

BOOK II.

For the Use of the Afflicted.

The Afflicted Person Takes Comfort in the Omnipotence of God.

EXHORTATION.

Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.

Is. 41, 10.

If there is anything that can lift up an afflicted soul, it is certainly the omnipotence of our gracious God; for this is the afflicted person's anchor, to which he clings by reflecting (1) that with God nothing is impossible. No misery is so great but that God can deliver from it; no burden is so heavy but that He can remove it; no misfortune is so severe but that He can change it. (2) The afflicted person should consider that others have borne much heavier burdens, and that God has delivered them nevertheless. He should therefore say with joy: O God, Thou art as strong to-day as Thou hast ever been; my trust is entirely in Thee.

(3) Afflicted persons should remind themselves that God's omnipotence knows no bounds, and should therefore not become disheartened, even though they do not see how and by what means and in what manner they can be helped; for all this they should leave to the wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness of God. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord." Is. 55, 8. This reflection should strengthen the confidence and hope of the afflicted because he knows that God is able and willing to help him. He should therefore be still, hope, pray, trust in God, patiently bear his affliction, and cheerfully lift his eyes to heaven, saying: "My help cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth." Ps. 121, 2.

PRAYER.

O good and kind God, Thou knowest and seest how my heart is afflicted; there lies upon it a heavy stone which I cannot roll away, a hard load which I can scarcely bear. Therefore I come to Thee, O almighty God; I pour out my soul before Thee, who art my Confidence; I cast my burden from myself upon Thee, and pray Thee to provide for me, to deliver me, and to assist me. The little bark tossed by the waves clings to the anchor, and I cling to Thee, Thou living and mighty God. The hunted game hastens to the mountains, and I lift up my eyes to Thee, my Rock, my Deliverer, and mighty Defender. I will not lose heart; I know that Thou art an almighty God; Thou canst help; nothing is impossible with Thee. Therefore, O Lord, help me, and I shall be helped; speak but one word, and my affliction shall pass away, and I shall obtain help.

O my God, I know that Thou art merciful; therefore have mercy on me in my misery. Thou knowest my pain, Thou art acquainted with my heart; since Thou hast laid this burden upon me, help me also to bear it. I know that Thou art a wise God; Thou wilt find ways and means still unknown to me. Oh, point out to me some little well of comfort as to weeping Hagar of old; assure me of Thy help as Thou didst the afflicted widow of old; help me as of old Thou didst forsaken Elisha, and manifest Thy great goodness towards me as Thou didst to Peter in prison. Let the bonds of my misery and distress drop from my heart. Let the light of Thy joy arise in me, bringing me Thy assurance: "I will not leave thee nor forsake thee; for a small moment

have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee.”

I know that Thou art a faithful God who hast not forsaken any one that called upon Thee, and hence Thou wilt not forsake me. O Lord, my God, behold a wretched and helpless soul lying here before Thy throne of grace; send me help from the sanctuary and strengthen me out of Zion. Lord, I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me. My God and Father, if Thou dost not help me, who shall? I was cast upon Thee from the womb; then Thou didst take me into the arms of Thy unwearied mercy and hast carried me hitherto. Oh, then, let me there find help now. I shall cry after Thee until Thou sayest: Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.

I rest me here Without a fear; By Thee shall all be given
That I can need, O Friend indeed, For this life or for heaven.
O make me true, My heart renew, My soul and flesh deliver! Lord,
hear my prayer, And in Thy care Keep me in peace forever. Amen.

HYMN.

Commit whatever grieves thee	Thy grace that ever floweth,
At heart and all thy ways,	O Father, what is good,
To Him who never leaves thee,	Or evil, ever knoweth,
On whom creation stays.	To mortal flesh and blood.
Who freest courses maketh	What to Thine eye all-seeing,
For clouds, and air, and wind,	And to Thy counsel wise
And who care ever taketh	Seems good must into being,
A path for thee to find.	O mighty Prince, arise!
The Lord thou must repose on	For means it fails Thee never,
If thou wouldst prosper sure,	Thou always findest a way,
His work must ever gaze on	Thy deeds are blessing ever,
If thine is to endure.	Thy path like brightest day.
By anxious care and grieving.	Thy work can no one hinder,
By self-consuming pain,	Thy labor cannot rest,
God is not moved to giving;	If Thou design'st Thy tender
By prayer must thou obtain.	Children should all be blessed.

Though all the power of evil	Hope on, thou heart, grief-riven,
Should rise up to resist,	Hope, and courageous be,
Without a doubt or cavil	Where anguish thee had driven
God never will desist;	Thou shalt deliverance see
His undertakings ever	God from Thy pit of sadness
At length He carries through;	Shall raise thee graciously;
What He designs He never	Wait, and the sun of gladness
Can fail at all to do.	Thine eyes shall early see.

The Afflicted Person Takes Comfort in the Love of God.

EXHORTATION.

For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer. *Is. 54, 7, 8.*

To an afflicted soul in its sadness, trials, and sufferings, nothing more cheering can happen or be said than this, that for Christ's sake it is loved by God nevertheless.

Under a grievous cross the first thought suggested to us by Satan and our flesh is this: God is your enemy; He has ceased loving you; for if He loved you, He would never afflict you thus and hide His gracious face from you. To such a thought, however, the afflicted person should not lend his ear, but should set up against it the everlasting love of God, who does not forsake His children, and should remind himself of these facts: (1) that to live in tribulations and sorrow, and to be a child of God nevertheless, is quite compatible; for Christ, the beloved Son of God, suffered tribulation enough, and yet remained the Son of God. (2) The afflicted person should ponder that God still loves those whom He suffers to be subjected to great sorrow, trials, and crosses. A father remains a father whether he caresses his child or chastises it with the rod.

Add to this, (3) that such a cross is not sent to the afflicted soul out of anger, nor for its ruin or harm, but that the soul may learn all the more God's goodness, omnipotence, faithfulness, and wisdom. (4) This love of God is very busy even while the cross

endures: it supports the afflicted, it preserves them, strengthens them, blesses them; at times they are refreshed and gladdened in a wonderful way; their burden is lightened, — all of which are proofs of God's love.

PRAYER.

The Lord is on my side, therefore I will not be afraid. Thou art my Shelter, my Rock, my Fortress, and my Deliverance—thus I sigh, my God, in my present affliction and anguish of soul. O Lord, Lord, Thou knowest full well how stricken my heart is, how full of suffering and pain I am. But I also know that this distress will not crush me if Thou art with me. Do not hide Thy face from me any longer; I am full of anxiety; give me relief. Thou hast shown me much love and goodness from the days of my youth; oh, embrace me with Thy love also in the present distress of my soul. A sheep, when pursued, flees to its shepherd; a child, when terrified, to his father. Therefore, I, too, come to Thee, my Shepherd and my Father.

O great God, Thou hast promised me Thy aid, saying: I am with thee in thy distress; I will rescue thee. Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not discouraged, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness; I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Now, then, O great God, I am in need of help; be at my side now; do not go away from me now; do not forsake me now.

I know that I am not forsaken; Thy love is so tender that Thou must have mercy upon me. Thou hast loved me with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness Thou hast drawn me. Embrace me now with the arms of Thy love; hold me, lest I sink;

refresh me in my suffering; make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice. Give me beauty for sackcloth and ashes, and turn my sorrow into joy. Manifest also in me Thy love and goodness which others have in so many ways extolled, that with them I may praise Thy great name. O Thou God of love, seal in my heart the assurance that, as little as a father can forget his child, Thou hast forgotten me. Faithful Father, behold, Thy child is in sorrow, gladden it; it is full of anxiety, have mercy on it and help it for Jesus' sake.

My sins assail me sore, But I despair no more; I build on Christ who loves me, From this Rock nothing moves me; To Him I all surrender, To Him, my soul's Defender. Amen.

HYMN.

God is love; His mercy brightens
All the path in which we rove;
Bliss He wakes, and woe He lightens:
God is wisdom, God is love.

Chance and change are busy ever,
Man decays, and ages move:
But His mercy waneth never:
God is wisdom, God is love.

E'en the hour that darkest seemeth
Will His changeless goodness prove;
From the gloom His brightness streameth:
God is wisdom, God is love.

He with earthly cares entwineth
Hope and comfort from above;
Everywhere His glory shineth:
God is wisdom, God is love.

The Afflicted Person Takes Comfort in God's Help.

EXHORTATION.

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. *Ps. 121, 1. 2.*

To be without help in suffering and distress is more grievous than the suffering itself. On the other hand, hoping for help and final deliverance lightens even the severest suffering.

