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THE  
DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL  
A  
SPIRITUAL CANTICLE,  
AND  
THE LIVING FLAME OF LOVE,  
OF

SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS,  
OF THE ORDER OF OUR LADY OF CARMEL,

TRANSLATED BY  
DAVID LEWIS, M.A.

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SECOND EDITION, REVISED.

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THE  
DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL.

WITH AN EXPLANATION OF THE STANZAS COMPRISING  
THE WAY OF THE PERFECT UNION OF LOVE WITH  
GOD, SUCH AS IS POSSIBLE IN THIS LIFE; AND THE  
ADMIRABLE ENDOWMENTS OF THE SOUL WHICH HAS  
ATTAINED TO IT.

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ARGUMENT.

The stanzas to be explained are set forth at the beginning of this book, then an explanation of each severally, the stanza being placed before it. After that an explanation of each line, which is also set before the explanation. The first two stanzas explain the two spiritual purgations of the sensual and spiritual part of man, and the other six the various and admirable effects of the spiritual enlightenment and union of love with God.

STANZAS.

I

In a dark night,  
With anxious love inflamed,  
O, happy lot!  
Forth unobserved I went,  
My house being now at rest.

II

In darkness and in safety,  
By the secret ladder, disguised,  
O, happy lot!  
In darkness and concealment,  
My house being now at rest.

## III

In that happy night,  
In secret, seen of none,  
Seeing nought myself,  
Without other light or guide  
Save that which in my heart was burning.

## IV

That light guided me  
More surely than the noonday sun  
To the place where He was waiting for me,  
Whom I knew well,  
And where none appeared.

## V

O, guiding night ;  
O, night more lovely than the dawn ;  
O, night that hast united  
The lover with His beloved,  
And changed her into her love.

## VI

On my flowery bosom,  
Kept whole for Him alone,  
There He reposed and slept ;  
And I cherished Him, and the waving  
Of the cedars fanned Him.

## VII

As His hair floated in the breeze  
That from the turret blew,  
He struck me on the neck  
With His gentle hand,  
And all sensation left me.

## VIII

I continued in oblivion lost,  
My head was resting on my love ;  
Lost to all things and myself,  
And, amid the lilies forgotten,  
Threw all my cares away.



## EXPLANATION OF THE STANZAS.

Before we enter on an explanation of these, it is right we should understand that they are the words of the soul already in the state of perfection, which is the union of love with God, when it has gone through the straits, tribulations and severities, by means of the spiritual training, of the strait way of everlasting life, by which ordinarily the soul attains to this high and divine union with God. Of it our Saviour says in the Gospel,\* ‘How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it.’ This road being so strait, and they who find it being so few, the soul regards it as a great and joyful blessing that it has journeyed on it to the perfection of love, as it sings in the first stanza, very rightly calling the strait road, a dark night, as may be seen further on in the words of the stanza. The soul, therefore, rejoicing in that it has travelled on this strait road whereby so great a blessing has come to it, sings as follows.

\* S. Matt. vii. 14.

## BOOK I.

## OF THE NIGHT OF SENSE.

---

*In a dark night,  
With anxious love inflamed,  
O, happy lot!  
Forth unobserved I went,  
My house being now at rest.*

IN the first stanza the soul sings of the way and manner of its going forth, as to its affections, from self and all created things, dying thereto by real mortification, that it may live the life of love, sweet and delicious in God. It went forth, from itself and from all things, in a dark night, by which is meant here purgative contemplation—as I shall hereinafter explain\*—which leads the soul to deny itself and all besides. This departure, it says, it was able to accomplish in the strength and fervour which the love of the Bridegroom supplied, in the obscure contemplation for that end. The soul magnifies its own happiness in having journeyed Godwards in that night so successfully as to escape all hindrance on the part of its three enemies—the world, the devil, and the flesh—which are always found infesting this road; for the night of purgative contemplation had lulled to sleep and mortified, in the house of sensuality, all passions and desires, in their rebellious movements.

\* Ch. viii.

## CHAPTER I.

Begins with the first stanza and treats of the imperfections of beginners.

*In a dark night.*

SOULS begin to enter the dark night when God is drawing them out of the state of beginners, which is that of those who meditate on the spiritual road, and is leading them into that of proficients, the state of contemplatives, that, having passed through it, they may arrive at the state of the perfect, which is that of the divine union with God. That we may the better understand and explain the nature of this night through which the soul has to pass, and why God leads men into it, it may be well to touch first upon certain peculiarities of beginners, that they may perceive the weakness of the state they are in, take courage, and desire to be led of God into this night, where the soul is established in virtue and made strong for the inestimable delights of His love. Though I shall dwell at some length upon this point, I shall do so no longer than suffices for the immediate discussion of this dark night.

2. We are to keep in mind that a soul, when seriously converted to the service of God, is, in general, spiritually nursed and caressed, as an infant by its loving mother, who warms it in her bosom, nourishes it with her own sweet milk, feeds it with tender and delicate food, carries it in her arms, and fondles it. But as the child grows up



the mother withholds her caresses, hides her breasts, and anoints them with the juice of bitter aloes; she carries the infant in her arms no longer, but makes it walk on the ground, so that, losing the habits of an infant, it may apply itself to greater and more substantial pursuits.

