and bloom within you.

His visits to His faithful disciples are frequent. His communion is sweet and full of consolation, His peace is great, and His intimacy is wonderful indeed.

¹ Luke 17:21

² Joel 2:12

³ Romans 14:17

“Even now,” says the Lord, “return to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts, and not your garments.” – JOEL 2:12-13

⁴Therefore, faithful soul, prepare your heart for Him, so that He might come and dwell within you.

Christ Himself says: “If a man loves Me, he will keep my Word, and my Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”¹

⁵Admit Christ, then, but deny entrance to all others.

When you have Christ, you are rich, for He is sufficient for you.

He will provide for you. He will supply your every want and need, so that you need not trust in others. For the world soon changes, and fails, but Christ remains forever,² standing firmly with us to the end.

⁶Do not place your trust in weak and mortal people,³ helpful and friendly though they may be; and do not grieve if they sometimes oppose and contradict you. Those who are with us today may be against us tomorrow, for people change like the wind.

⁷Place all your trust in God;⁴ let Him be your fear and your love.

He will answer for you. He will do everything well, and will do what is best for you.

⁸You have no lasting home here.⁵ You are a stranger and a pilgrim wherever you may be, and you shall have no rest until you are wholly united with Christ.

⁹Why do you gaze around here, when this is not your resting place?

Regard Heaven as your home,⁶ and give only a passing glance to all earthly things.

All the things of the world will pass away,⁷ and you will pass with them. Take care, then, that you do not cling to them, lest you are entrapped and lost.

¹⁰Fix your mind on the Most High, and pray unceasingly to Christ.

If you do not know how to meditate on Heavenly things, let your thoughts be on Christ’s Passion, and behold His sacred wounds.

¹John 14:23

²John 12:34

³Jeremiah 17:5

⁴1 Peter 5:7

⁵Hebrews 13:14

⁶Philippians 3:20

⁷Wisdom 5:9

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit. – JEREMIAH 17:7-8



¹¹If you turn devoutly to the wounds and stigmata of Christ, you will find great comfort in suffering. You will not fear the scorn of men, and you will easily bear the talk of those who reproach you.

¹²When Christ was in the world, He was despised by men. In His hour of need, He was abandoned by his followers, and left by His friends.¹

If He was willing to suffer and be despised, why then should you dare to complain about anything?

He was surrounded by enemies and defamers; so why do you want everyone to be your friend, and your benefactor?

¹³How can your patience attain its crown,² when there is no adversity to test it? How can you be a friend of Christ, if you are not willing to suffer hardship?

Suffer with Christ, and for Christ, if you wish to reign with Him.

¹Matthew 12:24, 16:21;
John 20:20

²2 Timothy 2:5

Take your share of suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. - 2 TIMOTHY 2:3

¹⁴Had you just once entered into perfect communion with Jesus or felt a little of His Love, you would care nothing at all for your own comfort or discomfort.

You would then rejoice in the hardships that you suffer; for love of Christ will make you disdain yourself.

When you are a lover of Jesus and of truth, when you live an inner life which is free from uncontrolled affections and lust, you can then turn to God, and rise above yourself to enjoy spiritual peace.

¹⁵If you see life as it really is, and not as the world around you says or thinks it is, then you are indeed wise with the Wisdom of God, rather than that of men.¹

If you learn to live the inner life, you will take little account of outward things, and you will not need to seek special places or times to perform your spiritual devotions.

¹⁶When you live the spiritual life, you will always be able to recollect yourself, because you do not waste your attention upon external things.

No outside work or business will stand in your way.

You will adjust yourself with ease to things as they happen.

When your inner life is well ordered, you will care nothing about the strange or perverse behavior of others, for you are upset and distracted only inasmuch as you entangle yourself in external things, and draw them toward you.

¹⁷If you have the right spirit within you, and if you are purified from all sin, everything will work for your good, and be to your profit.²

But if you are still attached to your self, and not free of all earthly desires, there are still many things that will displease and disturb you.

¹⁸Nothing defiles your heart so much as the impure love of created things. If you reject all external comforts and consolations, however, you will be able to contemplate Heavenly things, and you will experience the inner joy that only Heaven gives.