Afflicted souls should sustain themselves (1) with the reflection that God can help, for with God nothing is impossible; nothing is too difficult, nothing too great for Him; He can help in every need and out of every need. (2) Afflicted persons should remember that God is willing to help them because of His glorious promises that He will be with them in their distress, that He will pluck them out of the net, that He will not leave them nor forsake them. (3) Afflicted persons should ponder the examples of others whom God has already helped. Indeed, others may have been more wretched, sadder, more forsaken, and more miserable than they; and yet the Lord has helped these miserable people. Why, then, should we cast away our hope?

(4) For the help of God afflicted persons should watch amid prayer and supplication, hoping and trusting, and should finally believe that His help will not fail them; for what the Lord promises He surely performs. Let His Word be surer to you than anything; and though your heart should say nay to your every hope, still be not dismayed. (5) Afflicted persons, indeed, do not see how they can be helped, but they should bear in mind that God can do abundantly above all that we ask or think, and that He Himself will be their Helper, their Father, their Comforter, their Deliverer, their Succor. Having God, then, they have everything. (6) Yea, they should allow time to assuage their sorrow; for this, too, is a blessing of God, that He alleviates our suffering by making us forget it in the course of time.

PRAYER.

When I am afflicted, I think of God. Whither else shall I turn, of whom else shall I think in the sorrow and grief of my heart, than of Thee alone, my God? Thou hast never yet suffered me to go

away sorrowful from Thy most holy presence. Therefore, hear also now my prayer for Christ's sake; give ear to my crying, my King and my God, and when I call, be not silent, but hear me speedily.

By Thy hand the affliction which I suffer was sent me; Thou canst deliver me from it according to Thy mercy. Lord, Lord, Thou killest and makest alive; Thou bringest down to hell and up again. Thou, Lord, makest poor and makest rich; Thou humblest and liftest up. Thou raisest up the poor out of the dust, and liftest up the beggar from his hovel. Therefore I say in faith, Lord, help me. Thou canst help; for Thou art an almighty God; Thou art willing to help; for Thou hast promised to do so. Father, wilt Thou forsake Thy child? My Father, canst Thou endure the cries of Thy child and not come to his aid? Thou hast said: "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." "My bowels are troubled for thee; I will surely have mercy upon thee." Oh, hear me also at this time; hear the cry of my heart and the wail of my lips.

Yet I know, my Father, that Thou hearest me at all times; therefore I will not prescribe to Thee the day and the hour when Thou art to help. I will cheerfully abide Thy hour for helping me; meanwhile strengthen my faith, my hope, my confidence; give me patience and strength to bear my affliction, and at last let me behold the day when Thou wilt gladden me with Thy mercy. O my Father, Thou hast never yet forsaken any one; do not forsake me either. Thou hast at all times gladdened the afflicted; gladden me also. Thou hast helped the distressed; help me also. When, where, and how

Thou art going to do this, I herewith leave entirely to Thy wisdom, love, goodness, and mercy. Be content, then, my soul; why art thou cast down and disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him who is the Help of my countenance and my God.

Help, Helper, help in fear and need, Have mercy, to my prayer give heed! I know Thou lov'st me still as Thine, Though 'gainst me world and hell combine. My God and Lord, I trust in Thee; What need I, if Thou art with me? And Thou, Lord Jesus Christ, art mine; My God and Savior, I am Thine. Therefore my happiness is great, I am content, for Thee I wait, Trust wholly in Thy name, and then I pray: Help, Helper, help! Amen.

HYMN.

Lord Jesus, life is hard, as Thou dost know,
And hours of peace and rest are very rare;
But it is sweet, after the toil and woe,
To nestle close to Thee with thoughts of prayer.
If Thou wilt lay Thy hand upon my head,
I shall arise refreshed and comforted.

Dear Master, I am sitting at Thy feet;
I would not miss a look or lose a word;
The hour is very holy when we meet;
I fain would see and hear none but the Lord;
I long to lay aside joy, grief, and fear,
And only know and feel that Thou art near.

The world's discordant noises evermore
Clang round about my ears and weary me
There were rough hands, ungentle hearts before
That troubled me, but now I come to Thee,
O Jesus, quiet me with tender speech,
While up to Thee my wistful arms I reach.

In life's bewildering strife and eager rush
I lose so much of Thy sweet gentleness;
But in the peace and solace of this hush
Strengthen and soothe me with Thy blessedness;
Give to me what Thou wilt; here at Thy side,
Whate'er it be, I shall be satisfied.

The Afflicted Person Takes Comfort in the Mercy of God.

EXHORTATION.

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide; neither will He keep His anger forever. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. *Ps. 103. 8. 9. 13.*

In misery and distress how sad it is to have to deal with hard-hearted and unkind people! However, an afflicted child of God should rest assured (1) that his faithful God knows all his suffering, distress, and trials, how great and grievous they are, how long they will last, and how keenly they are felt by the soul. Not only does God know these things, but (2) He also takes pity on the afflicted. We see this in the instance of the grief-stricken widow at Nain and of all the sick and distressed whom Jesus went to meet of His own accord, and whom He relieved. Thus He spoke concerning the multitude: "I have compassion on the people." And concerning Zion we read: "My bowels are troubled for thee; I will surely have mercy upon thee." Reflecting upon the fact that God is so merciful and exercises compassion, an afflicted person (3) should not lose heart, but seek refuge with the merciful God; for they that mourn shall be comforted.

(4) God manifests His mercy towards the afflicted, partly by giving them cheerfulness and resolute courage, partly by sustaining them in their suffering and giving them strength to endure and bear it, partly by removing it from them altogether. If a father takes pity on his child, neither will God without mercy suffer the afflicted to perish in their distress.

PRAYER.

O Thou all-loving God, whose mercy has no end, and whose kindness is renewed every morning, behold, I, an afflicted and sorrowful soul, come before Thy most holy countenance and pour out before Thee the great grief of my afflicted heart. My distressful condition and the great misery which has befallen me are indeed well known to Thee. My soul is sorrowful; my spirit is in anguish, and afflic-

tions innumerable have compassed me round about. I look about me for helpers, but find none. Some men refuse to give me succor, others do not know my distress, and I do not like to reveal it to them. But to Thee, O God, I make complaint with a heart full of grief. I know that Thou art merciful and moved to pity by our distress. Thou didst take pity on the stricken widow weeping for her son; Thou wast moved to compassion when Thou sawest that the people who had gathered about Thee had nothing to eat, and Thy compassion went hand in hand with Thy mercy and succor.

Therefore I come to Thee and plead, Have mercy upon me! O God, I am Thy creature; therefore Thou wilt not forsake the work of Thy hands. Yea, I am more: I am also Thy child whom Thou hast taken into the arms of Thy mercy in Holy Baptism; therefore I say: O my Father, have compassion on Thy poor and forsaken child. My Jesus, I have been bought with Thy holy blood; I am Thy portion and inheritance, purchased with Thy precious blood; therefore Thou wilt have compassion on what is Thine own. O Thou precious Holy Spirit, bear witness with my spirit that in spite of all my suffering I am still a child of God. And when I grow faint in praying and can hardly pray any more, do Thou cry within me: Abba, Father!

Behold, I am sinking; oh, reach out Thy hand for me! Lord, help me; Lord, be at my side! Lord, Lord, let Thy mercy be enlarged upon me and give me cheerfulness of heart! Yea, write upon my heart and constantly cry to my soul these words: Thou art not forsaken; I will have compassion upon thee;

I am with thee in thy distress; I will deliver thee and honor thee. O Lord, according to Thy great mercy strengthen my faith, sustain me in my distress, give me each day new strength and fresh ability, in order that my faith may not cease, my hope may not sink, nor my confidence in Thee grow weak.

Thou sayest: Is not Ephraim my dear son and my pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him. Remember me also: Thou hast promised mercy also to me; I, too, am Thy child; have compassion also on me. Thou hast never yet forsaken me; do not forsake me now; help Thy child who seeks refuge only in Thy mercy.

Did ever mourner plead with Thee, And Thou refuse that mourner's plea? Does not the word still fixed remain That none shall seek Thy face in vain? That were a grief I could not bear, Didst Thou not hear and answer prayer; But a prayer-hearing, answering God Supports me under every load. Amen.

HYMN.

O keep me always trusting,
 And keep me ever glad;
 Let not my heart be sorry,
 Let not my face be sad,
 In Jesus let me glory,
 Who gave Himself for me;
 Who fills my heart with singing,
 My lips with melody.