3. The grace of God,\* like a loving mother, as soon as the soul is regenerated in the new fire and fervour of His service, treats it in the same way; for it enables it, without labour on its own part, to find its spiritual milk, sweet and delicious, in all the things of God, and in devotional exercises great sweetness; God giving it the breasts of His own tender love, as to a tender babe. Such souls, therefore, delight to spend many hours, and perhaps whole nights, in prayer; their pleasures are penances, their joy is fasting, and their consolations lie in the use of the sacraments and in speaking of divine things.

4. Now spiritual men generally, speaking spiritually, are extremely weak and imperfect here, though they apply themselves to devotion, and practise it with great resolution, earnestness, and care. For being drawn to these things and to their spiritual exercises by the comfort and satisfaction they find therein, and not yet confirmed in virtue by the struggle it demands, they fall into many errors and imperfections in their spiritual life: for every man's work corresponds to the habit of perfection which he has acquired. These souls, therefore, not having had time to acquire those habits of vigour, must, of necessity, perform their acts, like children, weakly.

\* Sap. xvi. 25.—In omnia transfigurata omnium nutrici gratiæ tuæ deserviebat.

5. To make this more clear, and to show how weak are beginners in virtue in those good works which they perform with so much ease and pleasure, I proceed to explain by reference to the seven capital sins, pointing out some of the imperfections into which beginners fall in the matter of each of them. This will show us plainly how like children they are in all they do, and also how great are the blessings of this dark night of which I am about to speak\*; seeing that it cleanses and purifies the soul from all these imperfections.

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## CHAPTER II.

Of some spiritual imperfections to which beginners are liable in the matter of pride.

WHEN beginners become aware of their own fervour and diligence in their spiritual works and devotional exercises, this prosperity of theirs gives rise to secret pride—though holy things tend of their own nature to humility—because of their imperfections; and the issue is that they conceive a certain satisfaction in the contemplation of their works and of themselves. From the same source, too, proceeds that empty eagerness which they display, in speaking before others of the spiritual life, and sometimes as teachers rather than learners. They condemn others in their heart when they see that they are not devout in their way. Sometimes also they say it in words, showing

\* Ch. xii. § 2.

themselves herein to be like the Pharisee, who in the act of prayer boasted of his own works and despised the Publican.\*

2. Their fervour, and desire to do these and other works, is frequently fed by satan in order that they may grow in pride and presumption : he knows perfectly well that all their virtue and works are not only nothing worth, but rather tending to sin. Some of them go so far as to think none good but themselves, and so, at all times, both in word and deed fall into condemnation and detraction of others. They see the mote in the eye of their brother, but not the beam which is in their own.† They strain out the gnat in another man's cup, and swallow the camel in their own.‡

3. Sometimes, also, when their spiritual masters, such as confessors and superiors, do not approve of their spirit and conduct—for they wish to be praised and considered for what they do—they decide that they are not understood, and that their superiors are not spiritual men because they do not approve and sanction their proceedings. So they go about in quest of some one else, who will accommodate himself to their fancy ; for in general they love to discuss their spiritual state with those who, they think, will commend and respect it. They avoid, as they would death, those who destroy their delusion with the view of leading them into a safe way, and sometimes they even hate them. Presuming greatly on themselves, they make many resolutions, and accomplish little. They are occasionally desirous that others should perceive their spirituality and devotion, and for that end they give out-

\* S. Luke xviii. 11, 12.

† S. Matt. vii. 3.

‡ Ib. xxiii. 24.



ward tokens by movements, sighs and divers ceremonies ; sometimes, too, they fall into certain trances in public rather than in private—whereunto satan contributes—and are pleased when others are witnesses of them.

4. Many of them seek to be the favourites of their confessors, and the result is endless envy and disquietude. They are ashamed to confess their sins plainly, lest their confessors should think less of them, so they go about palliating them, that they may not seem so bad : which is excusing rather than accusing themselves. Sometimes they go to a stranger to confess their sin, that their usual confessor may think they are not sinners, but good people. And so they always take pleasure in telling him of their goodness, and that in terms suggestive of more than is in them : at the least, they wish all their goodness to be appreciated, when it would be greater humility on their part, as I shall presently show,\* to undervalue it, and wish that neither their confessor nor anyone else should think it of the least importance.

5. Some beginners, too, make light of their faults, and at other times indulge in immoderate grief when they commit them. They thought themselves already saints, and so they become angry and impatient with themselves, which is another great imperfection. They also importune God to deliver them from their faults and imperfections, but it is for the comfort of living in peace, unmolested by them, and not for God ; they do not consider that, were He to deliver them, they would become, perhaps, prouder than ever. They are great enemies of other men's praise, but great lovers of their own, and sometimes they seek it.

\* § 7.

In this respect they resemble the foolish virgins, who, when their lamps gave no light, went about in search of oil, saying : ‘ Give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’\*

6. From these some go on to very serious imperfections, and come to great harm thereby. Some, however, fall into them less than others, and some have to contend with little more than the first movements of them. But scarcely anyone can be found who, in his first fervours, did not fall into some of them.