¹ Isaiah 54:13

² Romans 8:28

The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And He who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the Saints according to the Will of God. - ROMANS 8:26-27



2. Humility and Submission

¹DO NOT BE TROUBLED about who is with you or against you.¹

Take care only that God is with you, in everything you do.

Keep your conscience clear and God will protect you,²
for the malice of man cannot harm one whom God wishes to help.

If you know how to suffer in silence, there is no doubt
that God will support you.

²He knows when and how to deliver you. Therefore, place yourself in
His hands, for it is God who helps us and frees us from all confusion.

It is often good for us to have others know our faults and to rebuke
us for them, for it gives us greater humility.

¹ 1 Corinthians 4:3

² Psalm 28:7

*But with me it is a very small thing that I should
be judged by you or by any human court. I do not
even judge myself. I am not aware of anything
against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted.
It is the Lord who judges me. - 1 CORINTHIANS 4:3-4*

Who is wise and understanding among you?

By his good life let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.

This wisdom is not such as comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

But the Wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of Mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity. And the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

– JAMES 3:13-18

³When you humble yourself on account of your faults, you placate those about you, and readily appease those who you have offended.

It is the humble whom God protects and liberates;¹ it is the humble whom He loves and consoles.

To the humble He turns, and upon them bestows great Grace, so that after their humiliation He will raise them up to Glory.

He reveals His secrets to the humble,² and with kindness, He bids them come to Him.

⁴Thus, when you have humility, you enjoy peace in the midst of many vexations, because your trust is in God, and not in the world.

Hence, you must not think that you have made any progress until you can regard yourself as being inferior to all others.

¹James 3; Job 5:11

²Matthew 11:25

At that time Jesus declared:

“I thank You, Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and revealed them to babes.” – MATTHEW 11:25



3. *On Being a Good and Peaceful Person*

¹FIRST, HAVE PEACE IN YOURSELF; then you will be able to bring peace to others. The peaceful achieve more good than do those who are learned.

²Those who are passionate can turn even good things to evil, and they are quick to believe the worst; but those who are peaceful are good in themselves, and turn all things to good.

³When you are in perfect ease, you are never suspicious,¹ but the disturbed and discontented spirit is upset by many suspicions.

That spirit neither rests, nor permits others to rest.

It often says what should not be said, and leaves undone what should be done. It is concerned with the duties of others,² but neglects its own.

Direct your attention, therefore, first to yourself;³ do not concern yourself with your neighbor's affairs.

¹ Psalm 4:8

² Matthew 7:3

³ Acts 22:3

In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for You alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety. – PSALM 4:8

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the Law of Christ.

– GALATIANS 6:2

⁴You are well versed in justifying your own actions with excuses which you will not accept from others.

However, it would be more just if you were to accuse yourself, and excuse your brother.

⁵If you wish others to bear with you, you must bear with them.¹

Behold how far you are from true Charity and humility – for they would not cause you to be angry or indignant with anyone, other than your own self!

⁶It is no great thing to associate with the good and gentle, for such association is naturally pleasing. Everyone enjoys a peaceful life, and prefers to be with those who have congenial habits.

But to be able to live at peace with those who are harsh and perverse, who are undisciplined and who irritate us – that is a great Grace, it is a praiseworthy and significant thing.

⁷Some people live at peace with themselves and with their fellow men.

There are others who are never at peace with themselves, nor do they bring peace to anyone else.

These latter are a burden to everyone, but they are more of a burden to themselves.

A few, finally, keep themselves in peace, and live to bring others to peace.

⁸All our peace in this miserable life is found in humbly enduring suffering, rather than in being free from it.

When you best know how to suffer, you will enjoy the greater peace, because you will be the conqueror of yourself, the master of the world, a friend of Christ, and an heir of Heaven.

¹Galatians 6:2; 1 Corinthians 13:7

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. – EPHESIANS 4:31-32



4. *A Pure Mind and a Single Purpose*

¹YOU ARE RAISED UP FROM EARTH by two wings: simplicity and purity.

