

MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY DAY OF THE
WEEK.

MEDITATION FOR THE FIRST DAY (SUNDAY).

ON FAITH.

HEAR, O my people! and I will give warning unto thee, O Israel! if thou wouldst but hearken unto me! there shall not be among thee a foreign god, nor shalt thou bow thyself down to any strange god,—I am the Lord thy God." (Ps. lxxxi. 9–11.) The faith of Israel is great and holy; because it is based on the divine instruction revealed to the patriarchs, the mighty ones in confidence in God and good deeds, and by them transmitted to their children; on the public legislation which all the people witnessed at Sinai; on the prophetic inspiration bestowed on Moses, the greatest of the wise men the world has ever known; and on the teachings of the devoted servants of the Most High, the prophets, who were sent to exhort and warn their countrymen during many generations.—It is great and holy, because of the truths it reveals, the pure morality it inculcates, and the hopes it inspires; and, above all, because it enabled the small remnant of Israel that had escaped and remained true to its requirements to struggle bravely during the course of many centuries against all the rest of the world, suffering patiently all the horrors which persecution could inflict, and resisting the temptations held out by earthly happiness which apostasy promised, in defence of the great truth of the UNITY of God.

Our Faith is indeed great and holy; it agrees so entirely with enlightened reason and finds an echo in our own intellect, these being the characteristics by which God has made a distinction between man and the brute. All that

my soul is commanded to adore and believe, my reason can comprehend.

I thank Thee, O God! for the possession of the faith which so strongly appeals for confirmation to my spirit; for although it speaks convincingly to my mind, it is not the invention of my own unassisted reason, but it is the gift bestowed by Thy goodness; through it our heart reposes confidently on Thy eternal power, and it bids our souls to soar aloft towards Thy presence. I therefore believe in the sublime doctrines propagated from Sinai, and taught by all the prophets. I believe in the immutability of Thy law, in Thy eternal providence which watches over all Thy creatures. I confidently await the coming of the Messiah, announced by the prophets, when all mankind shall unite to observe Thy law, and accept universally the belief in Thy unity; and at my last hour I shall descend to the grave full of confidence that my soul will live eternally. Faith sheds a benignant light over our whole existence; guided by it I shall pass through this life full of trust and hope; my joys will be more serene, my sorrows less bitter, while distress even will become a source of comfort and salvation. It is good to follow Thy precepts; I mean to obey them from love to Thee; wherever I may be, I shall feel myself guarded by Thy care, O heavenly Father! and illumined by Thy light. I shall behold Thee in the sun's gorgeous rays, and in the pale light of the stars. I shall see Thee watching every act of mine, and weighing every thought; I shall walk in Thy presence, and my eyes shall be turned constantly towards Thee.

Therefore is my heart filled with joy when dwelling on the words of the Psalmist: "Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast treasured up for those that fear Thee." (Ps. xxxi. 20.) Yes, I feel that without faith there is no peace of mind, no consolation in trouble, no hope in eternity, no foundation for righteousness. Without faith in Thee, human virtue is nothing; for it would succumb before the power of the passions or when we should be called upon to make great sacrifices.

But Thou, God of Israel! regardest not the faith which is unaccompanied by deeds. If morality without faith is but like the unproductive seed, faith without righteousness is like a tree which produces no fruit. It is not sufficient for us to be convinced of the greatness of our duties towards Thee and our neighbour; for we must practise them. It is not enough that we recognise Thy attributes; we must be, as the sages teach us, "benevolent, merciful, ready to forgive offences, and prompt to assist all, even as Thou art merciful and gracious."

The Jewish faith, being the primary source of all morality and of all charity, does not exist in those who nourish hatred and selfishness, and indulge in calumny and revenge; nor is it with those whose hands are unclean, who practise dishonesty, whose words are deceitful, or who sacrifice the rights of another to their own cupidity, ambition, or sensuality. For Holy Writ clearly teaches the conditions whereby salvation is obtained:—"Lord! who may sojourn in Thy tent? who may dwell in Thy holy mount? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart; that uttereth no calumny with his tongue, that doth no evil to his neighbour, and bringeth no reproach on his fellow-man; in whose eyes the despicable is despised; but that honoureth those who fear the Lord; that sweareth to his own injury and changeth not; that putteth not out his money for interest, and taketh no bribe against the innocent." (Ps. xv. 1-5.)

PRAYER.

Grant, O God! that I may think, act, and live but for the sanctification of Thy faith and the glory of Thy Name, both by thought and deed. May my faith be ever active, my piety constant, and grant that a firm trust make me ready to brave death rather than deny my belief.

Lord God! enlighten and strengthen my reason, so that it may combat all the evil suggestions of unbelief. En-

lighten all men, open their eyes to true wisdom, make them comprehend the eternal truths announced through Thy prophets, so that they may return to Thee, confess Thy name, and proclaim, with all Israel, "The Eternal, our God, is One!" Amen.

Then read Psalm xxiv.

MEDITATION FOR MONDAY (THE SECOND DAY).

ON THE LOVE OF GOD.

As men, formed by the hands of God, and created in His image, we are enjoined to love the Lord our Creator in all things and at all times, in order that we may attain true happiness. If we rightly reflect on our position in the world relative to God, nothing will be easier or more agreeable than the fulfilment of this duty. For why should not all our thoughts, all our affections, all the moments of our life, be devoted to prove our love of the Lord? Have we not received all we have from His bounty? He has given us our existence; He provides for all our wants; every day that we live, every thing which we enjoy, are simply new blessings we obtain from Him. Every day He bestows on us favour and mercy; nay, our ingratitude exhibited by deeds of wickedness does not close His paternal hand, nor exhaust the abundance of His indulgence and forbearance. It is therefore scarcely needed for us to be *commanded* to love God; on the contrary, affection for Him ought to be a spontaneous offering of the soul, manifested in all our actions.

To love God with all our heart is to give Him all our affection, our constant worship, not for the sake of recompense, nor the dread of punishment, but for the sake of His glorious attributes, and His inexhaustible mercy. How can we fail to love Him, who alone is perfection, with the whole strength of our being, and thus fulfil the injunction of the Psalmist, "Serve the Lord with gladness"? But do we love God thus? Some obey Him with indifference, and bear im-