7. But those who at this time are going on to perfection proceed in a very different way, and in a very different temper of mind : they grow and are built up in humility, not only looking on their own works as nothing, but also dissatisfied with themselves : they look upon all others as much better, they regard them with a holy envy in their anxiety to serve God as they do. For the greater their fervour, the more numerous their good works ; and the keener the pleasure therein, the more they perceive—for they humble themselves—how much that is which God deserves at their hands, and how little is all they can do for Him : thus the more they do, the less are they satisfied :

8. So great is that which they in their love would fain do, that all they are doing seems nothing. This loving anxiety so importunes and fills them that they never consider whether others are doing good or not, and if they do, it is, as I have said, in the conviction that all others are much better than they are. They think little of themselves, and wish others to do so also, to make no account of them,

\* S. Matt. xxv. 8.

and despise their works. Moreover, if anyone should praise and respect them they will give them no credit, for they think it strange that anybody should speak well of them.

9. They, in great tranquility and humility, are very desirous to learn the things that are profitable to them from anyone ; in this respect the very opposite of those of whom I have just spoken, who are willing to teach everybody ; and who, when anyone seems about to teach them anything, take the words out of his mouth, as if they knew it already.

10. But they of whom I am now speaking are very far from wishing to instruct anyone ; they are most ready to travel by another road if they be but commanded, for they never imagine that they can be right in anything. When others are praised they rejoice, and their only regret is that they do not serve God themselves as well as they. They have no wish to speak about their own state, for they think so lightly of it, that they are ashamed to speak of it to their own confessors ; it seems to them unworthy of any mention whatever. But they have a great desire to speak of their shortcomings and sins, or of that which they consider not to be virtue : thus they incline to treat of the affairs of their soul with those who have no great opinion of their state and spirit.\* This is a characteristic of that spirituality which is pure, simple, true, and most pleasing unto God. For as the wise Spirit of God dwells in these humble souls, He moves and inclines them to keep His treasures secretly within, and to cast out the evil. For God gives this grace, together with the

\* See Life of St. Teresa, Relation vii. § 11.



other virtues, to the humble, and withholds it from the proud.

II. These will give their hearts' blood for him who serves God, and will help him to serve Him to the utmost of their powers. When they fall into any imperfection they bear up under it with humility, in meekness of spirit, in loving fear of God, and hoping in Him. But the souls who in the beginning travel thus towards perfection are, as I said,\* few, yea, very few, and we ought to be content when they do not rush into the opposite evils. This is the reason, as I shall hereafter explain,† why God leads into the dark night those souls whom He will purify from all these imperfections in order to their further progress.

---

### CHAPTER III.

Of the imperfections into which some beginners are wont to fall, in the matter of the second capital sin, which is avarice, in the spiritual sense.

MANY a beginner also falls at times into great spiritual avarice. Scarcely anyone is contented with that measure of the spirit which God gives; they are very disconsolate and querulous because they do not find the comfort they desire in spiritual things. Many are never satisfied with listening to spiritual counsels and precepts, with reading books which treat of their state; and they spend more time in this than in doing their duty, having no regard to that mortification, and perfection of interior poverty of spirit, to which they ought to apply themselves. Besides, they load themselves with images, rosaries, and crucifixes,

\* § 6.      † Ch. viii. § 5.

curious and costly; now taking up one, then another, now changing them, and then resuming them again. At one time they will have them of a certain fashion, at another time of another, prizing one more than another because more curious or costly. Some may be seen with an *Agnus Dei*, and with relics and medals, like children with coral.

2. I condemn here that attachment and clinging of the heart to the form, number, and variety of these things, because in direct opposition to poverty of spirit, which looks only to the substance of devotion; which makes use indeed of these things, but only sufficiently for the end, and disdains that variety and curiosity, for real devotion must spring out of the heart, and consider only the truth and substance which the objects in question represent. All beyond this is attachment and greed of imperfection; he who will go on unto perfection, must root out that feeling utterly.

3. I knew a person who for more than ten years used continually, without interruption, a cross rudely formed of a piece of blessed palm, and fastened together with a common pin bent backwards, until I took it away. This was a person not deficient in sense and understanding. I knew another who had a rosary made of the backbones of fish, and whose devotion, I am certain, was not on that account of less value in the eyes of God; for it is clear that the cost or workmanship of these contributed nothing to it.

4. Those beginners, therefore, who go on well, do not rely on visible instruments, neither do they burden themselves with them, nor do they seek to know more

than is necessary for acting rightly ; their sole object is to be well with God and to please Him ; their avarice consists in that. With a noble generosity they give up all they possess ; and their delight is to be poor for the love of God and their neighbour, disposing of everything according to the laws of this virtue ; because, as I have said, their sole aim is real perfection, to please God in all things and themselves in nothing.

5. The soul, however, cannot be perfectly purified from these imperfections, any more than from the others, until God shall have led it into the passive purgation of the dark night, of which I shall speak immediately.\* But it is expedient that the soul, so far as it can, should labour, on its own part, to purify and perfect itself, that it may merit from God to be taken under His divine care, and be healed from those imperfections which of itself it cannot remedy. For, after all the efforts of the soul, it cannot by any exertions of its own actively purify itself so as to be in the slightest degree fit for the divine union of perfection in the love of God, if God Himself does not take it into His own hands and purify it in the fire, dark to the soul, in the way I am going to explain.†

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#### CHAPTER IV.

Of other imperfections into which some beginners are wont to fall, in the matter of the third sin, which is luxury, spiritually understood.

MANY beginners fall into other imperfections, over and above those belonging to each capital sin of which I am

\* Ch. viii. § 5

† Bk. ii. ch. 10



speaking. I pass them by now, to avoid prolixity, and treat of some of the chiefest, which are, as it were, the source and origin of the rest.