There must be simplicity in your intention, and purity in your desires. Simplicity leads to God, and purity embraces and enjoys Him.

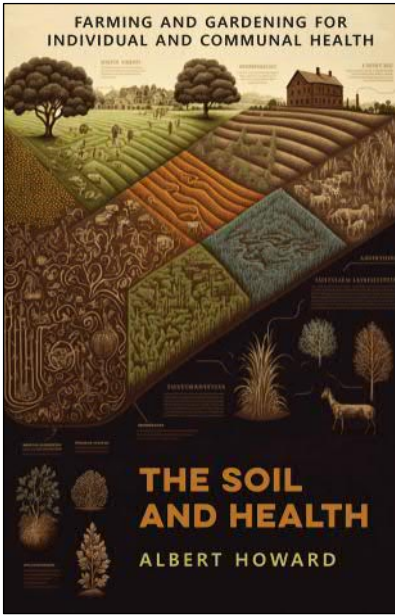
²If your heart is free from ill-ordered affections, no good deed will be difficult for you.

If you aim at and seek after nothing but the pleasure of God and the welfare of your neighbor, you will enjoy freedom within.

If your heart is right, then every created thing will be a mirror of Life for you, and a book of Holy teaching; for there is no creature so small and worthless that it does not show forth the goodness of God.¹

¹Romans 1:20

Ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature, namely, His Eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. - ROMANS 1:20



The Soil and Health

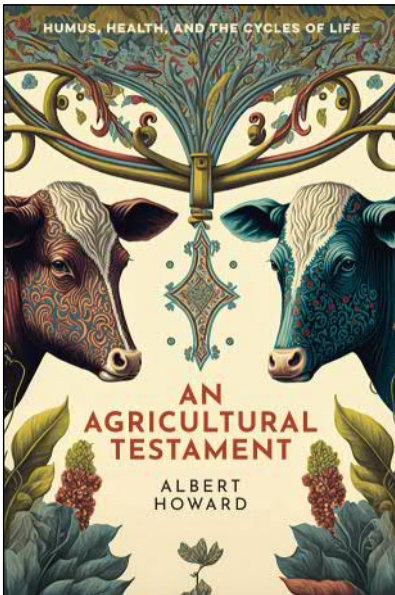
Albert Howard

This valuable book is a detailed analysis of the vital role of humus and compost in soil health – and the importance of soil health to the health of crops and the humans who eat them. The author is keenly aware of the dead end which awaits humanity if we insist on growing our food using artificial fertilisers and poisons.

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An Agricultural Testament

Albert Howard

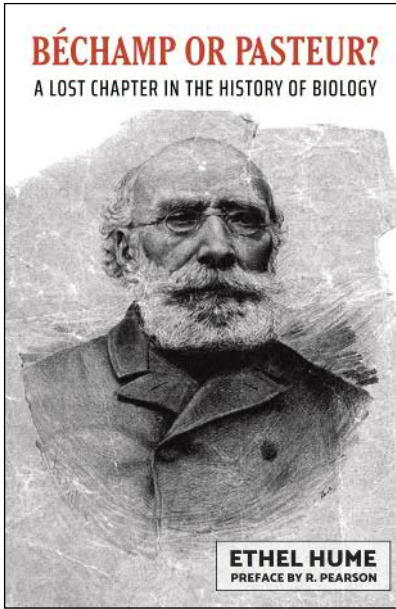
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Ethel Hume / Robert Pearson

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The Blood and its Third Element