I do not know what sorrows
 May wait for me to-day,
 But this I know, His presence
 Will take their sting away;

I do not fear to meet them,
 Or great they be or small,
 For without His permission
 No evil can befall.

I neither know what pleasures
 To-day may me await,
 I know *some* joy shall surely
 Come early or come late.
 In trials and temptations
 Hear Jesus' prayer for me,
 And let my faith not waver,
 But gain intensity.

I know Thy loving-kindness
 Encompasseth me round,
 And though Thy love must chasten,
 Thy comfortings abound.
 So keep me always trusting,
 And keep me ever glad;
 Let not my heart be sorry,
 Let not my face be sad.

The Afflicted Person Ponders the Divine Promises.

EXHORTATION.

Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high because he hath known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation. *Ps. 91, 14—16.*

As greatly as trials, misfortune, and distress depress us, so gloriously do the divine promises of mercy lift us up again. Therefore an afflicted person should reflect (1) that all the divine promises concern him also. We are not to imagine that the promises were given only to Moses, David, and those living at that time. No; they are intended also for us; for Paul says, Romans 15, 4: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scrip-

tures might have hope." Moreover, he should consider (2) that all divine promises are fulfilled at the time which God has appointed. Therefore an afflicted person should not prescribe to God the time and season when He is to help, but wait for His help in meekness and faith.

(3) An afflicted person should reflect that God's promises to help, redeem, save, and deliver us from all external ills are sometimes fulfilled in this life, sick persons recovering from their illness, mourners being made to rejoice, people in distress being delivered, and afflicted persons comforted; but that sometimes God does not fulfil these promises until in the life everlasting, when all the promises of God will reach their perfect fulfilment. Reflecting upon this fact, an afflicted person (4) should be still and hope in the goodness of God, who has already fulfilled His promises to so many thousands of people.

PRAYER.

Lord, my God, when Thou saidst, "Seek ye My face," my heart said unto Thee, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." In my grief I know not where to find consolation and counsel except with Thee. With Thee my heart has at all times found comfort, help, and counsel.

Especially do I seek consolation in Thy glorious promises; in them I find the true and living fountain to refresh me in the anguish of my soul. I come into Thy sanctuary; in Thy holy Word I seek strengthening manna for my famished soul and living water for my faint heart. Thou hast said: "I will be with thee in trouble; I will deliver thee." O Lord, the troubles of my soul are enlarged; bring Thou me out of my distresses. Thou hast said: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." Thou hast said: "The moun-

tains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from thee." O Lord, do have mercy on me; do not depart from me. Cast me not away from Thy presence; uphold me with Thy free Spirit.

O my Lord and God, I know that Thou wilt faithfully keep Thy promise and truth to me in heaven. If Thy Word is not to be my comfort, I shall have to perish in my distress. But though my heart is filled with griefs, Thy consolations refresh my soul. Thy holy Word places Thee before me as a mighty God, a loving Father, a strong Helper, a gracious Succorer, a sure Deliverer; in this I trust; in this I take comfort. My heart is content and undismayed and waits for the Lord.

Therefore, return to thy peace, my soul; the Lord will not cast away forever. He afflicts indeed, but He has compassion on thee according to His great goodness. Then why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning, until He show us His mercy. Gladden my afflicted soul, strengthen my weary soul, uphold my sinking soul, raise up my downcast soul, comfort my sorrowful soul. Take me into Thy arms and comfort me. Do not leave me, nor withdraw Thy hand from me, O God of my salvation. I yearn for Thee; my soul longs for Thee and sighs: When wilt Thou comfort me?

God of my life, to Thee I call; Afflicted at Thy feet I fall;
When the great water-floods prevail, Leave not my trembling heart
to fail. Amen.

HYMN.

Fret not, sad soul,
 When waters roll,
 And seem to overwhelm thy heart,
 God will the fearful waters part,
 And thou shalt cross,
 Nor suffer loss.

Hope, weary soul;
 Despair will roll
 Its heavy arm on thee if faint;
 In heaven's law there's no restraint
 But to the bad.
 In Christ be glad.

Trust, fainting soul,
 Though doubt may roll
 Its baneful fruits on all around;
 Stand thou the test, hold fast thy ground.
 On Jesus' breast
 Securely rest.

Speed on, tried soul,
 Press to the goal;
 And if, perchance, the way you lose,
 Thy Guide is near, His footprints choose.
 Let go thy sin.
 And heaven win.

**The Afflicted Person Ponders God's Design in
 Sending the Cross.**

EXHORTATION.

No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. *Heb. 12, 11.*

When a child is made to feel the chastising of his father, he weeps and thinks himself greatly afflicted. Is it a wonder, then, if afflicted persons do not know how to conduct themselves under the cross?

Now, an afflicted person should reflect (1) that by sending us a cross God does not mean to lead us into destruction, but to save us from it. When a surgeon cuts into a wound and applies caustics, his intention is to heal and purify. By means of tribulation God intends to draw us away from the world and unto Himself. (2) When God sees that we have fallen in love with earthly things and creatures, He takes them away from us, in order that we may love Him alone and find our joy in Him. Yea, when He sees that because of our constant happiness, ease, and continuous prosperity we are about to become sluggish in our prayers and negligent in our Christian profession, He sends us a little grief and sorrow, in order that we may long for Him again and seek to grow in love and knowledge of Him. All the while, however, He remains a gracious, almighty, wise, and kind God, who loves us cordially.

PRAYER.

My God, who hast now plunged me into such great sadness and grief that my heart is in anguish, my mouth filled with sighing, and my eyes with tears, oh, I know not whither to turn. Was I not happy? Was I not in goodly peace? Did I not have rest? Whence, then, comes this unrest?

My distress is great, but I will not on that account flee from Thee, my Shepherd. Thou hast struck me down with this grievous blow; raise me up again with Thy powerful Word, that I may ponder why this distress has been sent me. I know for a certainty that this cross has afflicted me not for my perdition nor for injury to my soul; O no, Thou Lover of life, my Father, it is not Thy purpose to destroy me and to wreak Thy anger upon me, but by placing me in such a mournful condition it is Thy purpose to test my love, whether I will love Thee in evil as well as in good days.

Thou wouldst test my faith, whether I believe

also that Thou art an almighty, wise, and merciful God, who is able to deliver me from this distress and to sustain me in it. Thou wouldst test my patience, whether I will gladly bear this cross to Thy glory. Thou wouldst test my confidence, whether I trust in Thee above all things and rely on Thee, on Thy grace, love, and mercy. Thou wouldst test my hope, whether I will hope when there seems to be nothing to hope for, and credit Thy Word and promise.

Yea, my gracious God and Father, Thou wouldst by means of the cross draw me away from the world, its lusts, sins, and habits, that I may turn to Thee alone and cling to Thee. Thou takest from me what gladdens me that I may find my joy in Thee alone. Thou takest from me what I delight in in order that I may esteem Thee my highest and dearest treasure. Well and good, my gracious God, I wish to become as Thou wouldst have me to be; I wish to bear what Thou layest upon me.

Give me Thy Holy Spirit that He may furnish me with strength and ability for this end. Without Thee it is impossible for me to maintain myself in tribulation, but by Thy Spirit and gracious succor I can conquer. I am also willing and glad to be patient and hold still while Thou art at work, no matter how long it may last. I will also renounce the world and worldly pleasures and cling to Thee alone that I may become one spirit with Thee. Thus this cross will purify me and greatly benefit my soul. Thou wilt send my help at the proper time.

Friend of the friendless and the faint, Where should I lodge my deep complaint? Where but with Thee, whose open door Invites the helpless and the poor? Amen.

HYMN.

Is life to thee a mystery,
Are some things hard to bear?
Does God reveal all clearly
As heavenward thou dost stare?
Or dost thou stop and wonder
Amid life's stormy days
Why God in all His wisdom
Doth lead in such dark ways?

"What I do now thou know'st not,"
Says Christ, the Friend of friends,
"But thou shalt know hereafter,"
Are loving words He sends.
The stroke that falls upon thee
In this cold, dreary land
Prepares the soul for heaven,
A house not made with hands.

Thou may'st not know just now,
Why trials should be sent
To cut off all affections
On which the soul was bent.
But God, who loves in mercy,
Has plans divinely wise,
That all at last to glory
May in His likeness rise.

Baptized in seas of sorrow,
Tears like the dew may fall,
Yet by them God doth quicken
The weak who on Him call.
For while night's dreary curtains
Are closely round us drawn,
We fall asleep in Jesus,
And wake refreshed at dawn.