2. As to the sin of luxury, putting aside the commission of the sin—my object being to speak of those imperfections which have to be purged away in the dark night—beginners fall into many imperfections, which may be called spiritual luxury; not that it is so in fact, but because it is felt and experienced sometimes in the flesh, because of its frailty, when the soul is the recipient of spiritual communications. For very often, in the midst of their spiritual exercises, and when they cannot help themselves, the impure movements of sensuality are felt; and sometimes even when the mind is absorbed in prayer, or when they are receiving the sacraments of penance and the eucharist. These movements not being in their power, proceed from one of three sources.

3. They proceed occasionally—though but rarely, and in persons of delicate constitutions—from sensible sweetness in spiritual things. For when sense and spirit are both delighted together, the whole nature of man is moved in that delectation according to its measure and character. For then the spirit, that is, the higher part of our nature is moved to delight itself in God; and sensuality, which is the lower part, is moved towards sensible gratification, because it knows, and admits of, none other. And so it happens that the soul is in spirit praying, and on the other hand in the senses troubled, to its great disgust, with the rebellious movements of the flesh passively. But inasmuch as these two parts form but one subject, man, they ordinarily share in their respective passions,

each in its own way ; for, as the philosopher tells us, all that is received is received according to the condition of the recipient.

3. Thus in these beginnings, and even when the soul has made some progress, the sensual part, being still imperfect, when spiritual delight flows into the soul, mingles occasionally of its own therewith. But when the sensual part is already renewed in the purgation of the dark night, it is no longer subject to these infirmities, because it receives so abundantly of the Spirit of God, that it seems rather to be received into that Spirit itself, as into that which is greater and grander. Thus it possesses everything according to the measure of the Spirit, in an admirable manner, of Whom it is a partaker, united with God.

4. The second source of these rebellious movements is satan, who, in order to disquiet the soul during prayer, or when preparing for it, causes these filthy movements of our lower nature, and these, when in any degree admitted, are injury enough. Some persons not only relax in their prayers through fear of these movements, which is the object of satan when he undertakes to assail them, but even abandon them altogether, for they imagine that they are more liable to these assaults during prayer than at other times. This is certainly true ; for the devil then assails them more than at other times, that they may cease from prayer.

5. This is not all ; for he represents before them then, most vividly, the most foul and filthy images, and occasionally in close relation with certain spiritual things and persons, by whom their souls are profited, that he may

terrify and crush them. Some are so grievously assailed that they dare not dwell upon anything, for it becomes at once a stumbling-block to them, especially those who are of a melancholy temperament; these are so vehemently and effectually assailed as to be objects of the deepest pity. When melancholy is the occasion of these visitations of satan, men in general cannot be delivered from them till their bodily health is improved, unless they shall have entered on the dark night which purifies them wholly.

6. The third source of these depraved movements which war against the soul is usually the fear of them, for this fear which is brought about by a sudden remembrance of them, in a look, a word, or thought, makes souls suffer from them, but without fault on their part.

7. Sometimes, spiritual persons, when either speaking of spiritual things, or doing good works, display a certain energy and strength arising out of their consideration for persons present, and that with a certain measure of vain joy. This also proceeds from spiritual luxury in the sense in which I use the word, and is accompanied at times by a certain complacency of the will.

8. Some, too, form spiritual friendships with others, the source of which is luxury, and not spirituality. We may know it to be so by observing whether the remembrance of that affection increases our recollection and love of God, or brings remorse of conscience. When this affection is purely spiritual, the love of God grows with it, and the more we think of it the more we think of God, and the greater our longing for Him; for the one grows with the other. The spirit of God has this property, that

it increases good by good, because there is a likeness and conformity between them. But when this affection springs out of the vice of sensuality, its effects are quite opposite; for the more it grows, the more is the love of God diminished, and the remembrance of Him also; for if this earthly love grows, that of God cools down; the remembrance of that love brings forgetfulness of God and a certain remorse of conscience.

9. On the other hand, if the love of God grows in the soul, the human love cools, and is forgotten; for as they are contrary the one to the other, not only do they not help each other, but the one which predominates suppresses the other, and strengthens itself, as philosophers say. And so our Saviour tells us in the gospel, saying, ‘that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit;’\* that love which grows out of sensuality ends in the same, and that which is spiritual ends in the spirit of God, and makes it grow. This is the difference between these two loves, whereby we may know them. When the soul enters the dark night, these affections are ruled by reason; that night strengthens and purifies the affection which is according to God, and removes, destroys, or mortifies the other. In the beginning both are by it put out of sight, as I shall explain hereafter.†

\* S. John iii. 6.

† Ch. xiii. 11.



## CHAPTER V.

Of the imperfections of beginners in the matter of anger.

MANY beginners, because of their inordinate appetite for spiritual sweetness, generally fall into many imperfections in the matter of anger; for when spiritual things minister to them no more sweetness and delight, they naturally become peevish, and in that bitterness of spirit prove a burden to themselves in all they do: trifles make them angry, and they are at times intolerable to all about them. This happens generally after great sweetness in prayer; and so, when that sensible sweetness is past, their natural temper is soured and rendered morose. They are like a babe weaned from the breast, which he found so sweet. When this natural feeling of displeasure is not permitted to grow, there is no sin, but only imperfection, which will have to be purged away in the severity and aridities of the dark night.