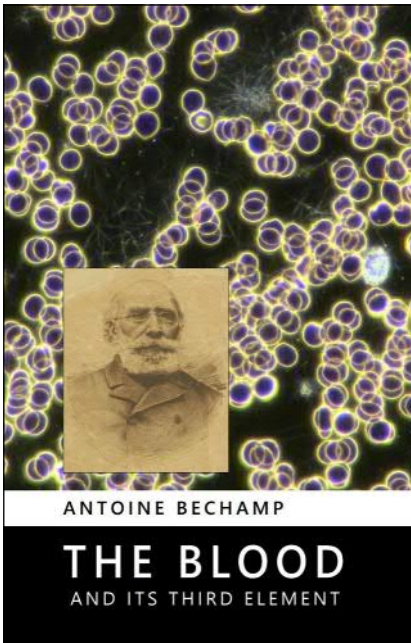
Antoine Béchamp

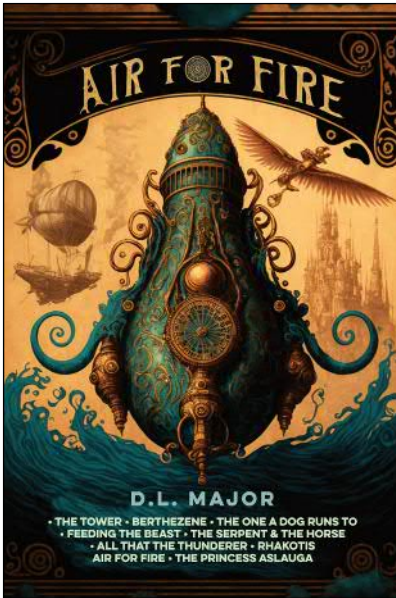
There is no single cause of disease. The ancients knew this. Béchamp proved it with meticulous research, and was written out of history for his trouble. The relevance of his work to the dilemmas that plague the modern medical world remains to this day unrealized by mainstream science and medicine.

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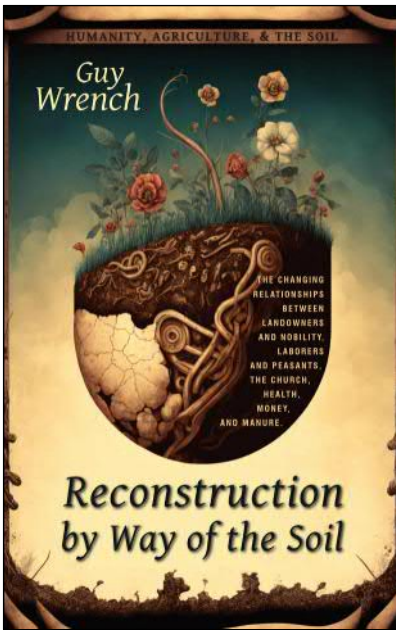
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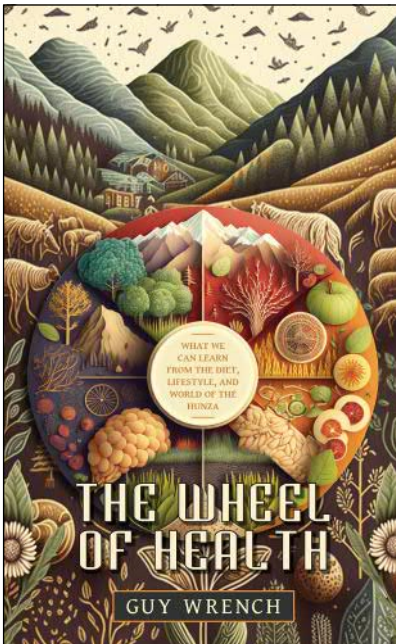
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Includes case studies from Ancient Rome, nomadic societies, medieval England, Africa and Egypt, the West Indies, Russia, Australia and the USA to show that nothing is more important than the relationship between civilization and the soil. The way that the soil is treated has brought about both the rise and fall of civilizations.

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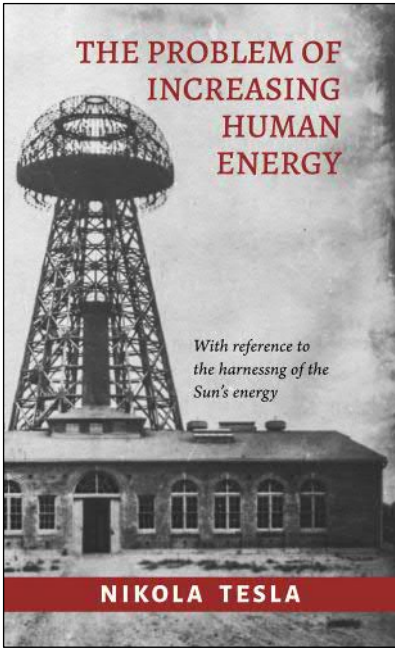
Dr Guy Wrench

The Hunza of northern Pakistan were famous for their extraordinary vitality and health. Dr Wrench argues that in part at least, this is because their food was not made 'sophisticated', by the artificial processes typically applied to modern processed food. How these processes affect our food is dealt with in great detail in this book. What Dr Wrench uncovered in his researches goes deeper than just food, though. It's about water.

