

THE SPIRITUAL CASKET

OF

DAILY BIBLE MEDITATIONS;

FOR THE FURTHERANCE OF FAMILY GODLINESS
AND DEVOTION.

BY

JOHN EVANGELIST GOSSNER.

Translated from the German.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY THE REV. E. H. BICKERSTETH, M.A., CHRIST CHURCH, HAMPSTEAD.

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His slaves, but as His sheep ; He seeks not wool, profit, or advantage of us, but our weal and blessedness. He despises no one of His sheep, not even the meanest, not even the strayed and lost ones, but seeks them with unwearied zeal ; and when He finds one, He looks upon it as if he had found a kingdom. He accepts all as His sheep. What the world despises and rejects, He collects with care and love, tends and preserves with loving watchfulness. He does not leave His sheep to the care of hirelings, He takes charge of them all as His own sheep. What advantages therefore has a sheep of Christ's, which knows Him as its good shepherd. experiences His faithfulness as a shepherd, and is under His keeping ! Alas ! why do not men hasten to Him ? Why do so many despise the great happiness of being one of Christ's sheep ? When will the hour come when there shall be but one shepherd and one flock ? It will, it must come : He that hath scattered Israel, will likewise gather him again.

MARCH THE FIRST.

“ And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands ? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts.”—ZECH. xiii. 6, 7.

DID thy friends inflict on Thee these wounds ? Those that should love Thee, the people which is called by thy name, which desired to

have made known of it in all the world, and was proud, that it knew the true God, and expected His son, as Messiah, Redeemer, and Saviour down from heaven. This people, the so-called beloved and chosen ones, the children of Israel, have wounded Thee. Who now wounds the Lord? Who else, but His people again, that calls itself by His name, and desires to be known for believing in Christ, for loving and honouring Him. The heathen wound him not, they know Him not. But His own people, who ought to love Him, fall upon Him with all the weapons of sin. And He lets Himself be wounded that he may heal them that wound him! The Father likewise has the same love to these ungrateful ones, so that He calls forth the sword of death over His son, over Him that is next to Him in divine nature and eternal existence. What a word in the mouth of God: Awake, O sword, slay my shepherd—for the sheep,—slay Him that is nearest, likeliest to me,—that those who are far from me, those who are sunk deep, may be brought near, and lifted up out of the depths of sin, and out of the abysses of perdition. Behold the decree of God, His sentence against His beloved son, for thy salvation! The Father hath heaped all these pains upon His son, not because He did not love Him, but because both equally loved man, by whom they were not loved but hated. O love, take our hearts captive to Thee! Here is mine!

MARCH THE SECOND.

“He made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” PHIL. ii. 7, 8.

HIS self-resignation and humiliation we cannot conceive, because we cannot grasp His sublimity and glory, which He had with the Father from the beginning. We cannot measure the height on which He was, and therefore cannot fathom the depth to which He descended. But enough we do know, that He was the Highest, and became the lowest; He was the All-powerful, and became the most powerless and the weakest; He was the Holiest, and He took the sins of all the world upon Him. His love to us impelled Him into these depths. For He was obliged to descend to the same depth as that to which we were sunk and fallen, to bring us up from the deepest depths of perdition. He, the God of truth, hath done this, and will have in return nothing but that we should love Him, and that we should enjoy and possess with thankfulness what He hath won for us, by His humiliation, even to the death on the cross. We must live and be saved, because He suffered and died. Everything was lost to man by the fall, everything was found again and restored by the humiliation of God. All men were captives and slaves to sin, death, and hell; all became free, all were redeemed and bought into liberty by the selling, the bonds, the

captivity, and the cross of the Son of God. All the blood on the earth was corrupted, poisoned, and accursed; all can be purified, healed, made healthy, and consecrated by the blood of the Reconciler.

MARCH THE THIRD.

“For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all.—1 TIM. ii. 5, 6. “Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.—ISA. liii. 4, 5.

THAT our Saviour, though the everlasting God, was nevertheless also a real man, that He felt as a man, that He had taken upon Him the real nature of man, which is liable to suffering, is apparent throughout His whole life, but particularly so in the last days of His suffering. Wherefore, Paul says distinctly, The *man* Christ Jesus, whom he elsewhere calls God, greatly praised to all eternity, who was in the form of God, hath emptied and humbled Himself. As God, He could not suffer, yet love drove Him to redeem man through suffering, and to prove to him His love by His own death, by bearing in His own person the punishment of death which he had deserved; for this cause He had to take upon Him the nature of man, and clothe Himself in all our misery and all our weakness. Which of us would like to become a serpent or a wild

beast? And yet this would not be so debasing and humiliating for us, as it was for Him to become a man, like to condemned sinners, and to die as an evil-doer, to sweat blood in the fear of death, to struggle with death, to feel himself forsaken of God, cursed and cast out by His creatures, smitten, wounded, spit upon, counted amongst evil-doers and so on. All that, and how much more than that, did the God-man do for thee, O soul? All his anguish, pains, wounds, and stripes which thou beholdest on Him, thou hast caused Him, and He has freely suffered them all to free thee from them, and to obtain for thee joy and blessedness.

MARCH THE FOURTH.

“They went out into the Mount of Olives. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night, and [He] began to be sorrowful and very heavy. —MATT. xxvi. 30—37.

IF all the hearts of men would but turn in thought, and for a single hour consider right earnestly what the Saviour has suffered for them, surely they would all take leave of sin and the world, and throw themselves into His arms; they would become Christians. But thou, pious Christian, if they do not all go with thee, if they are all offended in Him, if they all make light of His sufferings, do thou nevertheless hasten very frequently to Him, to thy suffering Mediator, and let it be thy dearest employment on earth, the delight of thine heart, to feed thy soul on the sufferings of thy Redeemer. Thou canst find no odor-

ous flowers, no heart-strengthening and spirit-strengthening perfumes, save in this garden. No brighter light can shine upon thee, than will shine on that night, when thou castest thyself down beside thy Saviour on the mount of Olives, and contemplatest, how for thee He prays, weeps, sighs, wrestles, is tormented, and sweats blood. O let not this most sacred of histories, the most remarkable that has ever happened and been written upon earth, have been written in vain for thee ; but collect all that is recorded of the pains and sufferings of thy Saviour, as precious jewels, into the treasury of thine heart, and feed thine eyes day and night thereupon ; so shalt thou be richer and happier than all they that are called rich and happy upon earth.

MARCH THE FIFTH.

“ And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly ; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”—LUKE xxii. 44.

HOW few words ! how shortly described ! and what matter ! Centuries do not suffice, all tongues and pens are too little to express or to describe what the Saviour has suffered. The awakener of the dead, who, like the Father, has life in Himself, who has given to all life and breath, and all things, is in agony, and filled with the anguish of death ; how unfathomable, and yet how encouraging, how credible ! The life,

the origin of life, struggles with death, that He may with justice give to all death-deserving sinners life and salvation. He struggles with death, and the fear and the anxiety press from Him the bloody sweat ; and thou wilt exercise no force upon thyself that thou mayest rid thee of the sin that so torments Him ! He prays, and prays ever more earnestly and urgently, and wilt thou not persevere in prayer, but let thy hands sink so soon ? He sweats blood by reason of thy sin : thou art neither afraid nor anxious, thou troublest not thyself about thy salvation ; thou leavest that to the kindness of God, and givest thyself over to thine inclinations. Alas ! I fear thou lettest thy Saviour's bloody sweat fall to the ground in vain, and that it is lost for thee. Do come and hasten to the mount of Olives, seek for His blood-drops ; pray, struggle with the Saviour, till thou feel the power and influence of His blood in thine heart, till thou hast found peace in Him. But then let slip no more, but hold fast for ever, what thou hast found in Him.

MARCH THE SIXTH.

“ Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith ; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”—HEB. xii. 1, 2. “ To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”—REV. 3, 21.