2. There are other spiritual persons, too, among these who fall into another kind of spiritual anger. They are angry with other people for their faults, with a sort of unquiet zeal, and watch them; they are occasionally moved to blame them, and even do so in anger, constituting themselves guardians of virtue. All this is contrary to spiritual meekness.

3. Others, again, seeing their own imperfections, become angry with themselves with an impatience that is not humble. They are so impatient with their shortcomings as if they would be saints in one day. Many of

these make many and grand resolutions, but, being self-confident and not humble, the more they resolve, the more they fall, and the more angry they become; not having the patience to wait for God's time; this is also opposed to spiritual meekness. There is no perfect remedy for this but in the dark night. There are, however, some people who are so patient, and who advance so slowly in their spiritual progress, that God wishes they were not so patient.

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## CHAPTER VI.

Of the imperfections in the matter of spiritual gluttony.

THERE is much to say of the fourth capital sin, which is spiritual gluttony, for there is scarcely one among beginners, however good his progress, who, in the matter of this sin, does not fall into some of the many imperfections to which beginners are liable, because of that sweetness which in the beginning they find in spiritual exercises.

2. Many beginners, delighting in the sweetness and joy of their spiritual occupations, strive after spiritual sweetness rather than after pure and true devotion, which is that which God regards and accepts in the whole course of the spiritual way. For this reason, over and above their imperfection in seeking after sweetness in devotion, that spirit of gluttony, which has taken possession of them, forces them to overstep the limits of moderation, within which virtue is acquired and consists. For allured

by the delights they then experience, some of them kill themselves by penances, and others weaken themselves by fasting. They take upon themselves more than they can bear, without rule or advice; they try to conceal their austerities from those whom they are bound to obey, and some even venture to practise them though commanded to abstain. These are full of imperfections—unreasonable people, who undervalue submission and obedience, which is the penance of the reason and judgment, and therefore a more acceptable and sweet sacrifice unto God than all the acts of bodily penance. Bodily penance is full of imperfections when the penance of the will is neglected, for men undertake it merely because they like it, and for the sweetness which they find in it.

3. Inasmuch then as all extremes are vicious, and as in this course of conduct men follow their own will, the consequences are that they grow in vice and not in virtue; at least they minister to their spiritual gluttony and pride, for they do not walk in the way of obedience. The devil so deceives many of them by exciting their gluttony through this sweetness which he increases, that, since they cannot obey, they either change, or vary, or add to, what is commanded them; so hard and bitter is obedience become. The evil has so grown upon some, that they lose all desire to do their spiritual duties the instant obedience enjoins them; because all their satisfaction consists in doing that which pleases them, and perhaps it would be better for them to leave it undone.

4. Many of these importune their spiritual directors to allow them to do their own will: they extort that permission as if by force, and if it be refused, they mope

like children, and become discontented, and think they are not serving God whenever they are thwarted. These persons clinging to sweetness and their own will, the moment they are contradicted, and directed according to the will of God, become fretful, fainthearted, and then fall away. They imagine that to please and satisfy themselves, is to serve and please God.

5. Others also there are, who, by reason of this spiritual gluttony, are so ignorant of their own meanness and misery, and so insensible to that loving fear and reverence due to the majesty of God, that they are not afraid to insist on being allowed by their confessors to confess and communicate frequently. And what is much worse, they very often dare to communicate without the leave and sanction of the minister and steward of Christ, purely out of their own head, and hide the truth from him. This eagerness for communion makes them confess carelessly, for they are more anxious to communicate anyhow than to communicate in pureness and perfection. It would be more profitable for them, and a holier course, to beg their confessors not to enjoin such frequent communions; though the better way between these two extremes is to be humble and resigned. This excessive boldness leads to great evil, and men may well be in fear of chastisement for such rashness.

6. These persons, when they communicate, strive with all their might for sensible sweetness, instead of worshipping in humility and praising God within themselves. So much are they given to this, that they think, when they derive no sensible sweetness, they have done nothing, so meanly do they think of God; neither do they



understand that the least of the blessings of the Most Holy Sacrament is that which touches the senses, and that the invisible grace It confers is far greater; for God frequently withholds these sensible favours from men, that they may fix the eyes of faith upon Himself. But these persons will feel and taste God, as if He were palpable and accessible to them, not only in communion, but in all their other acts of devotion. All this is a very great imperfection, and directly at variance with the nature of God, Who demands the purest faith.

7. They conduct themselves in the same way when they are praying; for they imagine that the whole business of prayer consists in sensible devotion, and this they strive to obtain with all their might, wearying out their brains and perplexing all the faculties of their souls. When they miss that sensible devotion, they are cast down, thinking they have done nothing. This effort after sweetness destroys true devotion and spirituality, which consist in perseverance in prayer with patience and humility, mistrusting self, solely to please God. Therefore, when they once miss sweetness in prayer, or in any other act of religion, they feel a sort of repugnance to resume it, and sometimes cease from it altogether.

8. In this they are, as we said just now, like children who are not influenced by reason, but by their inclinations. They waste their time in the search after spiritual consolation, and are never satisfied with reading good books, taking up one meditation after another, in the pursuit of sensible sweetness in the things of God. God refuses it to them most justly, wisely, and lovingly, for if He did not, this spiritual gluttony on their part would grow into great

evils. For this reason, it is most necessary that they should enter into the dark night, that they may be cleansed from this childishness.