In many ways of suff'ring,
By tears and pain and woe,
God separates from evil
His children here below,

He leads in valleys lonely,
 And hedges up the way,
 To keep them in the "strait path,"
 That leads to endless day.

The burdens which oppress us,
 And ofttimes sink us low,
 Are meant for wings to lift us
 Above this world below,
 That when our work is over
 And we before God stand,
 He shall unto us pilgrims
 Extend a Father's hand.

Thus suff'ring with our Master,
 Bearing with Him the cross,
 Fighting with Him the battle,
 We shall not suffer loss.
 But glorified and reigning,
 We shall with Jesus stand,
 And shout 'mid scenes of rapture:
 "I now do understand."

The Afflicted Person Prays for Patience and Strength.

EXHORTATION.

Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. *Heb. 10, 35. 36.*

Patience is a fruit of the Spirit; it comes from God, and to obtain it we must call upon Him. An afflicted person must pray the more fervently and earnestly, the more vehemently his tribulation assails him, as it is written concerning Christ: "And being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly."

Accordingly, the afflicted person should reflect, (1) that this is patience, to remain quiet in our trials and submit to God's will. He knows that his affliction comes from God, who can remove it again. He knows that God loves him dearly, despite the fact that He has laid the cross upon him, and that He has not therefore

ceased to be his Father. Therefore the afflicted person (2) does not murmur against God, though his trial is long and grievous, but he says: I will hold my peace and not open my mouth; Thou wilt do all things well.

(3) If he should nevertheless become discouraged on account of violent pains and manifold suffering, he must call upon God for strength. However, God strengthens afflicted persons sometimes by letting them know in their hearts that the trial will soon cease, at other times, by assuring them that He will not forsake them, or by affording them some help and alleviation. (4) By these means the afflicted person becomes strong again in the Lord and in the power of His might. Men should by all means beware lest they become impatient; for God has promised that He will help us bear our cross. Patience brings true quietness of the heart and mind.

PRAYER.

Lord, all my desire is before Thee, and my groaning is not hid from Thee. O my God, my groaning is not hid from Thee, and my misery and distress is well known to Thee. This is my consolation, that I know it comes from loving hands. I have not chosen it for myself, but Thou hast laid it upon me; help me, then, to bear it. And since patience, too, belongs to the good gifts which come down from above, from the Father of lights, O grant me this gift according to Thy mercy. When Thou dost strengthen me, when Thou dost help and succor me, I can do all things, and the cross will not be too heavy for me. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Do not assail me too violently, lest I be unable to withstand. Have patience with my weakness, strengthen my weary hands, support my tottering knees; say to my fainting heart: Thy God is King; thy Jesus is with thee; thy King comes unto thee; He is just and having salvation. Yea, when Thou dost help me, I am helped indeed.

Therefore help me, O my Salvation, for Thy name's sake. I seek refuge in Thee.

Impress upon my soul that it is Thy holy will that I shall suffer thus and bear my cross, in order that I may cheerfully resolve and say: Father, not my will, but Thine, be done. Place before me Thy love, namely, that also under the cross and amidst afflictions Thou still lovest me, that my suffering lasts only a little while and not forever, yea, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. Help me to bear in mind that Thou art my gracious God and loving Father, that this cross is not a sign of Thy anger, but of Thy grace. Convince me that it will be for my benefit, since by it I am drawn to Thee. Hold before my soul the example of my dear Savior Jesus Christ, who patiently endured all things and like a lamb did not open His mouth. Grant that with such quiet and resignation I may follow after Him by Thy grace. Grant me to endure and to suffer with Him, in order that I may also be crowned and lifted up to glory with Him. Let not my cross pluck Thy Word from my heart, nor weaken my faith, nor hinder my prayer; but give me new strength and new courage when I must weather a storm or just have passed through one. Yea, put me in mind that I shall soon be gladdened by Thy help, and that Thy powerful succor will surely refresh me.

Fair is the lot that's cast for me; I have an Advocate with Thee; They whom the world caresses most Have no such privilege to boast. Poor though I be, despised, forgot, Yet God, my God, forgets me not; And he is safe and must succeed For whom the Lord Himself does plead. Amen.

HYMN.

I cannot always see the way that leads
 To heights above;
 I sometimes quite forget He leads me on
 With hand of love;
 But yet I know the path must lead me to
 Immanuel's land,
 And when I reach life's summit, I shall know
 And understand.

I cannot always trace the onward course
 My ship must take;
 But, looking backward, I behold afar
 Its shining wake,
 Illumined with God's light of love, and so
 I onward go,
 In perfect trust that He who holds the helm
 The course must know.

I cannot always see the plan on which
 He builds my life;
 For oft the sound of hammers, blow on blow,
 The noise of strife,
 Confuse me till I quite forget He knows
 And oversees,
 And that in all details, with His good plan,
 My life agrees.

I cannot always know and understand
 The Master's rule;
 I cannot always do the tasks He gives
 In life's hard school;
 But I am learning with His help to solve
 Them one by one,
 And, when I cannot understand, to say,
 "Thy will be done."

The Afflicted Person Prays to have His Affliction Removed.

EXHORTATION.

Like a crane or a swallow so did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove; mine eyes fail with looking upward. O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me. Behold, for peace I had great bitterness; but Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.

Is. 38, 14, 17.

God has promised His children alleviation and comfort in their sufferings, either in this life or in that which is to come. Afflicted persons are, therefore, not forbidden to beseech God that He would grant them these things in this life, provided they submit themselves at the same time entirely to the will of God.

Therefore, (1) when they experience the severity, bitterness, and tediousness of their cross, they may pray indeed that He would remove it; for that is what Christ, our Savior, Himself did, who besought His heavenly Father that the bitter cup might be removed from Him. In this way afflicted persons manifest their trust and confidence in the almighty power of God. However, (2) this prayer for the removal of the cross must be combined with a resigned submission to God's will. It is better that we bear willingly the cross that God has sent us than that He remove it from us on account of our murmuring, and then, in His anger, send us a more grievous one.

This prayer for the removal of our affliction should (3) flow from the good intention that we may be able to serve God more cheerfully and with less hindrance, since affliction frequently distracts us, dashes our zeal, and makes us unfit for holy exercises. But if impatience were to prompt the desire to be rid of one's cross, or the wish that one might indulge again in the pleasures and joys of the world, it is easily seen that God will not hear such a prayer. If the heart is still carnal, vain, and earthly-minded, He lets the cross remain till, like a holy fire, it has consumed this dross and all impurities.

PRAYER.

O God, plenteous in mercy, who lookest upon the afflicted and distressed, and whose tender mercies are over all Thy works, behold, I, a poor and

afflicted soul, am standing here at the door of Thy grace and beseech Thee to help me. Thou knowest how Thou hast afflicted me; Thou knowest how Thou hast laid hold of me; but Thou knowest also that no one but Thou alone can remove my affliction from me. Thy fatherly hand which has wounded me must heal me; He that slew me must restore me to life; yea, He that brought me down to hell must bring me out again.

Therefore, O God, plenteous in mercy, I come to Thee and say: Lord, help me; have compassion upon me. Thy wrath endures for but a moment, and Thou takest pleasure in life; however, what is but a moment to Thee seems much too long for me. Merciful God, who hast given Thy children such a kind permission in Thy Word to pray to Thee, saying: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," let my asking, seeking, and knocking find favor with Thee. Remove my affliction from me; however, not my will, but Thine, be done. I will not prescribe to Thee the time and season, the manner and method of helping me, but will abide Thy help in patience.

O let me experience some refreshing; if Thou wilt not take my distress from me entirely, remove but a part of it. Thou intendest to hide Thyself from Thy believers only for a moment, and to gather them again with great mercies. O God, how long wilt Thou forget me utterly? How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me? Is Thy mercy clean gone forever, and doth Thy promise fail forevermore? O let me realize that Thou art still my Father, who will have compassion upon me. Let me become per-

suaded that my eager prayer has been acceptable to Thee. Long my heart hath panted, till it well-nigh fainted, thirsting after Thee. With Thee nothing is impossible. Lord of hosts is Thy name, great in wisdom and mighty in power. Thou art the consolation of Israel and the Helper in need; therefore do not forsake me; save me, and be gracious unto me.