A MID sharp sufferings and deep darkness, nothing is more wholesome, consoling, and strengthen-

ing than a look to Jesus, the suffering and crucified Saviour. Therefore look not this way and that way, seek not, here or there among men or in creatures, thy consolation : seek Him where He is to be found, where He lies ready for thee—look to Jesus : He that hath begun the work of faith in thee, will and must also finish it. See Him suffering, dying—see Him at whose command were all the joy and glory of heaven from all eternity, and who, nevertheless, of His own free will, left all joy, and for thee chose the cross and death, but through the cross and death again entered into His glory. What His divine power could and did do in his humanity, it can also do in thee, in thy human nature ; for thou art bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh. As He has conquered in the great distress and anguish, in all sufferings, so wilt thou also conquer through Him if thou look to Him in faith. As He, after His sufferings, was exalted to the right hand of God, and sits upon God's throne, in His human nature, so shalt thou also be exalted through Him, if thou conquer through Him. What He through Himself was able to do, and what He became thou mayest do and become through Him. Follow Him, with thine eyes, from the Mount of Olives to the right hand of God, and let His power work mightily in thee, so shalt thou also with Him from suffering enter into glory.

MARCH THE SEVENTH.

“And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”—*MATT.* xxvi. 39.

WHAT art thou, O man? how deep art thou fallen, that for thy sake the Son of God must sink to the ground, and struggle thus! How great must be thy corruption, how terrible thy sin, how dangerous thy wound, how incurable thy disease, since thy Physician must labour, wear Himself away, energize so much, and undergo such anguish and distress! From the remedy used for thy recovery thou canst judge of thy malady. The remedy was terrible; one cannot look upon it without heart-rending pain; it is sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow;—how awful, how desperate, must be thy corruption and thy malady! Learn from thy Reconciler and Mediator, from thy Physician and Saviour, from His sufferings, to know who and what thou art. Humble thyself yet once, and cast thyself upon Him—upon the ground stained with the blood of his anguish shed for thee, and take His blood-drops into thine heart, that they may soften, change, and purify it. This bitter cup of death thou hast poured out for Him. Thou hast poured death, and the terror of death into this cup, through thy sin, and He had to drink it. In return, He now holds out to thee the cup of salvation and of life.

Put thy mouth of faith to it and drink. Dost thou see thy Saviour lying on his face, praying for thee, and drinking the bitterest cup for thee? Then be not ashamed to bend thy knees also, yea even on thy face to deprecate Him, to worship Him, and to beg of Him strength and grace for the contest, and for patience in thy pilgrimage.

MARCH THE EIGHTH.

“Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” *HEB. xii. 3.* “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, . . . thou art mine.” *Is. xliii. 1, &c.*

WHEN the giddy spirit of unbelief is going to assail thee, then hasten quickly to Golgotha, and behold there what thy God hath done and suffered for thee. If thou behold this aright, trust, and confidence must again revive in thee, and the dizziness of unbelief and mistrust leave thee. Send all doubts and devils to the cross of Christ: there let them measure their strength and prove their power. Forget thou not that thou, a defenceless child, art no match for them, and canst not cope with them. Flee thou unto thy mother's bosom, cast thyself with confidence into the arms of thy crucified Saviour. He will fight for thee, and slay all the doubts and difficulties of thy faith upon this cross; for in the air of the cross these cannot breathe but must perish. If, however, they meet thee outside Golgotha, far from the cross of Christ, then

thou art beaten ; their breath poisons, disables, and kills thee. Abide, therefore, unmoved beside the cross of Christ, think continually of His suffering and death, by which He hath ransomed and redeemed thee. For that very reason thou art His, and neither doubt nor devil shall take thee from Him ; if only thou abide in Him, and depart not from his cross. There all unbelieving thoughts or doubts, which weaken trust in thee, are unmasked, and shown as liars and slanderers of God. For all doubts concerning God's word and promises are lies, and slanders against God, because they contradict His word, and exhibit it as false and fictitious. They are all products of Hell, children of the devil, which thou must dash to pieces on the rock of the cross of Christ.

MARCH THE NINTH.

“The chastisement of our peace was upon him. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”—Is. liii. 5, 6.

WHAT dost thou fear, O sinner? The punishment of sin—judgment, death, the devil, and hell, are the due rewards of thy sins? Do not fear these, for these are not laid upon thee ; nay, these are laid upon Him, that for thee He went to judgment, to death, to battle with the devil, to hell, and to the pains and torments of hell, and withstood, overcame, and vanquished them all. Why then dost thou fear what is no more laid upon thee, but has been laid on Him, on the back of the Lamb of God, and by Him

taken away, effaced, and atoned for. But how came thy sin upon His back? God cast it upon Him, and He also voluntarily took it upon Himself, because He foresaw that thou couldst neither bear it nor destroy it—that it would crush thee to pieces. God took compassion on thy back, and therefore He laid thy punishment on the back of His Son; and He, of his own free will, took it upon Himself and bore it away. Therefore be not afraid of what is abolished and cancelled; but look continually at the back of the Lamb of God, how heavy thy sins are for Him—how He, bowed down beneath the heavy load, is filled with anguish, sighs, sweats blood, and almost faints. Learn therefrom to fear, what is still, and ever will be, fearful, as long as thou livest in the flesh,—that is, the desire to sin, flesh and blood, the world and Satan, which tempt thee to sin. Learn, from the sight of the Lamb's burdened back, how great an evil sin is, how carefully thou shouldst guard against it, and not lay fresh burdens on the Lamb of God, nor draw down fresh judgments and punishments upon thyself. Rather guard the peace, which the Lamb of God has won for thee, by the wiping out of thy sins. Old sins will not and cannot steal this peace from thee; but new unfaithfulnesses, and insults to the Lamb may rob thee of it. Beware, and look continually on the back of the Lamb.

MARCH THE TENTH.

“And he, bearing his cross, went forth into a place called The place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified him.”—JOHN xix. 17, 18.

HE that bears heaven, and earth, and all things by the word of His power, bears *thy* cross, Osoul, and calls it, from love to thee, *His* cross. His love has assumed it ; for, to Him belongs no cross. The heavens and the glory of all the heavens are His. Worship and honour from all angels and men belong to Him,—and now He carries a cross, the tree of the curse, of ignominy, and of death upon his shoulders, and calls it *His* cross, as if He were the guilty one, the sinner, that had to die on the cross. Thus He walks on, under *thy* cross, which He loves as if it were His own, and bears thine iniquities. O soul, look after Him, contemplate this path of the cross, which thy Saviour walks. Consider how God could have laid such a heavy cross on His beloved Son ; and, indeed, He took thy cross, which thou shouldst have borne, from thy shoulders, and threw it on the shoulders of His innocent Son, as if thou wert dearer, and the object of more care to Him, than His Son. Who comprehends this love ? Neither man nor angel. The angels desire to look into it—into this mystery of the love of God ; but they cannot, their vision, as well as ours, is too short and weak to scrutinize these depths. But one thing thou canst and shouldst do : take up the cross, which He bore for thee and plant it in thine heart, and never

more let slip from thy mind the thought of how heavy the bearing of thy cross was for Him, and how much God hath loved thee, in that He spared not His son, who is one with Himself, but laid upon Him thy cross, which thou couldst not bear, that thou mightest not be lost, but mightest be saved.

MARCH THE ELEVENTH.

“Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”—Ps. xxii. 12, 17, 18. “He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.”—Is. lxi. 10.

JESUS was stripped of His clothes and nailed naked to the cross. He allowed himself to be stripped of all things, and His life to be taken from Him, in order to obtain for us life, the robe of innocence and glory, and the garment of righteousness. He that clothes all things, all the flowers of the field, all the fowls of the air, and the whole earth, with such manifold beauty, stands there, divested of all beauty, in the guise of the poorest and most despised among men, as a sheep for the slaughter, ready to sacrifice Himself for His creatures. He whose teaching was, “If any man take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also,” let Himself be stripped entirely naked, so that not a thread was left upon Him, which He did not part with for our sake. Who allows even a single article of his superfluous clothing to

be taken from him? How is it that men love clothes so much? How much vanity lurks behind their clothes! How proud they are of this borrowed beauty! How they despise the man with the shabby dress! What preference the fool and the godly man in fine clothing enjoy in this world, before the wise and upright man in poor attire! How many spend their whole lifetime in thoughts about clothes merely! Behold, for this cause the Creator of all things stands naked, and yet He has still one garment, and that too the fairest and costliest of all, to cover Him in His nakedness,—one which the angels admire, and we, with them, shall worship everlastingly. Light, love, meekness, patience, are His garment, in which He shone forth here. This radiant robe, however, is seen by none, save those whose eyes God has opened. O Lord, give us the faculty to recognise Thy beautiful nakedness.