9. They who are bent on sensible sweetness, labour also under another very great imperfection: excessive weakness and remissness on the rugged road of the cross; for the soul that is given to sweetness naturally sets its face against all the pain of self-denial. They labour under many other imperfections, which have their origin here, of which our Lord will heal them in due time, through temptations, aridities and trials, elements of the dark night. I will not enlarge upon them here, that I may avoid prolixity; but this will I say, that spiritual soberness and temperance produce a far different temper, that of mortification, of fear and submission in all things; showing us that the perfection and value of things consist not in the multitude thereof, but in our knowing how to deny ourselves in them. Spiritual men must labour after this with all their might, until it shall please God to purify them by leading them into the dark night. I hasten on with the description of these imperfections, that I may enter on the explanation of it.

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## CHAPTER VII.

Of the imperfections in the matter of envy and spiritual sloth.

BEGINNERS are not free from many imperfections in the matter of the two other vices, envy and spiritual sloth. Many of them are often vexed because of other men's goodness. They are sensibly afflicted when others outstrip them on the spiritual road, and will not endure to

hear them praised. They become fretful over other men's virtues, and are sometimes unable to refrain from contradiction when they are commended; they depreciate them as much as they can, and feel acutely because they themselves are not thought so well of, for they wish to be preferred above all others. This is most opposed to that charity of which S. Paul says, it 'rejoiceth with the truth.'\* If charity admits of envy at all, it is a holy envy that makes us grieve that we have not the virtues that others have; but still rejoicing that they have them, and glad that others outstrip us in the race that they may serve God, we being so full of imperfection ourselves.

2. As to spiritual sloth, beginners are wont to find their most spiritual occupations irksome, and avoid them as repugnant to their taste, for being so given to sweetness in spiritual things, they loathe them when they find none. If they miss once this sweetness in prayer which is their joy—it is expedient that God should deprive them of it in order to try them—they will not resume it; at other times they omit it, or return to it with a bad grace. Thus, under the influence of sloth they neglect the way of perfection—which is the denial of their will and pleasure for God—for the gratification of their own will, which they serve rather than the will of God.

3. Many of these will have it that God should will that which they will, and are afflicted when they must will that which He wills, reluctantly submitting their own to the divine will. The result is that they frequently imagine that what is not according to their will is also

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 6.

not according to the will of God; and, on the other hand, when they are pleased, they believe that God is pleased. They measure Him by themselves, and not themselves by Him, in direct contradiction to His teaching in the gospel; 'He that shall lose his life for My sake, shall find it.' \* That is, he who shall give up his will for God shall have it, and he who will have it, he shall have it never.

4. They also find it wearisome to obey when they are commanded to do that which they like not; and because they walk in the way of consolation and spiritual sweetness, they are too weak for the rough trials of perfection. They are like persons delicately nurtured who avoid with heavy hearts all that is hard and rugged, and are offended at the Cross wherein the joys of the spirit consist. The more spiritual the work they have to do, the more irksome do they feel it to be. And because they insist on having their own way and will in spiritual things, they enter on the 'strait way that leadeth unto life,' † of which Christ speaks, with repugnance and heaviness of heart.

5. Let this reference to these imperfections among the many under which they labour, who are in the first state of beginners, suffice to show them how necessary it is for them that God should bring them to the state of proficients, which He effects when He leads them into the dark night of which we shall now speak. In that night He weans them from the breasts of sweetness, in pure aridities and interior darkness, cleanses them from all these imperfections and childish ways, and by ways most different, makes them grow in virtue. For after all the exertions of beginners to mortify themselves in their

\* S. Matt. xvi. 25:

† S. Matt. vii. 14.



actions and passions, their success will not be perfect, or even great, until God Himself shall do it for them in the purgation of the dark night. May God be pleased to give me His light, that I may speak profitably of this; for I have great need of it while treating of a night so dark and a subject so difficult.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

Explanation of the first line of the first stanza. ‘Beginning of the explanation of the dark night.’

‘IN a dark night.’ This night—it is contemplation—produces in spiritual men two sorts of darkness or purgations conformable to the two divisions of man’s nature into sensual and spiritual. Thus the first night, or sensual purgation, wherein the soul is purified or detached, will be of the senses, subjecting them to the spirit. The other is that night or spiritual purgation wherein the soul is purified and detached in the spirit, and which subdues and disposes it for union with God in love. The night of sense is common, and the lot of many: these are the beginners, of whom I shall first speak. The spiritual night is the portion of very few; and they are those who have made some progress, exercised therein, of whom I shall speak hereafter.\*

2. The first night, or purgation, is bitter and terrible to sense. The second is not to be compared with it, for it is much more awful to the spirit, as I shall soon show.† But as the night of sense is the first in order and the first

\* Bk. ii. ch. i.

† Bk. ii. ch. v.

to be entered, I shall speak of it briefly—for being of ordinary occurrence, it is the matter of many treatises—that I may pass on to treat more at large of the spiritual night; for of that very little has been said, either by word of mouth or in writing, and little is known of it even by experience.