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The Problem of Increasing Human Energy

Nikola Tesla

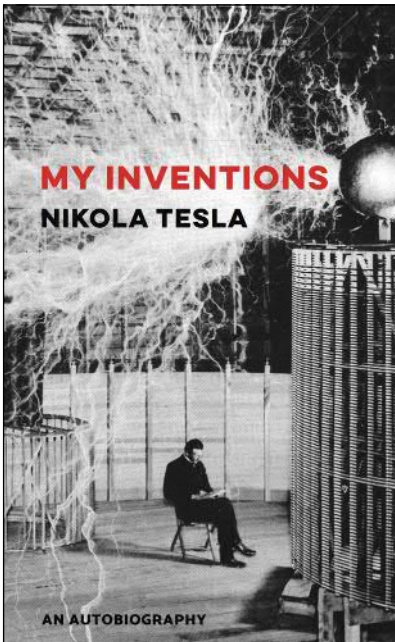
Contains Tesla's thoughts on humanity's relationship with the universe, and also his explanation of the technological wonders embodied in his work.

This text was first published in *Century Illustrated Magazine* in June 1900.

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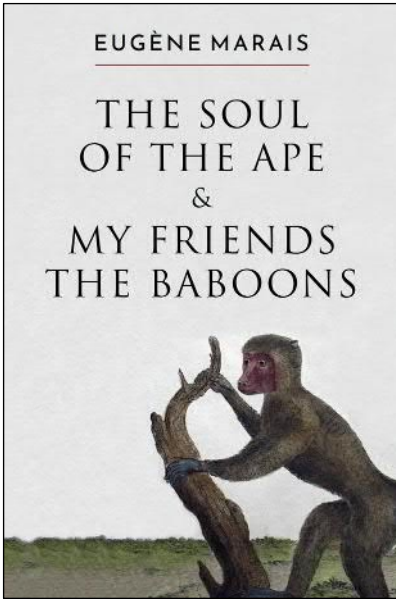
Nikola Tesla

Not only is this book an invitation to meet one of the greatest minds of the last century, and to hear him talk about his inventions; it is also a chance to get to know Tesla as a person, as the book is filled with anecdotes of his early life.

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The Soul of the Ape

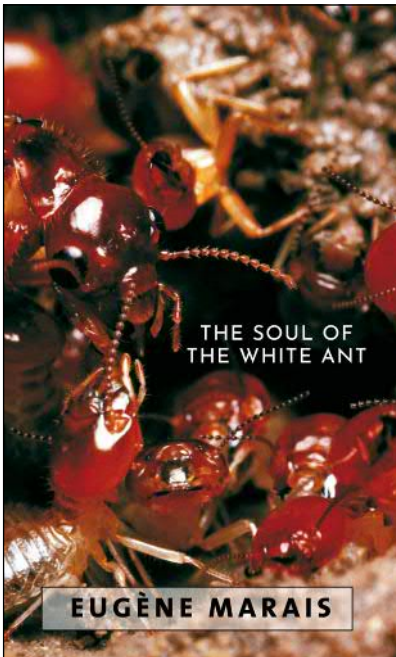
Eugène Marais

Includes two works by Marais written after his period spent living among a troop of baboons in the South African veldt. *My Friends* was written for a newspaper readership. *The Soul of the Ape* was the more serious scientific document. The excellent introduction by Robert Ardrey was part of the 1969 edition, and adds greatly to an appreciation of the importance of this text.