MARCH THE TWELFTH.

“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.”—Ps. xxii. 14, 16. “He teacheth my hands to war.”—Ps. xviii. 34. “Wilt not Thou deliver my feet from falling?”—Ps. lvi. 13.

THUS mourned David in the name of the Messiah, foreseeing His sufferings, and how the children of Israel would one day compass Him, and nail Him to the stake of the cross. Did the

ancients in spirit already contemplate, so long beforehand, the yet future sufferings of the Redeemer, and point to them, when only fragments, and these only in dim images, were known to them in spirit? How then should we unceasingly pass all His sufferings before the eyes of our mind, and ponder upon them, without overlooking even the smallest detail of His martyrdom. Dear heart! look at thy Saviour, how He, that so often stretched forth His hands to heal and to cure, now willingly stretches forth the same hands, to let them be nailed for thy sake to the cross, at which thou wilt not even stand by. The pain which He suffered from the blows of the hammer, which drove the nails through His hands and feet, ever the bearers of blessings and goodness, let it thrill through thy soul, and cure it of all lusting after the pleasure and happiness of the world. Seize this hammer and these nails in spirit, whenever thine hands are about to stretch themselves out after forbidden pleasure, or thy feet to enter a bye-path—whenever an appetite of the flesh, whenever selfishness, or the like, shows itself in thee,—and therewith nail it to the cross of Christ. Thus thou shalt be crucified with Christ, and hence, shalt also live with Him. Thus His nailed hands shall teach thy hands to war; thus His pierced feet shall preserve thy feet from sliding. But if thou allow the evil desire to harbour in thee, what avails it thee that thy Saviour hangs upon the cross? They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts, Gal. v. 24. Rom. vi. 6.

MARCH THE THIRTEENTH.

“And with him they crucified two thieves; the one on his right hand and the other on his left.”—**MARK. xv. 27.**
 “Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”—**Is. liii. 12.**

HE hung in the midst between murderers and evil-doers, as if He had been the greatest of them. Such was His wish, because He had taken upon Himself all the evil deeds of all men, who are altogether evil-doers, Rom iii. 12, and borne them in His own body on the tree. What ignominy, what shame was laid upon Him, the most blessed Son of God! how could the eye of His most loving Father behold Him hanging in such company, in such a place, between murderers upon the accursed tree! And He did see Him, and let Him hang, why? Because he hated Him? Surely not, but because He loved thee, and wished to cancel thine evil deeds, and make righteous and saved men out of evil-doers! God alone loves thus! Thus can neither man nor angel love, When one considers what John says, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.” 1 John iii. 15, Jesus is often among murderers. But for this very reason, that He humbled Himself and did not despise the evil-doers, He shall have a portion with the great, and shall divide the spoil with the strong, the rudest and most hardened of evil-doers. O soul, look closely at thy Saviour, on the cross, in His ignominy and love!

What results His suffering produces! What glorious and countless fruits this tree bears! How far does the efficacy of His sufferings and of His prayers, amid his sufferings for sinners, extend. The sinners of all ages and nations of the earth owe their redemption and salvation to His bleeding intercession on the cross. The answer to His prayer hath no end; eternities of eternities shall be able to tell thereof.

MARCH THE FOURTEENTH.

“They gave him vinegar [myrrh wine] to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof he would not drink.”—MAT. xxvii. 34. “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”—LUKE xiii. 34.

THEY hand Him gall, He repays their gall—drink with the sweet prayer for the forgiveness of their sins. What else are all our constitution and conduct—what He sees in us and receives from us—but pure gall? For sin which is really all that He finds in us is more bitter to Him than gall, and more unpleasant to His taste than vinegar and myrrh-wine. He does not like this bitter drink which we hand Him; but He does not on that account disown and curse us; but prays for us, and becomes our representative with His Father, that He may not impute our sins to us, nor go into judgment with us. But after He has pardoned thee, thou must offer Him no more gall and myrrh-wine, no more vinegar,

but the sweet wine of love and gratitude. Now must thy soul cleave to Him with fervent and constant affection. The bitter gall of evil desires, of hatred, envy, and the like are distasteful to Him, and hence His mercy desires to change them in thee to a warm desire to please Him, into a holy earnestness to deny all ungodliness and to live soberly, righteously, and piously in this world. He turns from His crucifiers to His Father, not against them, but for them; calls down, not vengeance upon His enemies, but the mercy of the Father upon them; sends up, not complaints, but exonerations, intercessions; does not desire of the Father that He will send down vengeance and fire to destroy His enemies, but that He will vouchsafe them pardon and mercy, draw them to Him and bless them.

MARCH THE FIFTEENTH.

“And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads.”—MAT. xxvii. 39. “And one of the malefactors railed on him; but the other said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.”—LUKE xxiii. 39—43. “He said unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!”—JOHN xix. 26.

THEY revile, He blesses. They shake their heads at Him to give Him pain, He shakes the hearts of the sinners to do them good. Yet when all reviled—priest and people—all rejected and cursed Him, there was still one that prayed

to Him ; he was indeed a malefactor, not a saint, but his prayer was heard ; he prays not to be released from the cross, but, after the death of the cross, to be admitted into the kingdom of heaven. That was a large request—a murderer enter the kingdom of heaven ! How do these tally ! And yet his prayer was heard on the spot. The more others curse and revile, mock and despise, the more confidently do thou pray ; for the more thou wilt receive. The smaller the number of men around thee that seek, confess, and love Christ, the more faithfully do thou avow Him, for the more gladly wilt thou be accepted by Him, and the more welcome wilt thou be to Him. And even although thou deem thyself as little deserving of the kingdom of heaven, and of mercy, as the murderer and thief at the gallows ; if thine heart be contrite, repentant, believing, and confident like his ; if thou art as little ashamed as he, to confess thyself before all the world as a criminal worthy of death, and Christ as the Lord of the kingdom, and as thy rescuer and Saviour ; then thou wilt receive from Him the same reply and promise as the thief did. He condemned himself, and Christ pronounced him saved. He rowed against the stream of all the world, following the example neither of the reviling priests, nor of the mocking people, nor even of the reviler crucified along with him, but aiming at Christ and His kingdom—and all was vouchsafed to him. Go and do thou likewise. Seeing that He on the cross saw and accepted sinners, how could He forget His friends and beloved ones ? His words

to Mary and to John testify plainly enough His unchangeable love and constancy to His friends, even to the last. He is the most loving of friends. No human heart loves like Him.

MARCH THE SIXTEENTH.

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”—MAT. xxvii. 45, 46. “Who in the days of his flesh, offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard.”—HEB. v. 7.

WITHOUT and within the thickest darkness lay upon Him. Then was the hardest contest of light with darkness. He, the light of the world, must destroy the kingdom of darkness, vanquish the prince of darkness, and change all the children of darkness into children of light : for this cause He must let all the storms and attacks of the dark powers of Satan light upon Him at once ; it must come to the worst ; the light now seemed to succumb, and the darkness to triumph ; the light seemed now to be extinguished, and the darkness to have become the ruling power. Night enshrouded the earth ; the day as it were, vanished, and had been swallowed up. But His patience, His strong inward cry and tearful prayer, that now had reached its height in His soul, pierced through, vanquished all, and made the victory complete. Then He showed how the Christian must conquer through defeat, and the enemy of

the light—hell, must succumb through victory. Here at the cross, at the utterance of these words of Jesus, the genuine aspect of Christianity is to be seen. When all the lights go out, and day is enveloped in the blackness of night, when God Himself seems to be turned into an enemy and adversary, and to stand on the side of the foe, so that the most faithful and confidential servant of God can offer up nought save groans, tears, and strong cries, then the victory is near and the triumph certain. Here tarry, O my soul! This strong cry, this tearful prayer of Jesus in his deepest abandonment, hath rescued thee from eternal darkness and eternal death. Thus it was needful for thy Redeemer to be forsaken and terror-stricken, that thou mightest be accepted and comforted. All thy comfort and peace flow from this anguish-fountain of Jesus.