Quicken me again after Thou hast afflicted me so long, after I have endured my suffering so long, and do not withdraw Thy hand from me, O God of my salvation. But if Thy hour for helping has not yet arrived, stablish me within and give me such strength that I can bear my cross to Thy glory. For if Thou, dear Father, bearest it with me, or lightenest the burden while I walk in Thy strength, I shall also consider that Thou hast removed it, rejoice in this, and thank Thee for it. However, if Thou wilt not remove my cross at all in the present life, but if it is Thy holy design that I should bear it until death, let Thy will be done also in this. Only do not suffer me to be tempted above that which I am able, and sweeten all my bitterness and affliction with the enjoyment of Thy love, with Thy mighty succor, and with a refreshing foretaste of heaven.

O Lord, no longer lengthen Our time of misery; Our hands and feet do strengthen; And until death may we By Thee be watched and cared for In faithfulness and love; So come we where prepared for Us is our blest abode. Amen.

HYMN.

O soul, why art thou not at peace,
 Why still so sad?
 If thou wouldst only hope in God,
 Thou couldst be glad!

Why dost thou always doubt the love
 The Savior bears
 To every sad, sin-laden soul?
 He knows thy cares.

O cast on Him thy many cares,
 And trust His love;
 He'll lift thy soul from this vain world
 To realms above.

Go onward, soul, be not cast down,
 Though dark the way;
 The night cannot forever last,
 Bright breaks the day.

On that bright day, beyond the night,
 The Savior's love
 Will lull the soul to rest at last
 In heaven above.

The Afflicted Person Reflects upon the Happy Issue of His Cross.

EXHORTATION.

The Lord will not cast off forever; but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. *Lam. 3, 31—33.*

Every affliction becomes light when there is hope that there will be a change for the better soon. A difficult journey becomes short when it is quickly accomplished. Similarly an afflicted person should bear in mind, (1) that his misery will certainly have an end, and that, perhaps even in this life; just as God turned David's flight, Hezekiah's illness, Job's distress, the widow's tears and the palsied man's pains to their advantage even in this life. Most assuredly, however, God will end the cross of the godly and turn it to their advantage at death; for then they shall obtain the crown, the white robe, and the joy of heaven; then He will wipe away all tears from their eyes.

(2) An afflicted person should bear in mind, when he is sad-

dened by his affliction, that his soul is being edified by suffering, for by this means he was led to know the omnipotence, wisdom, love, and mercy of God. By means of his sufferings and their happy issue his confidence has been established and his faith strengthened. And if the love of the world has been extinguished in him by the cross, so that he has now become more godly, more devout, more Christlike, more humble, and more meek, he has certainly derived a great benefit from his cross. Thus the issue of the cross remains a happy and blessed one, whether the cross is terminated here in time, or hereafter in eternity.

PRAYER.

O mighty God, how grievous and great is my affliction! Thou knowest that every day has its peculiar burden, and nearly every hour its special pain; yet my confidence shall not cease on that account, but in the midst of my tribulations I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills whence cometh my help, namely, to Thee, the almighty, good, and merciful God. I know that Thou wilt gladden me at last after my tribulation; after the storm Thou wilt surely make the sun shine for me. Thou hast promised to refresh those that labor and are heavy laden. I await, then, the fulfilment of this gracious promise.

Oh, if it makes for Thy glory and my salvation, grant me the desire of my heart and the petition of my lips; for in Thee, O Lord, Lord, have I trusted from my youth. I know that Thy right hand can change all things. Oh, if it be Thy holy will, change my condition: refresh me, gladden me, hear me! By this I shall know Thy great omnipotence, that Thou art able to deliver from the most grievous and greatest afflictions. By this I shall know Thy great goodness, by which Thou hast had pity upon me like a father. Without this affliction I should perhaps

not have learned as much of my Christian religion as I have now learned by my afflictions. Now I behold Thy holy design: Thou didst purpose to make me humble, meek, and godly, to draw me to Thyself in order that I might at all times find my joy in Thee, and rest my hope on Thee alone. Now that these things have been accomplished, Thou removest my affliction and makest my mind, which was quite restless before, once more quiet, resigned, and content.

O what a glorious fruit this bitter root has borne! O what a great benefit has come out of my affliction! David's persecutions furnished him the occasion for composing the most excellent hymns of praise and thanksgiving. My tears, too, shall become a seed from which good fruits shall grow. The thorns which prick me shall bear roses. After my battle shall come the victory, after the conflict the crown, after the suffering the deliverance, after the sad and mournful night the joyful morning. For this I thank Thee; for this I praise Thee. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. How glorious shall be my future deliverance on the last day, when freed from every evil I shall enter into the joyful life of heaven!

In hope of that immortal crown I now the cross sustain, And gladly wander up and down, And smile at toil and pain: I suffer on my threescore years Till my Deliverer come, And wipe away His servant's tears, And take His exile home. Amen.

HYMN.

I asked the Lord, that I might grow
 In faith and love, and every grace;
 Might more of His salvation know
 And seek more earnestly His face.

'Twas He who taught me thus to pray,
 And, He, I trust, has answered prayer;
 But it has been in such a way
 As almost drove me to despair.

I hoped that in some favored hour
 At once He'd answer my request:
 And by His love's constraining power
 Subdue my sins and give me rest.

Instead of this, He made me feel
 The hidden evils of my heart,
 And let the angry powers of hell
 Assault my soul in every part.

Yea, more; with His own hand He seemed
 Intent to aggravate my woe;
 Crossed all the fair designs I schemed;
 Blasted my gourds, and laid me low.

"Lord, why is this!" I trembling cried,
 "Wilt Thou pursue Thy worm to death?"
 "'Tis in this way," the Lord replied,
 "I answer prayer for grace and faith.

"These inward trials I employ
 From self and pride to set thee free,
 And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
 That thou may'st seek thy all in Me."

Afflicted Widows Pour Out Their Heart before God.

EXHORTATION.

Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto Me, I will surely hear their cry. *Ex. 22, 22. 23.*

"I am indeed a widow woman, and mine husband is dead," thus the wise woman of Tekoah describes a widow. 2 Sam. 14, 5. Widowhood is (1) a state of mourning, because a woman must be without her husband's help, counsel, comfort, presence, and kind-

ness. Even wealthy widows feel this loss keenly, while to a poor widow it is the more painful, because death has deprived her of the person who supported her and her children and under the blessing of God provided for them. Widowhood is (2) an afflicted state, because unchristian persons frequently do violence to widows, rob them of their possessions, oppress them, despise them, and do them wrong.

However, widowhood is (3) a state which God protects. God has commanded all men not to harm widows and orphans, and has threatened to avenge any wrong that may be done to them. God has promised to be the widows' Husband, Helper, and Judge, who will take care of them, manage their affairs, and advance their interests. Yea, He has promised them His special blessing and succor, as well as His particular help and mercy.

Reflecting upon these facts, godly widows should (1) not despair of God; for though their husbands have died, God is not dead. (2) They should accept their lot as a trial of their trust and hope in God. Nobody should cling to a creature or place his confidence in it. Now, if some widows imagine that no one could support them and their children except their husbands, they make idols of them. Hence God desires to make them free from this sin, and shows them that He is able to sustain and support them and their children also without their husbands. Therefore Christian widows should (3) persevere in prayer, not grow distrustful, zealously serve God, lead a godly, quiet, and Christian life, and God will abundantly provide for them, support and sustain them.

PRAYER.

O Thou merciful and gracious God, who art the Refuge of all the afflicted, desolate, and distressed, it has pleased Thee in Thy holy and inscrutable counsel to bring upon me the sad state of widowhood. My sun is gone down at noontide; and the crown of my house is gone. I am a woman in mourning; my husband is dead. Whither shall I turn now? Where shall I seek counsel and active aid? O my God, I come to Thee. When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee,

Thy face, Lord, will I seek. Thou hast promised in Thy holy Word to be the Judge of widows and the Father of orphans. I, the Lord, am Thine Husband; the God of Israel is My name. Oh, then, be now my Husband, my Judge, my Helper, my Deliverer, my Refuge, and the Father of my children. Behold the tears flowing down my cheeks, and let them rise heavenward to receive a gracious hearing. Behold my sighing, and have compassion on me. Make me to understand truly that I have not been forsaken by Thee, although I have to live without a husband, and that Thou, O eternal and immortal God, art not dead, but livest forever, although my husband is in his grave.