3. But the behaviour of these beginners on the way of God is not noble, and very much according to their own liking and self-love, as I have said before.\* Meanwhile, God seeks to raise them higher, to draw them out of this miserable manner of loving to a higher state of the love of God, to deliver them from the low usage of the senses and meditation whereby they seek after God, as I said before,† in ways so miserable and so unworthy of Him. He seeks to place them in the way of the spirit wherein they may the more abundantly, and more free from imperfections, commune with God now that they have been for some time tried in the way of goodness, persevering in meditation and prayer, and because of the sweetness they found therein have withdrawn their affections from the things of this world, and gained a certain spiritual strength in God, whereby they in some measure curb their love of the creature, and are able for the love of God, to carry a slight burden of dryness, without going back to that more pleasant time when their spiritual exercises abounded in delights, and when the sun of the divine graces shone as they think, more clearly upon them. God is now changing that light into darkness, and sealing up the door of the fountain of the sweet spiritual waters, which they tasted in God as often and as long as

\* Ch. i.

† Ch. vi., § 7.

they wished. For when they were weak and tender, this door was then not shut, as it is written, ‘Behold, I have given before thee an opened door, which no man can shut; because thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name.’\*

4. God thus leaves them in darkness so great that they know not whither to betake themselves with their imaginations and reflections of sense. They cannot advance a single step in meditation, as before, the inward sense now being overwhelmed in this night, and abandoned to dryness so great that they have no more any joy or sweetness in their spiritual exercises, as they had before; and in their place they find nothing but insipidity and bitterness. For, as I said before,† God now, looking upon them as somewhat grown in grace, weans them from the breasts that they may become strong, and cast their swaddling-clothes aside: He carries them in His arms no longer, and shows them how to walk alone. All this is strange to them, for all things seem to go against them.

5. Recollected persons enter the dark night sooner than others, after they have begun their spiritual course; because they are kept at a greater distance from the occasions of falling away, and because they correct more quickly their worldly desires, which is necessary in order to begin to enter the blessed night of sense. In general, there elapses no great length of time after they have begun before they enter the night of sense, and most of them do enter it, for they generally suffer aridities. The Holy Scriptures throughout, but especially the Psalms

\* Apoc. iii. 8.

† Ch. i.

and the prophetical books, furnish many illustrations of the night of sense, for it is so common; but, to avoid prolixity, I omit them for the present, though I shall make use of some of them later on.

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## CHAPTER IX.

Of the signs by which it may be known that the spiritual man is walking in the way of this night or purgation of sense.

BUT as these aridities frequently proceed, not from this night and purgation of the sensitive appetite, but from sins or imperfections, from weakness or lukewarmness, from some physical derangement or bodily indisposition, I shall here propose certain tests by which we may ascertain whether a particular aridity proceeds from the purgation of sense, or from any one of the vices I have just enumerated. There are three chief tests for this purpose:

2. The first is this: when we find no comfort in the things of God, and none also in created things. For when God brings the soul into the dark night in order to wean it from sweetness and to purge the desire of sense, He does not allow it to find sweetness or comfort anywhere. It is then probable, in such a case, that this dryness is not the result of sins or of imperfections recently committed; for if it were, we should feel some inclination or desire for other things than those of God. Whenever we give the reins to our desires in the way of any imperfection, our desires are instantly attracted to it, much or little, in proportion to the affection for it. But still, inasmuch as this absence of pleasure in the things of



heaven and of earth may proceed from bodily indisposition or a melancholy temperament, which frequently cause dissatisfaction with all things, the second test and condition become necessary.

3. The second test and condition of this purgation are that the memory dwells ordinarily upon God with a painful anxiety and carefulness, the soul thinks it is not serving God, but going backwards, because it is no longer conscious of any sweetness in the things of God. In that case it is clear that this weariness of spirit and aridity are not the results of weakness and lukewarmness; for the peculiarity of lukewarmness is the want of earnestness in, and of interior solicitude for, the things of God.

4. There is, therefore, a great difference between dryness and lukewarmness, for the latter consists in great remissness and weakness of will and spirit, in the want of all solicitude about serving God. The true purgative aridity is accompanied in general by a painful anxiety, because the soul thinks that it is not serving God. Though this be occasionally increased by melancholy or other infirmity—so it sometimes happens—yet it is not for that reason without its purgative effects on the desires, because the soul is deprived of all sweetness, and its sole anxieties are referred to God. For when mere bodily indisposition is the cause, all that it does is to produce disgust and the ruin of bodily health, without the desire of serving God which belongs to the purgative aridity. In this aridity, though the sensual part of man be greatly depressed, weak and sluggish in good works, by reason of the little satisfaction they furnish, the spirit is, nevertheless, ready and strong.

5. The cause of this dryness is that God is transferring to the spirit the goods and energies of the senses, which, having no natural fitness for them, become dry, parched up, and empty; for the sensual nature of man is helpless in those things which belong to the spirit simply. Thus the spirit having been tasted, the flesh becomes weak and remiss; but the spirit, having received its proper nourishment, becomes strong, more vigilant and careful than before, lest there should be any negligence in serving God. At first it is not conscious of any spiritual sweetness and delight, but rather of aridities and distaste, because of the novelty of the change. The palate accustomed to sensible sweetness looks for it still. And because the spiritual palate is not prepared and purified for so delicious a taste until it shall have been for some time disposed for it in this arid and dark night, it cannot taste of the spiritual good, but rather of aridity and distaste, because it misses that which it enjoyed so easily before.