MARCH THE SEVENTEENTH.

“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.”—JOHN xix, 28, 29.

JESUS had now within Him, after that dark hour of desertion, the consciousness of victory, and now saw the accomplishment of all things,—the eternal redemption of captive humanity, the overthrow of its foes, and, in this consciousness, He says: I thirst, For what? O thou everlasting one, unto whom all eyes look,

who openest thine hand and satisfiest all things with pleasure ; who wilt give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to thy people, thy chosen, Is. xliii. 20, thou that madst wine out of water, and madst water spring from the rock upon the dry land, that holdest together the waters in the sea as in a bottle, that measurest the waters in the hollow of Thine hand, for what doest Thou thirst ? For our salvation ; for the salvation of thy ransomed ones. But wherewith do they quench thy thirst ? Thou thirstest to give drink unto the thirsty, to man and beast : thou sendest rain, and vinegar is thy refreshment. This is indeed the real picture of the manner in which men thank their Creator and Redeemer, and repay His goodness. How many kinds of drink, how many kinds of fruit has He made to quench the thirst of man, and to refresh him. But to Him, now thirsting for us and in our stead, is offered vinegar. But He so willed it, and so it was written. This burning thirst has become for us an unfailling fountain, a stream of life, a spring of the sweetest refreshing. He, the good Shepherd, thirsted thus sore that He might be able to feed His sheep in green pastures, and lead them beside the still waters, Ps. xxiii. 2. He, the fountain of healing, was dried up for Himself, and thirsted that we with joy might draw water out of the well of salvation. He had to be tormented with thirst, in order that He might invite all and say, Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, Isaiah lv. 1. And it shall be in that day (after His

thirst) that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem—Zech. iv. 8, from Golgotha, where the hot thirsty one suffered and languished. Thou hadst to thirst, that thou mightst be able to say, Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. John iv. 14. He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. John vii. 38. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely, Rev. xxi. 6. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, Ezek. xxxvi. 25. Such waters, such refreshment has thy thirst prepared for us! We drink all of thy thirst, thy languishing revives us!

MARCH THE EIGHTEENTH.

“When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.”—JOHN xix. 30. “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father into thy hands I commit my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.”—LUKE xxiii. 46.

HERE fall down and worship. A mightier word was never uttered upon earth, one more rich in consequences never heard. Soul! what is finished? Thy salvation, thine eternal redemption, righteousness, sanctification and blessedness, the abolishment of thy sins, the living hope of everlasting glory, thy sonship and heirship to God; thy second birth, or new-creation, thy change

from a child of darkness to a child of light and blessedness, from a servant of sin, and a slave to the devil, to a free child of the grace of God ; from a prey of hell, to a member of God's family, and a fellow-citizen with the saints in heaven ; from a den of unclean spirits, to a temple of God and a dwelling of the blessed Trinity. And who can utter, who name what the Son of God hath finished by His sufferings and death ? All this is now thine, is finished, prepared, and ready for thee—thou mayest have it and enjoy it, is imputed to thee, and offered to thee in the gospel. And what could be more pleasing to the Son of God, whom it cost so many sufferings, and even life itself, to accomplish all these things, than that thou shouldst now be in possession and enjoyment of them all—that He could see in thee all the fruits of His redemption ? The whole day He stretches out His pierced hands to thee ; that He may pour out into thy bosom, and communicate to thee what He has so bitterly won for thee. Open thy mouth, and let thyself be filled, till thou be drunk with the good things of His house ; believe, love, hope ; with thy whole soul, give thyself up to the Author and Finisher of thy salvation—so shall all be thine, thine for ever. Boast thyself, however, of Him and His mercy, not merely with thy tongue, but let thine Heart be filled with the power, fulness, and mercy of the Redemption of Jesus, and then may thy mouth also overflow with it.

MARCH THE NINETEENTH.

“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, who also maketh intercession for us.”—ROM. viii. 34.

THUS asks Paul, and thus do thou ask, whenever sin and Satan would assault thee, and deprive thee of all consolation and faith. Flee to the cross of Christ, behold Him how he bows His head and dies—to thee He bows it, for thee He dies, that thou mayest live, and live in Him. O blessed lingering at the crucifixion of Jesus. As bees rest on flowers, dive deep into their calixes, thence to suck sweet juices, so every pious soul lays itself on the cross of Christ, dives deep—as deep as possible—with thought and heart into the calix, into the depth of His suffering and reconciling love, and draws from this everlasting fountain of healing all comfort for life and death. What greater comfort could the Father have given unto sinful men, than that He should allow His Son to die for them on the cross? Who can now impute our sin to us? Who can judge or condemn, when the offended One, against whom we have sinned, and who alone could have the right to punish or condemn us, has allowed Himself to be condemned and put to death for sinners deserving punishment and condemnation. The Judge Himself dies for the criminal; who shall accuse or judge Him? The Lord, the Judge, bears the punishment of the servant; who shall punish him? The offended one makes intercession for the offender; who shall condemn him?

MARCH THE TWENTIETH.

“Jesus should die for that nation ; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.”—JOHN xi. 51, 52. “For to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace ; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross.”—EPH. ii. 15, 16.

THE Messiah of the Jews was to abolish, not the sins of the Jews only, but the sins of all mankind, and to unite again to God, and into one whole all that had sundered itself from Him and from the whole, throughout the world. The separation and sundering of His soul from His body—His death—was therefore the eternal union of all that was parted. His soul was poured out as water, and even this gathered and collected all the scattered ones. Now must His death, His pierced heart be the point of union between all men’s hearts. Under His cross, beside His heart, from which there stream healing and life for all alike, we must all unite, be we of whatever nation or religion we may. As we have but one shepherd, who gave His life for all the sheep, we must all form but one flock. All divisions, parties, and severings are a disgrace to Christ and His death ; for He died, and let His heart be severed, that He might unite all that was severed in Himself. O may His blood and death, without which no man can be saved, soon bring together all the scattered children of God ; for they are still far far asunder, severed by miserable trifles. Let us turn away from all this, and look only to Him and His cross, so shall we become one body with one head, so

shall we have peace within and without, and be altogether one new man. But the old man, who everywhere still retains so much life, severs and will sever, till he be slain at the cross of Christ.

MARCH THE TWENTY-FIRST.

“Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?”—**LUKE** xxiii. 28—31. “And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”—**1 PET.** iv. 18.

THE pious female disciples of Jesus wept, when their master was led through the populous streets of the city called holy, as a malefactor condemned to death; and who would not have wept? Who would not weep still as often as he thinks: Such ignominy had my guiltless Saviour to suffer for me, a sinner deserving of ignominy; and He is so poorly repaid for it by me! It is so difficult to bring me to suffer even a little ignominy for Him! Foreseeing this, our Saviour did not indeed find fault with their tears, nor even say that they should not weep; nay, he said they should weep, but not for Him. He does not need our tears, but we must weep for ourselves. Why? thou wilt not surely ask. If thou knowest thine own heart, thou wilt find subjects enough for lamentation, for which thou shouldst weep blood, if that could avail thee anything. For if these things be done in the green tree, in the Son of God, if God, on account of sin, spares not His only Son, but delivers Him up to such ignominy,

to the cross, and to death, what shall be done in the dry tree? what shall God do to the sinner, who will not allow himself to be softened, bettered, or saved by this great love of God? What shall He do with the false Christians, who play the hypocrite and weep, but do not cling to the Saviour with their whole hearts, who still live to themselves and the world, and not to Him that died for them. Thou dry tree! Thou barren Christian! that, without heart, without improvement, without love, callest Christ thy Saviour; that sayest, Lord, Lord! but leavest His will unperformed; boastest of the righteousness and merits of Christ, and art yet content with the righteousness of the Pharisee — thou dry tree! behold there, in the sufferings of Christ, what God does in the green tree. Grow green again, transplant thyself, by repentance, faith, and love into the green-growing wood of the cross of Christ, into the communion of His sufferings and death, so shalt thou be preserved from the burning — from the fire!