It seems that by this affliction Thou wouldst draw me away from all creatures, in order that I may trust in Thee alone and rest my hope only on Thee. My God and Father, I believe from my heart that Thou art able to protect me and my children without a husband, to support us without a husband, and to provide for us without a husband. Strengthen this my faith according to Thy grace and mercy. Show me a token for good; guide me as Thou didst Naomi; provide for me as Thou didst for Ruth; bless my cruse of oil as Thou didst that of the widow in Israel; let my barrel of meal not waste, nor my cruse of oil fail, as that of the widow of Zarephath; wipe away my tears and say to me, Weep not! as Thou didst to the widow of Nain. O Lord, give me what I need from day to day; bless my going out and my coming in; preserve me from misfortune, and provide for me and my family according to Thy promise.

I place all my trust in Thee, Thou living God;

I rely upon Thee with all my heart and all my soul. Thou art wise enough to sustain me; Thou art powerful enough to protect me; Thou art rich enough to support me and to provide for me; Thou art merciful enough to give me all that I need; Thou art present everywhere to succor me in every need, to help and deliver me. If a traveler trusts the guide-post to point him to the right way; if a patient commits his body and his life to the physician, why should I not trust Thee and rely upon Thee, O almighty and wise God? Help me, O God of my salvation, for Thy name's sake. Father and mother forsake me, but Thou, O Lord, dost take me up. Behold, for peace I had great bitterness, but Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption. My heart is filled with sorrows, but Thy consolations and gracious promises delight my soul.

Grant that I may in this lonely state conduct myself as a believer and a godly person, that I may find my joy in Thee, delight myself in Thee, and give no one offense. For I know of a truth that those who serve God are comforted after their trials, delivered from their afflictions, and find favor after their chastisement. Oh, then, my God, let me also find favor with Thee after my suffering, help after my affliction, joy after my weeping, consolation after my sadness. Make all my enemies my friends, and grant that I may find favor and grace with all people. Hear my prayer, give me Thy blessing, guide me by Thy hand, provide for me and my family according to Thy gracious promise. I was cast upon Thee from the womb; therefore Thou wilt

be my Shield and Shelter also at this time. Thou wilt keep me and do good unto me, until Thou wilt bring me to that glory where I shall praise Thee with joyful lips forevermore.

Courage, faint heart, the promise is for thee; From hour to hour The Father's loving hand upholds with power; And as thy days thy strength will also be When dangers lower. Why dwell with anxious thought upon the years He hides from you? Why lift the veil He throws across the view Lest coming cares should cause thee needless fears, Thy faith renew. His tender care along the journey's length, With love untold, Will with fresh mercies every hour unfold; For every need will give thee added strength — Thy life uphold. Then trust His love to lead thee safely on From day to day; What lies beyond in misty shadows gray, He will reveal to thee each coming dawn, And smooth the way. Amen.

HYMN.

Whatever God ordains is good,
 Holy His will abideth;
 I will be still whate'er He doth,
 And follow where He guideth.
 He is my God; Though dark my road,
 He knoweth how to shield me,
 Wherefore to Him I yield me.

Whatever God ordains is good.
 He never will deceive me;
 He leads me by the proper path,
 I know He will not leave me,
 And take content What He hath sent;
 His hand that sends my sadness
 Will turn my tears to gladness.

Whatever God ordains is good.
 His loving thought attends me;
 No poisoned draught the cup can be
 That my Physician sends me,
 But medicine due; For God is true.
 Of doubt, then, I'll divest me,
 And on His goodness rest me.

Whatever God ordains is good.
 My Life, my Light can never
 Intend me harm; then to His care
 I give myself forever
 In weal or woe; For well I know,
 Some day I shall see clearly
 That God did love me dearly.

Whatever God ordains is good.
 Though now this cup in drinking
 May bitter to my taste appear,
 I take it all unshrinking;
 For to my heart God will impart
 A timely balm of healing,
 And end each painful feeling.

Whatever God ordains is good.
 Here shall my stand be taken;
 Though sorrow, need, or death be mine,
 Yet am I not forsaken;
 My Father's care Is round me there,
 His arms embrace and shield me;
 Then to my God I yield me.

Forsaken Orphans Tell Their Troubles to God.

EXHORTATION.

When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up. *Ps. 27, 10.*

If there be a sad state, that of orphans certainly is one—that state when children, bereft of father and mother, must live among strangers, become servants, eke out a living, and spend their days among them. Sad though this state is, nevertheless it produces many good results in the souls of such orphans as fear God. For (1) children whom father and mother have forsaken should bear in mind that, although they have no parents on earth, they have a rich Father in heaven, who has become their Father in Holy Baptism. This heavenly Father does not die; He is rich, He has all that we need; He is mighty, He can give everything;

He is a wise God, who knows wonderful and glorious ways for accomplishing everything.

(2) Godly orphans should reflect that God often deprives children of their parents intentionally, in order to show them that He is able, even without father and mother, to sustain, support, and provide for poor and forsaken children, yea, to raise them to honor and bless them abundantly. To teach us this He has placed before our eyes many thousand instances of persons who declare, as did Jacob, with joyful lips: I had nothing but my staff when I passed over this Jordan. From home I took with me as my staff poverty and my bare life; hence all that I now possess God has given me.

(3) However, orphans should also persevere in their trust in God, be humble toward all, diligent at their work, devout at their prayers, eager in their attendance at church, attentive listeners, chaste in their life, godly in their conduct, faithful in the performance of their duties, upright in all their dealings. Above all, however, they should have God before their eyes and in their hearts, not consent to any sin, nor act contrary to God's commandment. If they keep within these bounds, God will surely not forsake them. He will guide them in strange, but glorious ways, so that they will have cause to praise the almighty power and goodness of God all the days of their life

PRAYER.

O Thou gracious, merciful God and Father, I, a poor, forsaken child, prostrate myself before Thy exalted throne and pray Thee humbly and from my heart: Take me into Thy fatherly care. It has pleased Thee in Thy wise counsel to deprive me of the provident care of my parents. Whither shall I go now? I have become an orphan; who will take care of me now that I no longer have a father? O loving and kind God and Father, I come to Thee: take me into Thy care; have compassion on me. I was cast upon Thee from the womb; Thou hast been my trust from my youth. Behold, my father and my mother forsake me, but do Thou, O Lord, Lord, take me up.

O my God, Thou givest food to the birds roving over the wide fields; Thou arrayest the flowers; Thou providest for the wild beasts of the forest. Thou wilt therefore also provide for me like a faithful father; Thou wilt take pity on me and be gracious unto me. My eyes are longing for Thee; I lift up mine eyes unto the hills whence cometh my help; my help cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth. I know that I am not forsaken by Thee, although I am forsaken by men. How many examples do I see before me of children whose parents Thou didst suffer to die, and whom Thou nevertheless didst guide, provide for, and support gloriously. O God, who didst draw Moses out of the water, look upon me now that the waves of affliction are about to engulf me. O Lord Jesus, who hast taken faithful care of children, and didst bless them, bless me also. Take me into the arms of Thy mercy, bear me up, and preserve me from misfortune. O precious Holy Spirit, who guidest believers like children, guide me also. Show me Thy way, O Lord; lead me in Thy truth; unite my heart to fear Thy name. O Triune God, be my Keeper who protects me, my Helper who succors me, my Companion when I go in or out.

Bless me with good friends wherever I may sojourn; raise up for me patrons and benefactors who take pity on my distress. Let my foster-parents and guardians be filled with love toward me. Do good to them in return according to Thy mercy, preserve them from misfortunes and recompense to them temporal, spiritual, and heavenly blessings for all the good they do to me.

Give me a humble and obedient heart that I may

not forfeit the favor and kindness of my patrons through obstinacy, dissolute living, wickedness, or sinful practises. Guard me against temptations that I may not deny Thee because of my poverty, or fall away from faith, but help me to grow evermore in knowledge and love of Thee. Let Thy good Spirit always guide, sanctify, rule, and keep me that I may not be led into wanton sins by evil companions. Let me not fall into carousing and unchastity, and preserve me from a perverse heart. O Thou gracious God and Father, frighten me away from the paths of the wicked; warn me when I am about to commit sin; admonish me when I would indulge an evil desire; hold me when I fall; bring me back to Thy fold when I am going astray; strengthen me when I am weak; restore me to health when I am ill.

O faithful God and Father, I commit myself entirely to Thee; let my going out and my coming in be commended to Thee. How will I thank Thee, how will I sing praises to Thee, for having done so much good to me! My tongue shall say: This is what God has done: God has blessed, sustained, accompanied, guided me, and provided for me. Yea, I will tell all my fellow-men how Thou hast shown Thyself a gracious Father to me. O Lord, Lord, hear the prayer of the forsaken orphan; hear the voice of Thy child. Thou didst become my Father in Holy Baptism; into Thy hands my parents placed me after my natural birth. Thou art a rich and immortal Father, a wise and loving Father; therefore be merciful to Thy child. I know Thou canst help me and art willing to help me; O Lord, help me for Thy goodness' sake, in order

that I may be able to say in days to come: The Lord hath done great things for me, whereof I am glad.