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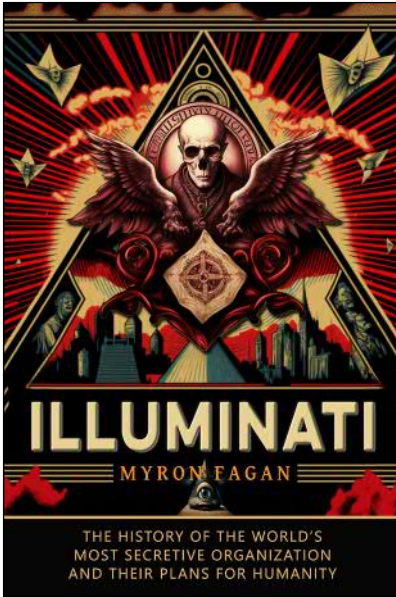
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The amazing results of a long, close study of the lives of termites. Eugène Marais compares the infrastructure of a termite colony to that of the human body. Writing from the heart, this scientific author who is also a poet instills a wonder in the reader, of the incredible intricacies of nature, in a light-hearted, easily readable manner.

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ILLUMINATI

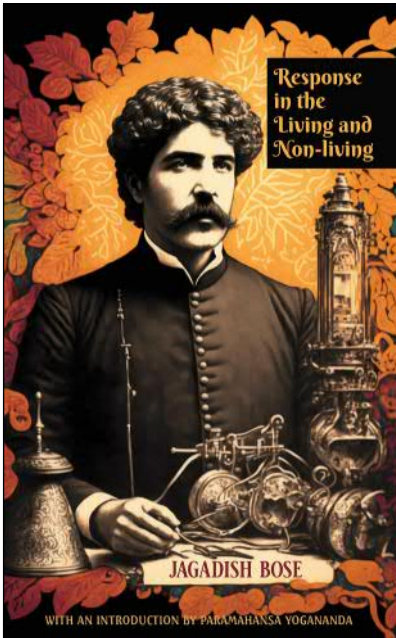
Myron Fagan

This book describes how the Illuminati became the instrument of the Rothschilds to achieve a One World Government, and how every war during the past two centuries has been instigated by this group. This is an historical text with names, dates, organizations and mode of operations, all exposing the octopus gripping the world today.

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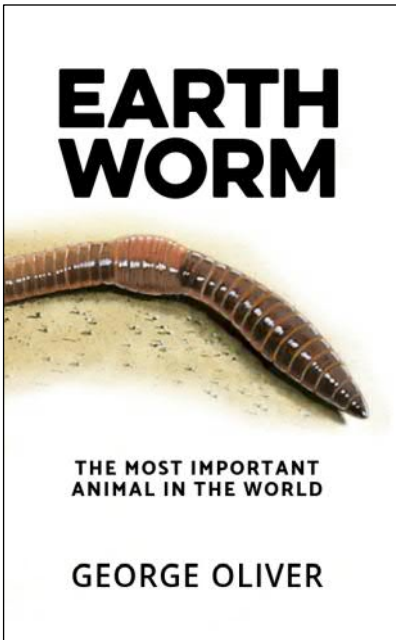
Edmund Morris

Recently we have seen a great back-to-the-land movement, with many young professional people returning to small scale farming; thus it is useful to read about someone who did exactly the same thing in 1864. In that year, Edmund Morris and his family gave up their business and city life for a farm of ten acres, where they made a go of mixed farming, and then wrote a book about it.

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Earthworm

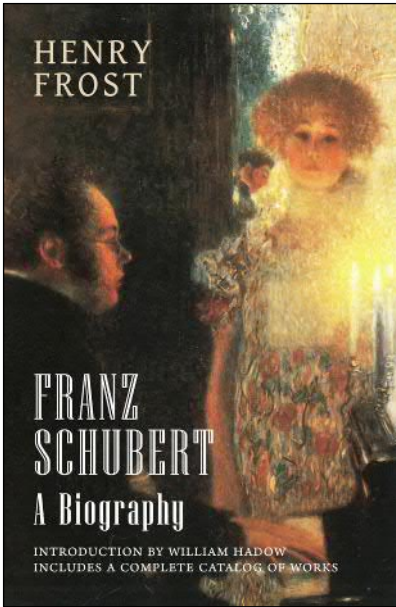
George Oliver

The author returns the reader to a time and methodology where people took responsibility for what they did and what they produced. In this world of spiraling food prices, huge landfills, diminishing food supplies, loss of topsoil, and water pollution, the reader is reminded that the world's most important animal could well be the humble earthworm.