MARCH THE TWENTY-SECOND.

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” — ROM. v. 8—10.

HOW could we commend love more than it hath commended and glorified itself, in dying for its enemies and for sinners! Love, worthy to be praised for ever! will it leave us to

perish and die after we have recognised and believed it, accepted it, and given it an abode in our hearts? What a pledge of future blessedness and of eternal life it has given us! I might say, the pledge, that we already have, is greater than what we hope for as pledged, or that both are the same. Love is our pledge and our hope, our everlasting life—here in foretaste, there in full fruition, ours, for ever ours. Did God seek and find us, when we fled from Him? And will He flee from us and reject us, when we seek and find Him? Did God accomplish our reconciliation, notwithstanding that it cost the life and blood of His Son? And shall He again cast us away, and not rather save us, now that our salvation will magnify and exalt the life and honour of His Son? Did He do us good when we were His enemies? and shall He reward us with evil now that we are His friends. When we loved sin and served Satan, He died for us: and shall He now kill and destroy us, when we love Him, and serve Him? If He loved even unto death those that hated Him, how will He love those that love Him? Therefore let us no more depart from the cross of Christ, in order to learn how to recognise and love the ever glorious love of God in all its greatness and splendour, how to hope in it, and trust in it!

MARCH THE TWENTY-THIRD.

“For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”—HEB. x. 14. “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.”—ZACH. xiii. 1. Cf. HEB. x. 22.

AN offering and a fountain is the death of our Saviour—an offering for the reconciliation and justification of the sinner, a fountain and a well for the healing of all vice, and for complete recovery therefrom. In all respects a perfect redemption, justification, and sanctification. He takes the guilt and the punishment from the conscience, and extirpates the root of sin from the heart, so that it does not spring again, nor again become strong. An offering sufficient for all the sins of the whole world, so that no sinner need be dispirited, however great and heavy the multitude of his sins may be; even though they were more in number than the sand on the sea-shore, than the drops of water in the sea, or than the leaves on the trees; the sacrifice of Jesus takes away all his guilt, has borne all the punishment, and fully reconciled him. And equally satisfactory and sufficient is it also for sanctification. As often as ever a trace of sin shows itself in us, we have only to go to this fountain, and draw from this well of salvation, from which issues the water of life, that washes away every impurity, and, at the same time, gives us new strength to recover from the disease of sin, and to grow strong in mind and spirit. Therefore the

true and only health-fountain, that deserves the name. Blessed is he that would not only be washed, but also made whole !

MARCH THE TWENTY-FOURTH.

“Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous [But] I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wound, saith the Lord.”—*JER. xxx. 12, 17.* “With His stripes we are healed.”—*Is. liii. 5.* *1 PET. ii. 24.*

HERE God the Lord tells thee who and what thou art ; let it be told thee but once more, thou art incurable, thy wounds it is impossible to heal. Who could thus reprove thee, if the Lord did not, whom thou darest not contradict? He knows thee through and through. Believe, God does not exaggerate. There is no safety for thee, unless He save thee. But, however wretched and desperate thy condition be, He does not cast thee out. I, I will restore health unto thee. I will heal thee of thy wounds, He says. If thou believest His first assertion that thou art incurable, believe also His second, that He can and will heal thee nevertheless. Deny not, conceal not thy corruption, close not thy wounds in hypocrisy, for they are not healed thereby. Give God glory, confess that His word is truth, and that thou art incurable, and He will give thee healing and life. Whereby? By His wounds, by the wounds of Jesus. He was bruised for our sakes, and wounded for our iniquities, and thereby are we healed ; if we only in spirit feel ourselves bruised,

crushed, and really wounded. But as for him that denies his corruption, tries not to appear bad, or thinks he can heal himself—that closes his wounds with the mere words of the wounds of Jesus, without having them thoroughly healed; his bruise, I might say, is more than incurable, his wounds cannot in all eternity be healed. Do not make the wounds of Jesus a mere plaster to cover thy wounds. Salvation, salvation let them be to thee! Many say: We are whole through His wounds, and yet are not whole, but full of the wounds of conscience. But if thou hast truly received forgiveness through His wounds, then continue in His wounds, and guard thyself by their power from sin, that it may strike thee no more wounds, and that thou mayest not become a twice dead tree, which can hardly be revived again.

MARCH THE TWENTY-FIFTH.

“Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, that the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither.”—*JOS. xx. 2, 3.* “But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar that he may die.”—*EX. xxi. 14.* O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock.”—*SONG OF SOL. ii. 14.* And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.”—*IS. iv. 6.*

THE cities of refuge in Israel, in which even the slayer, if he had committed the deed unawares and unwittingly, could find security, protection, and safety, so that the avenger of blood

could not seize him ; but which were of no avail to the designing crafty murderer, are a type of the wounds of Jesus, which likewise stand open as a city of refuge to every sinner that really and truly confesses his sins, to protect him from judgment, death, the devil, and hell, that pursue every sinner, like avengers of blood, and threaten him with everlasting destruction. He that hides himself in the wounds of Jesus, because he is weary of sin, and earnestly desires to improve and be free from sin, is unassailable and altogether safe. But just as a designing murderer was not safe or protected in the very temple, even though he laid hold of the horns of the altar, but must be seized, dragged away, and given over to condign punishment ; in like manner neither can nor shall any sinner or any saint comfort himself with the wounds of Jesus, unless he be really and truly converted ; if he still love the world, whether secretly or openly ; if he lay hold of the wounds and merits of Jesus without heart, merely with his mouth, and cling to them in false security. Such a one is dragged away from the altar of the cross, from the wounds of Jesus, which he bears only in his mouth, and cast, along with the hypocrites, into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. But for all those that are truly converted, all earnest seekers of salvation, all ardent conscientious souls, deeply anxious about their salvation, the wounds of Jesus are blessed cities of refuge, and clefts in the rocks in which they are free and safe from the wrath, the punishment, and the condemnation, the death and the hell

which they would have merited by their sins. In every heat of sorrow, in every distress and pain, they find there shadow, coolness, protection, defence, salvation, and blessedness. A truly pious soul goes no more out, but finds there everlasting joy and peace, finds all its strength and power—its full satisfaction.

MARCH THE TWENTY-SIXTH.

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”—ROM. vi. 6. “I am crucified with Christ.”—GAL. ii, 20. “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”—GAL. vi. 14.

HOW many words of the Apostle's are we fain to repeat ! and yet we seldom hear these—at least in sincerity. And yet the true Christian cannot pass over them, like the airy butterfly that flits over the flowers, without drawing honey from them. And in truth the very best honey is to be found here. The cross, the crucified One, must, if we really believe in Him, be in us ; and if this rock of salvation be in us, then all the lashing waves and billows of stormy passions, all the temptations of the flesh, the world, and the devil, will break, and bruise their heads, and lose their power and die upon it. Let not Christ and His cross or merits be to thee abettors of sin, but sin-destroyers, bruising the head of the serpent within thee, not without thee. If the world, and sin,

and every movement, yea, and the very thought of sin be a cross to thee, and thou slayest them therefore with or on the cross of Christ, then thou, or thine old man is crucified with Christ, and thou mayest in sincerity boast of the cross of Christ, but yet only of the cross of Christ; for it alone can crucify sin, the old man in thee: without Him and His cross all thy trouble is of no avail, and all thy boasting mere ruin and mischief.

MARCH THE TWENTY-SEVENTH.

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.”—ROM. vi. 8. Cf. verse 5. “Christ who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.”—1 THESS. v. 10.

HE hath won us, in that He died for us. He died that we might be His—eternally His. Woe to the man that withdraws himself from Him, that pretends to believe in Him, and yet does not live to Him! Whosoever lives to Him, or lives in Him, or lives with Him, as Paul will have it, as the disciple with the master, in one house, and in one workshop; whosoever lives in such confidence and intimacy with Him, may easily have done with sin. If it comes, the disciple has only to look to his master, and is done with it; it withdraws, but comes again: yes, but we are allowed another look at Him—the oftener the better—He delights to have it so; a look sent to Him at all times brings back a thunder peal at sin, and therewith a safeguard against it.