Jesus, Savior, pilot me Over life's tempestuous sea; Unknown waves before me roll, Hiding rock and treach'rous shoal; Chart and compass came from Thee: Jesus, Savior, pilot me. As a mother stills her child, Thou canst hush the ocean wild; Boisterous waves obey Thy will When Thou say'st to them, "Be still!" Wondrous Sovereign of the sea, Jesus, Savior, pilot me. When at last I near the shore, And the fearful breakers roar 'Twixt me and the peaceful rest, Then, while leaning on Thy breast May I hear Thee say to me, "Fear not, I will pilot thee!" Amen.

HYMN.

Take Thou my hands and lead me
O'er life's rough way,
With heavenly manna feed me
From day to day.
Alone, my footsteps falter,
Or straggle wide;
Lord, who my life canst alter,
Be Thou my Guide.

Take Thou my heart and hide it
In folds of grace,
Though weal or woe betide it,
To know Thy face.
Draw, Lord, of Thy good pleasure
Thy child to Thee.
And grant me faith full measure,
Though naught I see.

Full oft methinks Thou hidest
Thy wondrous night;
Still to my goal Thou guidest
Me through dark night.
Take, then, my hands and lead me
Till life is o'er,
With heavenly manna feed me
Forevermore.

The Afflicted Person Complains of the Weakness of His Faith.

EXHORTATION.

A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench. *Is. 42, 3.*—Lord, increase our faith. *Luke 17, 5.*

If there is anything that can frighten a believing soul, it is this affliction, that the believer imagines he is not praying aright, that he has no faith at all, or that his faith is not the genuine, living faith. Thence arises the doubt whether he is going to be saved.

Such anxious souls may derive comfort from the following reflections: (1) A prayer addressed to God in the name of Jesus and in reliance upon His merit and blood is a true prayer, and a weak faith is a genuine and saving faith as well as a strong faith. Is not a little child a human being just as well as a great, strong man? (2) When a person *would like to believe*, he is already a believer, because such a desire is a work of the Holy Spirit. A godless person does not desire to believe. (3) A weak faith apprehends Jesus, His holy merit and His wounds, just as well as a strong faith. If a gold coin is placed into the hand of a child and a robust man, the one has as much as the other. (4) Satan cannot extinguish the light of faith in the heart, because he cannot even extinguish a lamp at night. (5) Although the joy of faith is not always felt during prayer, faith is nevertheless present, just as an ember or spark hidden beneath the ashes is present, though it is not seen. (6) The certain test that a person has faith is his hatred and striving against unbelief and sin. Thence spring the fruits of faith, Gal. 5, 22: love, humility, meekness, chastity, hope, and the fear of God. For such anxious souls are afraid to speak or do anything wicked. But where these traits are found in a person, there faith exists and the Holy Spirit; for these are not the fruits of the flesh, Gal. 5, 19, but of faith and the Holy Spirit. For faith and the Holy Spirit cannot be separated.

(7) Prayer, reading the Holy Scriptures, patience, waiting upon God—these things strengthen faith. (8) Faith is a gift of God. Now, God is not going to ask of you more than He has given you. (9) Christ has died also for those weak in faith, and prays for them that their faith may not fail. And even if you cannot believe this, it is nevertheless true, because Scripture says so.

PRAYER.

O God, plenteous in mercy, I know from Thy holy Word that faith alone saves, and that without faith no one is acceptable unto Thee. However, desiring to please Thee and to be saved, I am alarmed at myself when at times I find so very little faith in my heart. Therefore kindle in my spirit the light of faith by which I may rightly know Thee, the one true God, as Thou hast revealed Thyself in Thy Word, that I may with my heart believe Thy revealed Word, and with firm confidence and unwavering trust may accept the promises of Thy grace and of the forgiveness of sins which Jesus acquired for me. For it seems to me at times that I am not praying aright, that I am not at all a believer, or that I shall not persevere in faith unto the end.

I bring these complaints before Thee, my God, because I know that every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from above. Now, since faith is not anybody's achievement, but Thy gift, I pray Thee: Oh, strengthen my weak faith! The bruised reed Thou wilt not break, nor quench the smoking flax. My God, engrave in my heart this comforting truth that a prayer which rests upon the merit, the blood, and death of Jesus is a true prayer, and that a weak faith, which firmly holds to Thee, O Triune God, namely to Thee, O heavenly Father, as our Creator, to Thee, O Jesus, as our only Redeemer and Savior, to Thee, O Holy Spirit, as our Sanctifier and Comforter, is also a faith that is acceptable to Thee and saves.

If it be Thy will, grant me also that I may perceive my faith by an inward joy during prayer, by

strong consolations, and by a joyful hope. O my Jesus, pray also for me, as Thou didst pray for Peter, that my faith fail not! Seal in me the comfort that I have been purchased with Thy holy blood and have become Thy child in Holy Baptism; that my feeble prayer is pleasing to God because of Thy intercession for me; that Thy blood was shed also for me that I might be made righteous and saved by it. And Thou, O gracious Holy Spirit, work in me the true fruits of faith; impel me, sanctify me, yea, dwell in me, and witness to my spirit that I am truly a child of God.

Blessed be Thy holy name, because Thou hast made me to abhor unbelief and sin, to mourn over it, and to fight against it by prayer, and hast also given me a heartfelt desire to live to Thee alone, to serve and obey Thee. From these things I see that Thou art still dwelling in me. Increase and preserve in me these fruits of faith, and make them sweeter and more refreshing to me from day to day. If Thou wilt grant me this request, I shall gladly be content with my weak faith.

Yet one thing, Lord, I ask of Thee, O grant my supplication: When Satan sorely tempteth me, Save me from desperation. O God, my Lord, True to Thy word, Do Thou my soul deliver! Who doth believe, He shall receive. Thy name be praised forever! Amen.

OUR HELPER.

I am often so weary of sorrow,
 So weary of struggling with sin,
 So timid concerning the morrow,
 So faithless of entering in
 To the beautiful rest that remaineth
 Secure in the city of God,
 Where shall enter no evil that staineth,
 Nor ever the spoiler hath trod.

But aye when the struggle is sorest,
 And dark are the clouds on my soul,
 Dear Lord, the sweet cup that Thou pourest
 Has balm, and I drink and am whole.
 From the quenchless old well of salvation
 I quaff the pure waters divine,
 And a sense of triumphant elation
 Is thrilled through this spirit of mine.

No hand but Thine own, blessed Master,
 Could comfort and cheer in thè day
 When the touch of a sudden disaster
 Has cumbered and tangled the way.
 No look but Thine own could illumine
 When night gathers black o'er the land,
 And strength that is failing and human
 Lies prone on the desolate strand.

But ever Thy help is the nearest
 When help from the earth there is none,
 And ever the word that is dearest
 Is the Word of the crucified Son;
 And aye when the tempest-clouds gather,
 I fly for sweet shelter and peace
 Through the Son to the heart of the Father,
 That terror and tremor may cease.

He restoreth my soul, and I praise Him
 Whose love is my chism and crown;
 He restoreth my soul; let me raise Him
 A song that His mercy will own.
 For often so weary of sorrow,
 So weary of fighting with sin,
 I look and I long for the morrow,
 When the ransomed their freedom shall win.

The Afflicted Person Complains of Sinful, Wicked, and Blasphemous Thoughts.

EXHORTATION.

There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness. *2 Cor. 12, 7—9.*

It is sad to hear a sick person complain of pains in every member of his body, but still sadder is that state of the soul when afflicted persons complain of sinful, wicked, and blasphemous thoughts.

For the comfort of such afflicted souls the following reflections may serve: (1) Spiritual trials, despondency, terrors, and anxiety of soul come from God, by whose will the afflicted persons must suffer these things. Without the will of God not a hair can fall from their head; how much less, then, could such anxiety of soul come upon them? (2) Pious Christians and children of God perceive these wicked and abominable thoughts, and are alarmed; the wicked also have these thoughts, but laugh about them. (3) But the fact that the godly are shocked at such thoughts is a sign that they heartily love God, that they are in a state of divine grace and faith, and hence cannot endure such evil things to arise in their hearts. (4) This alarm, this anxiety because of these blasphemous thoughts, is a sign that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are still dwelling in the hearts of these persons. If Satan were in their hearts, — as the afflicted imagine that he is, — they would never be alarmed at these thoughts.