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Franz Schubert – a Biography

Henry Frost

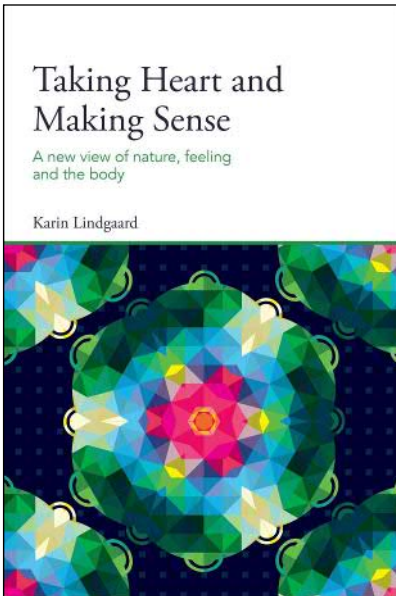
“With faith man steps forth into the world. Faith is far ahead of understanding and knowledge; for to understand anything, I must first of all believe something. Faith is the higher basis on which weak understanding rears its first columns of proof; reason is nothing but faith analysed.”

– *Franz Schubert*

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Taking Heart and Making Sense

Karin Lindgaard

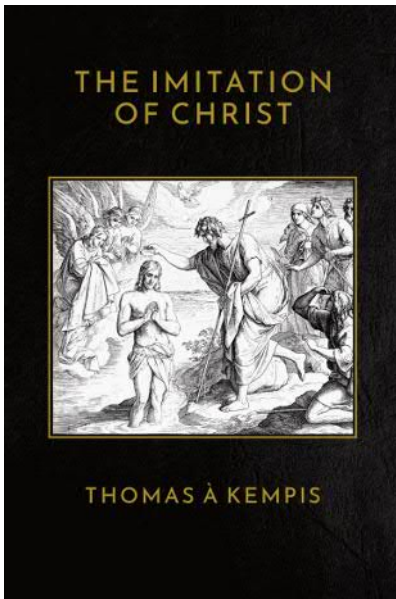
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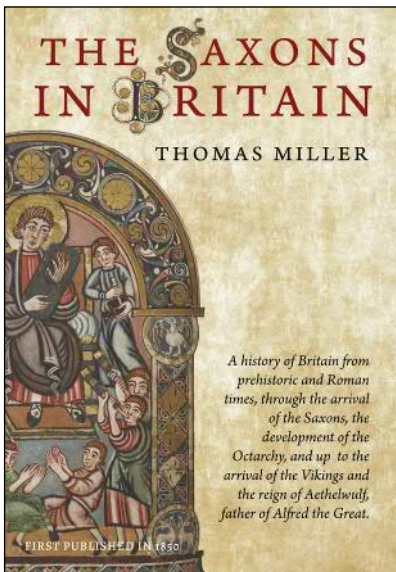
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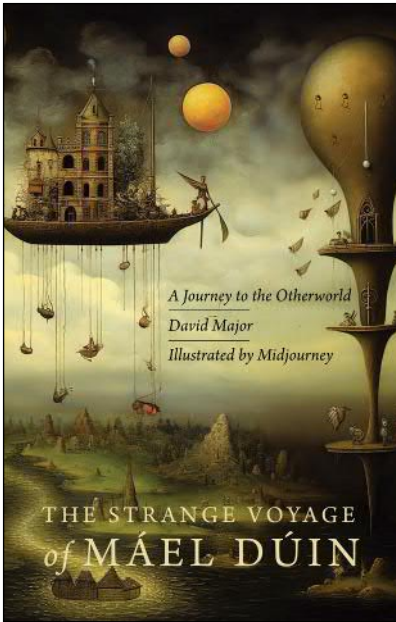
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