Altogether the life with Jesus is the most blessed life ; if people only knew it, they would desire nothing better. And, indeed, whether we sleep or wake—sleep in bed or in the grave, or wake here below, or in heaven above—we shall at all times be able to be with Him, and not to let Him slip from eyes, hearts, or minds, nor indeed to make the attempt. For this, *for this* Christ died. So near dost thou come to him. Such a life will His death confer upon thee, here and yonder, for it is and will be an everlasting, uninterrupted life with Him.

MARCH THE TWENTY-EIGHTH.

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!”—JOHN i. 29. “For as much as ye know that ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers ; but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot.”—1 PET. i. 18, 19.

YES, He is the Lamb, to which all God’s messengers in the old and new covenants pointed. Already Isaiah, the Evangelist of Israel, saw Him and pointed to Him : He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth, Is. 53. 7. But He is the Lamb, not only on account of His silent patience, amid the deepest and most trying suffering, but chiefly because He is the sacrifice and propitiation for our sins. With His blood we are redeemed

and ransomed from the service of sin, and the power of Satan, to serve the living God. What is more beautiful, more lovely, more attractive, to contemplate than that God should exhibit to us, as a lamb, Him whom He sent into the world for our salvation. Before a judge and master we should fear and tremble. But a lamb attracts even children, and is pleasant to all men. How kind the Lord is in this respect also! If hell terrify thee, if Satan be frightful to thee, and threaten thee with the terrors of the judgment, look to the Lamb; John points it out to thee with his finger. But what makes this lamb so very lovely and beautiful to us, that it takes away our sins, and was slain for us, as a full sacrifice for our sin.

MARCH THE TWENTY-NINTH.

“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously; who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.”—1 PET. ii. 21—24.

THE sufferings of Jesus, however we regard them, are of unspeakable value and advantage to us. He suffered for us in every respect; but first of all, for the forgiveness of our sins, as our mediator; so that His merits become, through faith, my merits, and I behold Him as the Lamb that atones for my sins, takes them

away, and bestows on me a gracious God and father, by His obedience even unto death. Then, secondly, He suffered and died, to win for us, and to confer upon us grace, spirit, strength, and life, for the sanctification and renewing of the inner man. His death is a fountain of life, a well of salvation, of which all that drink are made whole. Thirdly, He suffered and died as an example, and a consolation for us, in life and death, that we should look to Him and follow His steps, as the Apostles distinctly write. Whoever always contemplates Him only as a mediator, and never as an example, does not think and act after the manner of the Apostles, any more than those that represent Him only as an example, and a pattern of virtue, but never as a mediator. He is all to us. We must on no account divide Him, and take Him piece-meal, but accept Him entire, as He exhibits Himself to us, and as the Apostles declare Him.

MARCH THE THIRTIETH.

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause, &c.”—1 COR. xi. 28—30.

SELF examination is necessary at all seasons, daily and hourly, but least of all ought we to neglect it, or put it off till a more convenient season, when we partake of the blessed sacrament of the supper. Then it is thoroughly in-

dispensable, and so essentially necessary, that life and death, blessing and cursing, mercy and damnation hang upon it and depend upon it. Paul pronounces heavy judgments upon an unexamined, or, which is the same thing to him, an unworthy partaking, and points to facts and examples from his own time, in which an unworthy participation had occasioned many bodily and mental weaknesses, maladies, and even death. So the Lord chastises those that partake of His body, that for their sakes was given up to the bitterest of deaths, and of His blood that was dearly shed for them, without examination, heedlessly and unworthily ; that do not discern between His body and ordinary earthly food. Do not therefore bring disease upon thyself, do not eat death and damnation at the Lord's Supper, for thou mayst as readily find them in it as life and salvation. Wholesome food is not for sick persons, it makes them worse, more wretched, and may even kill them. The sick ought by no means to eat what the healthy eat ; that which brings health, nourishment, and strengthening to the healthy, becomes poison and death to the sick when they partake of it in that condition. Beware then of changing the food of life, the divine bread, the heavenly manna into poison and a curse, damnation and hell, by thy heedlessness and profanity. Examine thyself, prove thyself, pray for light and knowledge of thyself ; confess thy known sins to God and thine offended neighbour ; make good the mischief done, as far as thou canst, and at least give no new offence, so as to approach the table of the Lord

with a heedless disorderly conversation. Reconcile thyself to God, to thy neighbour, and to thine own heart. Seek to restore peace within and without thee, and show unmistakeably that thou purposost repentance, penitence, faith, and new obedience. Show that thou knowest and feelest whom thou art approaching—Him whose eyes are as flames of fire, and who tries and proves the reins and the heart—who is aware of what is in thee, and knows all the hidden designs of thine heart.

MARCH THE THIRTY-FIRST.

“With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.”—LUKE xxii. 15.

WITH desire He desires thee, beloved partaker of the supper! He hungers more after thee than thou dost after Him, as if He were the partaker and thou the food. Therefore He says elsewhere: I have meat to eat that ye know not of, John iv. 32. And what was it on that occasion? A poor sinful woman. So to Him it is really food, for which he hungers, and longingly yearns, if thou comest to His table with most fervent desire, and most passionate yearning to be very near to Him, to unite thyself very closely to Him, so to think of Him, and so to place Him in faith before thy mind's eye, as if he were crucified before thee, as if He exhibited Himself to thee, as if thou sawest His blood flow, and Him bow His head and die for thee. The Saviour hath

great purposes in His mind with this supper. He gives us no empty symbols of His death, He gives himself ; therefore He will have no small, narrow hearts, but broad ones, a large mouth of faith, and a famishing hunger, in order that He may give much, give all, give Himself. The more room that is prepared in thee for Him, the more wilt thou receive from Him ; the greater thy longing, the more wilt thou be a partaker of Christ.

APRIL THE FIRST.

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”—2 COR. v. 19—21.

GOD has so loved the world—the sinful, faithless, sunken, ungrateful world, that He gave up for it His blameless, holy, and righteous Son, as if the great shameless sinner had been dearer to Him than was His most beloved Son. The man that to-day, when he beholds the Son of God dying on the cross, dying for all sinners, put to death for the dead, does not here learn to read the holy scripture of God, which He has written for all men, to invite them to His great Communion, and to entreat them to become reconciled to God ; that does not learn to read this on the cross, and to understand and believe it, will never learn it at all ; for there—there it stands written in words of flame, there is preached

as loudly, as suitably for general comprehension, as forcibly, and as attractively as possible, that which Moses already foresaw and said:—How the Lord loveth his people! O, place yourselves all upon Golgotha, beside the cross of Christ; and in spirit gaze on Him till the fulness of the love of God, wherewith He hath loved us in the death of His Son, has pierced through heart, mind, and soul, marrow and bone, and your whole being; till ye can say with your whole souls: Let us love Him, for He hath first loved us. However, words are of no avail here; thou must thyself go to Golgotha, must gaze on the Son of love, bleeding on the cross for thee, and must tarry beside Him with unaverted gaze. He, His blood, His death, His wounds, the bowing of His head shall speak to thee;—listen only, and let all that is in thee be silent.

APRIL THE SECOND.

“Then they took the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.”—*JOHN* xix. 40, 41. “And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb.”—*MATT.* xxvii. 59, 60.

THE sufferings of Christ began in the garden, and ended in the garden. Blessed garden! that received the body which was sacrificed for us; honoured grave, that held the body of Him that shall call forth and awaken all that lie

in their graves, to the resurrection of life or of judgment! Blessed Joseph, that wert permitted to take the body of Jesus down from the cross, and lay it in thy new sepulchre! who does not envy thee? And yet we have far more than thou, if we, through faith, have Jesus dwelling in our hearts; if, in the sacrament, we receive and accept the living body of Jesus into our hearts! O that our hearts would but cease to be the grave of sin, and become the grave of Christ! that Jesus would dwell therein for ever, wrapped in faith, and sealed with fervent love! Moreover we must, at the grave of Christ, consider what Paul says, Rom. vi. 3:—Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death. This he repeats again, Col. ii. 12, and draws therefrom the conclusion that we no longer serve sin, nor allow sin to have dominion over us; because, with Christ, or by the death of Christ, we are dead and crucified to sin, and have therefore carried sin to the grave. Wake it up no more, beloved! let it, let it be for ever dead and buried; yea, rather cast the dead carcase of sin and evil desires out of your hearts, and receive Jesus into them, that He may live and hold dominion in you for ever.