(5) Such blasphemous thoughts God does not charge against the souls of the godly, a) because they arise against their will; b) because the godly mourn over them; c) because they have no pleasure in them; d) because, when these thoughts approach, the godly feel as if they were perspiring in an agony of fear; e) because they resist these thoughts. (6) Trials are not a sign of the anger, but of the grace of God. Persons thus afflicted nevertheless have a gracious God, as may be seen in the instance of Job. God has not departed from them; He is still in their hearts, but He hides Himself from them.

(7) When these thoughts come, the soul, like a house into

which fire-balls are thrown, makes its stand by suffering and not by acting. Accordingly, let the afflicted but keep silent and not utter the evil thoughts in words, nor readily tell them to unbelievers, lest he give any one offense. (8) He must continue to contradict these thoughts and say: It is not so; I am not damned. Satan is damned; I am redeemed. The wicked word (in me) is not mine; I do not approve it; away with it from my heart! I belong to God; God is mine. Who shall separate us?

(9) By blasphemous thoughts we must not suffer ourselves to be prevented from prayer and the reading of God's Word, but we should rather pray and read often. (10) Since persons thus afflicted declare that they would prefer walking on thorns and suffering pains in their body to these thoughts, yea, since they are also on their guard against sins and evil works, it is an incontrovertible proof that faith, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, indeed, the entire holy Trinity is still in their hearts. (11) Even if they can neither pray nor think of God on account of these evil thoughts, still their very complaint is a prayer and their sighing a certain sign of the presence of God in their hearts. For this yearning arises from indwelling grace; yea, in their sighing and moaning they pray most vigorously, zealously, and effectually.

(12) Although they imagine that by whatsoever they do they provoke God to anger, God does not take this ill; He regards their will and desire. They imagine that they are farthest removed from God, and they are closest to Him. They imagine that they are the most wicked people, and they are the most faithful. They imagine themselves cast away, and they are God's darlings. (13) They should patiently endure; for there is no instance of God's having forsaken such afflicted souls. He rather gladdens, refreshes, and comforts them again. But they must await the proper time, just as a disease must be permitted to run its course; bye and bye it will disappear, abate, and finally cease. That has been the experience of godly persons hitherto.

(14) These trials make a person humble, devout, cautious, and pious, so that he does not readily do or speak evil. Yea, this affliction will purify the heart from evil habits and practises, from lukewarmness in prayer and in hearing the divine Word. Is not that a glorious benefit derived from it? (15) These reasons we should consider point by point, or have friends of God explain

them to us, and at the same time we should use medicines for our body, work diligently, and go out walking with Christians in the open air, in the gardens and fields. We should not remain alone, but always have Christian people, children, or servants about us all the time, except when we wish to engage in prayer. To join in singing a hymn with those present is also edifying. Moreover, Romans 8 and Psalms 28 and 88 should be read diligently.

PRAYER.

O Thou holy God, who inhabitest the praises of Israel, and whom all the holy angels and elect praise and exalt without ceasing, I, an afflicted soul, confess to Thee with truly sorrowful heart that I am violently hindered in the praise of Thy holy name by wicked and blasphemous thoughts, which often, yea, daily, arise in my heart. Thou, all-knowing God, knowest well that they fall upon me like flying arrows, that they distress and frighten me. But Thou knowest also that I am alarmed at this and shed bitter tears because I have to endure these fiery darts.

O my God, do not charge against me what is done against my will! Thou seest how I fight and wrestle, how I sigh, how I abhor these thoughts, and how gladly I would drive them from my heart. O Lord, do not let Thy hand become too heavy upon me, lest I perish! I will cheerfully drink the cup which Thou, my dear Father, hast poured out for me. Only let it not be a cup of Thy wrath, but of Thy grace. Be merciful to me; for I am weak. Oh, how I am terrified when I perceive that the evil hour is about to commence! Do not cast me away on this account; for I cannot change this condition, but have to endure it.

However, Thy right hand, O Most High, can alter everything. Quicken me, O Triune God, and when the evil hour and my anguish are past, let me experience again Thy holy presence and Thy rich consolation. Yea, in the midst of my distress whisper into my heart a comforting passage to which I may cling, and by means of which I may raise myself up and gallantly defend myself. If my misery is to last a long time, give me also great patience, much power, and strength. Let not my faith fail, but bear witness to my spirit that I am nevertheless Thy child and an heir of life eternal.

O my God, I will gladly endure this trial also, because I know that Thou hast sent it, not for my destruction, but for my awakening unto whatsoever is good, for my purification from sin, evil practises, and worldly habits, and for the sanctification of my life. Shall I not drink the cup which the Father gives me to drink? Does it not come from loving hands? This fire is to consume the evil lusts and the Old Adam in my heart, and consecrate it to Thee, O great God, for a temple and a dwelling. Therefore I say in the midst of my anguish: Thou art still my Father, my Deliverer, my Helper, and my faithful Defender. Send into my heart the power of Thy Holy Spirit, that it may help me fight and overcome. Thou hast said: None that wait upon Me shall be ashamed. Lord, I trust in Thee; let me never be put to shame. Deliver me by Thy righteousness; hasten my help. Be Thou my strong Rock, for an house of defense to save me. For Thy name's sake lead me and guide me. Thou hast said that Thy kindness shall not depart from me, and

that mercy shall be built up for me forever. O Lord, Lord, let now this light arise also for me that I may behold my delight in Thy grace. O my Father, let Thy hour come when Thou wilt remove from me the anxiety of my soul. Strengthen me; help me; guard my heart as with a wall; surround it like the house of Job that the evil thoughts at last can no longer enter it, yea, that by Thy power I may learn to despise them. Thou, O faithful God, wilt not suffer me to be tried above that I am able. Alleviate my anguish, and I will also accept that as a help, until Thou shalt finally deliver me from it altogether in due time. O Jesus, Fountain of all grace, Thou castest out no one that comes to Thee burdened with infirmity, but givest comfort to all. Even though their faith be as small as a mustard-seed, Thou wilt esteem them worthy to remove great mountains.

In Thee, Lord, have I put my trust, Leave me not helpless in the dust, Let me not be confounded; Let in Thy Word My faith, O Lord, Be always firmly grounded. Amen.

ALL THINGS SHALL WORK FOR GOOD.

When waves of sorrow round you roll, and dark as night your way,
 No glimmering light across your path, and hope seems far away;
 And when God's face you cannot see, rely upon His Word,
 Hold fast, look up, have faith in Him —

All things shall work for good.

When your heart feels nigh to breaking, and you have to walk alone,
 When friends are few and scattered, and all earthly joys are flown;
 When you seem to walk in darkness, almost sinking 'neath your
 load,

Hold fast, look up, have faith in God —

All things shall work for good.

When your friends misunderstand you, scan you with suspicious eye,
 And when they misinterpret the cause of heartfelt sigh;
 If despised, cast out, forsaken, you tread a thorny road;
 Hold fast, look up, have faith in God —

All things shall work for good.

As the potter molds the vessel, as the gardener prunes the tree,
 The refiner tries the silver, till his likeness he can see;
 So when the Lord refines you, tries you with His chastening rod,
 Hold fast, look up, have faith in Him —

All things shall work for good.

Remember in your sorrow that the Lord is always nigh,
 Not a pang escapes His notice, He hears the faintest sigh;
 His love is everlasting, He's a sympathizing God.
 Hold fast, look up, have faith in Him —

All things shall work for good.

Follow the Savior's footsteps, and serve Him day by day,
 Keep ever close beside Him, though painful be the way;
 When you stand in glory, saved through His precious blood,
 You'll see that God has led you, and that

All things have worked for good.

PER PACEM AD LUCEM.

I do not ask, O Lord, that life may be
 A pleasant road;
 I do not ask that Thou wouldst take from me
 Aught of its load;

I do not ask that flowers should always spring
 Beneath my feet;
 I know too well the poison and the sting
 Of things too sweet.

For one thing only, Lord, dear Lord, I plead;
 Lead me aright —
 Though strength should falter and though heart
 should bleed —

Through Peace to Light.

I do not ask, O Lord, that Thou shouldst shed
Full radiance here;
Give but a ray of peace that I may tread
Without a fear.

I do not ask my cross to understand,
My way to see;
Better in darkness just to feel Thy hand,
And follow Thee.

Joy is like restless day; but peace divine
Like quiet night;
Lead me, O Lord, till perfect day shall shine —
Through Peace to Light.