APRIL THE THIRD.

“And, behold, there was a great earthquake : for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.”—MATT. xxviii. 2. “And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted : Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified. Why seek ye the living among the dead ?”—MARK xvi. 6. LUKE xxiv. 2.

AT the first entrance of Jesus into this world, angels were the messengers (evangelists) and heralds of the great joy, that the Saviour was born ; and, at His second birth, when He again came forth from death unto life, it was they again that proclaimed His resurrection from the tomb—His second appearance among the living—His second birth. They kindly chide the pious searchers, for still seeking the risen Lord of life among the dead. What joy it must have afforded to these beings so full of love, that they were permitted first to preach this great everlasting gospel in this world of dead men’s graves ! that they were the first that were permitted to cry as heralds of the kingdom : He is risen ! If then the angels, whom it does not concern so closely, rejoice so much at it, how much more should we rejoice, and give thanks and praise !—for, for us He died, for us He rose, for us He lives, and we with Him, if we rise and walk in newness of life with Him. But how can we rejoice, if we are still lying in the bonds of sin and death ? Thus it is that we seek the living among the dead, and there we shall not find Him. He is to be found only among the living, who are awakened and risen with Him from the grave of corruption.

APRIL THE FOURTH.

“When the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.”—JOHN xx. 19.

THE disciples did not run to the world, when their Master was dead and lying in the grave ; they rather shut themselves out from it, for they feared the world—not certainly with quite a noble fear. They were afraid of being seized and crucified likewise, and for that they had neither desire nor strength. Notwithstanding, this fear was beneficial to them, inasmuch as they were thereby preserved from the world, and awaited their Saviour in silence. If Jesus is to arise in thee, and thou desirest to feel His life in thee, thou must, in the first place, bar the world out of thine heart, and keep it open to thy Saviour, desiring nothing but Him ; in the second place, thou must love to assemble with those that wait for the consolation of Israel, that are not satisfied with the dead Christ of the letter, but wish to have Jesus the living. Among the dead thou wilt become and continue dead, among the living alive. If, like the disciples, far and free from the world, assembled in silent prayer, in waiting, and beseeching, and united with all the pious and believing, thou longest for Jesus, He will appear in spirit in the midst of thine heart, in the midst of thy friends, and bring thee peace which passeth understanding, the true Easter-prize which He hath won by His victory and battle ; by which thou shalt become sure that it is He, and no creation of the brain, no phantom.

APRIL THE FIFTH.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you.”—1 PET. i. 3. “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?”—1 COR. xv. 55.

THE Resurrection is the turning point of the Christian doctrine; on it hang our faith and all our hope, as Paul shows, 1 COR. 15. If Christ were not risen, there would be no Christianity, our faith would be vain, our hope empty, the doctrine false, the whole gospel of no value; there would be no forgiveness of sins; we should not know whither we were drifting either in this life or in the future, which indeed we should be altogether unable either to rely on or hope for. The Resurrection, however, confirms all that we, as Christians, believe, hope, and love; but more especially it is to us the second birth of a lively hope of eternal life, inasmuch as it does away with all fear of death, and makes manifest to us the future life in our risen Saviour. He is our Head, if we cling to Him, as members of His body, in living faith and fervent love; and when we see our Head victorious over death, hell, and Satan, swallowing up and crushing them—these dire foes of mankind—then may we not only not be dispirited, we must triumph with our Head, and rejoice in the victory, for He hath vanquished our foes, not for Himself, but for us. The victory is

ours, and therefore also the triumph. If a hero beats and annihilates the enemy of his country, when he conquers and triumphs, the victory and the triumph belong to the whole nation, and the meanest inhabitant of the land shares in the rejoicing; for he enjoys the fruits of it as well as the conqueror himself. Therefore let all Christians triumph with Christ in his resurrection.

APRIL THE SIXTH.

“He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”—2 COR. v. 15. “Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”—ACTS. iii. 26. “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.”—1 COR. v. 7.

AS the ground of our hope of eternal life lies in the Resurrection of Jesus, so also do the ground and cause of our awakening and conversion to a new life rest upon it. For how can we hope to live with Him, if we do not rise from the dead with Him? How can we hope to triumph with Him over sin, death, and the grave, the devil, and hell, if we voluntarily continue slaves to sin, to the devil, and to death? How can we celebrate the eternal Easter festival with our glorified paschal Lamb, unless we purge out the old leaven. Our old leaven—flesh and blood, sin and corruption cannot inherit the kingdom of God. He that hath vanquished the foes without us, can and

will also vanquish those within us ; He that died and rose again for us, can and will give us sufficient strength to die to sin, and to live to Him ; to rise with Him, to purge out all the leaven of wickedness and guile, and to become a new sweet leaven* full of purity and truth.

APRIL THE SEVENTH.

“And very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away.”—MARK ii. 4.

THE female disciples of the Lord rose early to seek the Lord without fear or delay. Neither the watch nor the great stone, which they could not lift, nor the seal which the Pharisees had put upon it, nor any other obstacle could alarm their fervent love. O when love seeks, it always finds ; for it believes all, hopes all, endures all, in order to reach its aim. It thinks, I must find Him, for I must have Him, even though a thousands stones, though mountains lie in the way. But when the Lord sees love in such earnest, He also lifts away the stones, which we cannot lift, and casts the mountains, which we cannot climb, into the sea. Even though thou find great stones in thy way, and many kinds of obstacles in thy path, like the

* *Süssteig* literally *sweet dough* ; *Sauerteig*, translated *leaven*, means *sour dough*. The play upon the words is untranslateable.—TRANS.

women at the sepulchre ; though thou find not Jesus immediately in thee, yet wait longingly, rise up early, do not stop short, and thou shalt surely find. Thou mayest every day procure thyself an Easter-morn, an Easter-festival, if thou risest every morning as early, seekest as longingly, waitest as patiently, and yearnest as ardently and fervently for a risen Saviour, as did Mary. He that seeketh, findeth.

APRIL THE EIGHTH.

“God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.”—1 COR. vi. 14. “And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin ; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”—ROM. viii. 10, 11.

THOU believest in Christ, that he rose from the dead ; thou believest that thou shalt also rise. But hast thou the Spirit that raised up Jesus ? Hast thou the witness of the Spirit of Christ, that thou art awakened and raised from the grave of sin ? Is Christ, the risen one, in thee ? Has he awakened, revived, and animated thee ? Is thy spirit alive through His righteousness ? Thus may thy body ever die ; yet thou shalt one day arise as Christ arose. But without the Spirit, and without the witness of the Spirit of God, who raised up Jesus, belief in Christ and His resurrection is a desperate thing ; to console oneself with the future resurrection, and still to be

dead here, and without the Spirit that alone can and must raise us up, and make us even now partakers in the first resurrection and the life in Christ, if we desire to have part in the second resurrection, is a cheating of ourselves, and a deception, of which the sooner we cure ourselves the better. If, however, Christ be in us—and this we know by the Spirit, whom He has given us, by the unction, and the inimitable, incomprehensible peace, by the love of God, which He pours out into the heart—if Christ and His Spirit be in us, and we be really already raised up here, be really awakened ones; living Christians, living and walking in Christ; then there is no doubt that He will no more leave us in the grave, than that He could remain in it. For where the Head is, there must also the living members be.

APRIL THE NINTH.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will.”—*HEB.* xiii. 20, 21. “Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”—*ROM.* vi. 4.

WHY has He allowed the Shepherd to be slain? Why has He again raised Him up? Altogether for the sake of the sheep. The Father loveth the scattered sheep, and could not allow them to go astray: therefore He raised up the Shepherd, and restored Him again to the

sheep. Shall then the sheep still be lost? Shall He not, even for the sake of the Shepherd who is risen, try to raise up the sheep also, and to breathe new life into them, that shepherd and flock may be one with each other, and enter into the everlasting fold? We must rely on the same power, walk in the same power, and lead a new life through the same power, by which Christ was raised up. The same power is ours if we will but use it, and not build upon our own powers, nor with pleasure and on purpose continue powerless, in order that we may continue lying in the death of sin. Beloved flock! look to your great Shepherd; He was sorely bruised, but He lives again, lives for ever, and dies no more. He hath undone the bands and grave-clothes, with which he was bound and swathed in death, wrapt them together, and buried them in the tomb, John xx. 6, 7: He Himself went forth free, and now nought binds Him more to this earth, save His love for us. Thus, dear soul, shalt thou also rise, and burst the bands and bonds that fetter thee to the earth, the world, and sin; thus shalt thou leave them lying in the grave of this world, and follow thy Shepherd in His flight upward to the heavenly kingdom, for which He hath raised thee up.

APRIL THE TENTH.

"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death,* I will be thy plagues; O grave I will be thy destruction."—HOSEA xiii. 14. "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."—GEN. iii. 15. "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."—JOHN xi. 25.

WHOSOEVER fears death and hell, let him hasten to Him that stands so close by and calls to him: Come, I will ransom thee from the grave, and redeem thee from death. Whosoever does not believe in Him that fearlessly said to death: I will be thy plagues! and to the grave: I will be thy destruction; whosoever does not believe in Him that says: He that believeth in me, dieth not; I am the Life, I give eternal life to him that believeth in me; whosoever does not and will not believe in Him, that by his death took the power from him that had the power of death—the devil, and redeemed those that, all their lives, are slaves from fear of death, Heb. ii. 14, 15; whosoever prefers continuing a slave to the fear of death and hell, (and why? simply for the sake of the paltry pleasure of being a slave to his appetites, and enjoying the little that remains of this transient life),—whosoever, I say, does not believe in Him, must love his own destruction, his eternal perdition, more than his life and salvation; he must be fearfully blinded by the god of this world, 2 Cor. iv. 4, so that he neither sees nor desires to see the shining light,

* *Hell*: German translation.—TRANS.

which streams from the resurrection of Christ, which invites us to the happiest triumph over death and hell, sin and the devil. Though hell already recognize us as its property ; though death already rule us its slaves ; they must nevertheless let us go free and unassaulted, if we but desire it: we can find a plague and a destruction for them, whereby they must utterly perish. Why dost thou fear death ? Because thou lovest the sting of death, which is sin ? Take rather the medicine, that is the plague of death and the destruction of hell, that slays death in thee ; accept Christ, and then thou shalt live and be blessed.

APRIL THE ELEVENTH.

“ But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee : there shall ye see him.”—**MARK** xvi. 7. “ The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.”—**LUKE** xxiv. 34.

THE most remarkable thing in the history of His resurrection, as the Evangelists themselves particularly remark, is the fact that the Lord appeared first to the greatest sinners, to Mary Magdalene and to Peter. Beloved brother ! this stands not in the history of Jesus in vain. Did He appear—appear specially and first—to Simon ? one might ask in amazement ; surely no one vexed Him more, no one denied him more shamefully, no one acted so perfidiously and faithlessly to Him, notwithstanding all the warnings and exhortations that were given him by the Lord

beforehand. Yes, this is indeed true. He did not deserve it ; his fall was great, but behold ! Peter wept bitterly. No one felt his weakness, his corruption, his faithlessness, so deeply as he. No one was so anxious ; no one waited with such pain, with such longing, as he. How he first hastened to the grave with John, when he heard the disquieting intelligence that the body of the Saviour was missing from the tomb ! how he ran first into the grave ! Behold, all that was seen and known too by the Saviour—who looks not only at thy fall, at thy denial and faithlessness, but also at thy tears, at thy pain, at thy fervent longing to be pardoned, consoled, and again accepted by Him. O, ye hearts that are deeply bowed down, that are rent on account of your sins, be of good cheer ! When the Saviour visits and comforts His disciples, He will visit and comfort you first, for He knows you stand more in need of it than others.

APRIL THE TWELFTH.

“But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping. She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.”—JOHN xx. 11—14.

WHOSOEVER could seek, like Mary, would also find like her. Ye men and women, seekers of the One worthy to be sought, ye that do not find, come and take a lesson from this blessed

finder. The art is easy ; every one can learn it ; and it brings the greatest gain. One has Him, when he weeps for Him. This was true here, and is true at all times. Tears from the heart, wept for Him, never miss their aim ; for they are themselves an unmistakeable proof that He stands before the heart and knocks, otherwise our hearts would not be troubled and moved about Him. No one but He Himself can stir up in our hearts the hungering and the yearning after Him. But He that knocks at our hearts, must be near our hearts. Only one does not know Him on all occasions, as in the case of Mary, till he calls Him by name. Whosoever bewails the loss of the Lord with such heaviness of heart, weeps for Him with such sincerity, seeks Him with such earnestness, looks about for Him with such longing as did this ardent soul, will and must find Him soon also. Yes, dear soul, ere thou hast done weeping, all at once, ere thou turnest thyself back, He stands there and salutes thee, as only He can salute ; and such a salutation is well worth all the trouble of searching.

APRIL THE THIRTEENTH.

"I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."—JOHN xvi. 22. "When the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."—JOHN xx. 19, 20. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."—Verse 29.

THEY rejoiced at seeing Him again, as did the wise men from the East, when they again saw the star which they had lost with Herod. Thus the disciples rejoiced to see Jesus again alive, and their joy hath no one hitherto taken from them; and who shall now take it from them? O, how sorely is he that knows this joy disgusted with all other joy that does not proceed from this, or does not lead thereto! Hast thou partaken of this joy, to feel Jesus risen to life in thee, and dwelling in thee? Hast thou likewise ever experienced the pain, the sadness of not having Jesus, or of having lost Him? Hast thou ever gathered thyself together as did the disciples, gathered thyself into thine own heart, to tarry for the Lord, to wait for Him, to partake of Him. O then He is certainly come into thine heart already, or He will come and visit thee soon, if thou perseverest, and knowest no other joy than to have Him. Thou canst not indeed have the joy of seeing Him here, as the disciples did; but on that account nothing must fail thee of the true and greater joy of having Him, and enjoying His

presence; but the fact that thou seest not and yet believest, that through faith thou hast Him dwelling in thy heart, must heighten thy joy still more, and make thee happier, instead of proving detrimental to thee.

APRIL THE FOURTEENTH.

“Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary! She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni.”
 JOHN xx. 15, 16.

HE has indeed taken Him away: He has borne Himself away out of the grave, and where has He laid Himself? Mary! into thine heart; for whosoever seeks Him like thee has Him already. Thou wouldst bring Him from afar, and He stands before thee, whom thou knowest not, and yet lovest so unspeakably. O beautiful question, Where hast thou laid Him? Mine heart, put this question right often to Him, when He has withdrawn Himself from thee. Ay, and put it also to thyself, when thou thyself hast put Him away, forsaken and lost Him; for very often it is the heart that takes Him away from itself, and then the search for Him is very long. Nevertheless, if we do not give in, He gives in; He cannot let us seek Him so long in sorrow; He comes and calls us by name. And one word from Him, His voice even, makes us as happy as did that *Mary!* How little, and yet how much for

her soul, was this word ! Whoever understands the speech of love, does not require many words nor long proofs to believe in the love, and to love the love. If, when He meets us, He once call me by name, as He called Mary here, I am blest through all eternity. And with this determination to be one day called by Him, we will now take pleasure in seeking Him, loving Him, and continuing His, till He come and call all His sheep by name. John x. 3.

APRIL THE FIFTEENTH.

"After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once. Last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."—1 COR. xv. 6, 8.

WE see from this that the Saviour appeared, not only to the chosen Apostles, and previously determined witnesses of His resurrection, but to all that then loved His appearing, that wished to be persuaded of His life. His mercy, and His favour ; that tarried for Him, and placed all their hope in Him. This must inspire thee with courage and confidence, that He will certainly not let thee be disappointed if thou seek Him in earnest. His eyes go through all lands, and look into all hearts, to-day, even as then. Did he once see, once find the five hundred brother-hearts that yearned for Him, and He could not leave them to languish for Him without comfort ? So likewise, even yet, He sees and finds thee and thy heart, if it long after