6. These, whom God begins to lead through the solitudes of the wilderness, are like the children of Israel, who, though God began to feed them, as soon as they were in the wilderness, with the manna of heaven, which was so sweet that as it is written, it turned to what every man liked,\* were more sensible to the loss of the onions and flesh of Egypt—for they liked them and had revelled in them—than to the delicious sweetness of the angelical food. So they wept and bewailed the flesh-pots of Egypt, saying, ‘We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free-cost; the cucumbers come into our mind, and the

\* Exod. xvi. 15, Wisd. xvi. 21.

melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic.\* Our appetite becomes so depraved that we long for miserable trifles, and loathe the priceless gifts of heaven.

7. But when these aridities arise in the purgative way of the sensual appetite, the spirit though at first without any sweetness, for the reasons I have given, is conscious of strength and energy to act because of the substantial nature of its interior food, which is the commencement of contemplation, dim and dry to the senses. This contemplation is in general secret, and unknown to him who is admitted into it, and with the aridity and emptiness which it produces in the senses, it makes the soul long for solitude and quiet, without the power of reflecting on anything distinctly, or even desiring to do so.

8. Now, if they who are in this state knew how to be quiet, to disregard every interior and exterior work,—for the accomplishment of which they labour,—to be without solicitude about everything, and resign themselves into the hands of God, with a loving interior obedience to His voice, they would have, in this tranquillity, a most delicious sense of this interior food. This food is so delicate that, in general, it eludes our perceptions if we make any special effort to feel it, for, as I am saying, it does its work when the soul is most tranquil and free; it is like the air which vanishes when we shut our hands to grasp it.

9. The words of the bridegroom which, addressed to the bride, in the Canticles, are applicable to this matter: ‘Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have made me

\* Numb. xi. 5.

flee away.\* For this is God's way of bringing the soul into this state; the road by which He leads it is so different from the first, that if it will do anything in its own strength, it will hinder rather than aid His work. It was far otherwise once.

10. The reason is this: God is now working in the soul, in the state of contemplation, that is, when it advances from meditation to the state of proficients, in such a way as to seem to have bound up all the interior faculties, leaving no help in the understanding, no sweetness in the will, no reflections in the memory. Therefore, at this time, all that the soul can do of itself ends, as I have said, in disturbing the peace and the work of God in the spirit amid the dryness of sense. This peace, being spiritual and delicate, effects a work that is quiet and delicate, pacific and utterly alien from the former delights, which were most gross and sensual. This is that peace, according to the Psalmist, which God speaks in the soul to make it spiritual. 'He will speak peace upon His people.†' This brings us to the third test.

11. The third sign we have for ascertaining whether this dryness be the purgation of sense, is inability to meditate and make reflections, and to excite the imagination, as before, notwithstanding all the efforts we may make; for God begins now to communicate Himself, no longer through the channel of sense, as formerly, in consecutive reflections, by which we arranged and divided our knowledge, but in pure spirit, which admits not of successive reflections, and

\* Cant. vi. 4.

† Ps. lxxxiv. 9.



in the act of pure contemplation, to which neither the interior nor the exterior senses of our lower nature can ascend. Hence it is that the fancy and the imagination cannot help or suggest any reflections, nor use them ever afterwards.

12. It is understood here that this embarrassment and dissatisfaction of the senses do not arise out of any bodily ailment. When they arise from this, the indisposition, which is always changeable, having ceased, the powers of the soul recover their former energies, and find their previous satisfactions at once. It is otherwise in the purgation of the appetite, for as soon as we enter upon this, the inability to make our meditations continually grows. It is true that this purgation at first, is not continuous in some persons, for they are not altogether without sensible sweetness and comfort—their weakness renders their rapid weaning inexpedient—nevertheless, it grows upon them more and more, and the operations of sense diminish; if they are going on to perfection. They, however, who are not walking in the way of contemplation, meet with a very different treatment, for the night of aridities is not continuous with them, they are sometimes in it, and sometimes not; they are at one time unable to meditate, and at another able as before.

13. God leads these persons into this night only to try them and to humble them, and to correct their desires, that they may not grow up spiritual gluttons, and not for the purpose of leading them into the way of the spirit, which is contemplation. God does not raise to perfect contemplation everyone that is tried in the way of the

spirit, and He alone knoweth why. Hence it is that these persons are never wholly weaned from the breasts of meditations and reflections, but only, as I have said, at intervals and at certain seasons.

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## CHAPTER X.

How they are to conduct themselves who have entered the dark night.

DURING the aridities, then, of the night of sense—when God effects the change of which I have spoken,\* drawing the soul out of the way of sense into that of the spirit, from meditation to contemplation, where it is helpless in the things of God, so far as its own powers are concerned, as I have said,†—spiritual persons have to endure great afflictions, not so much because of aridity, but because they are afraid that they will be lost on this road; thinking that they are spiritually ruined, and that God has forsaken them, because they find no help or consolation in holy things. Under these circumstances, they weary themselves, and strive, as they were wont, to fix the powers of the soul with some satisfaction upon some matter of meditation, imagining when they cannot do this, and are conscious of the effort, that they are doing nothing. This they do not without great dislike and inward unwillingness on the part of the soul, which enjoys its state of quietness and rest.

2. In thus turning away from this state they make no progress in the other, because, by exerting their own spirit, they lose that spirit which they had, that of

\* Ch. ix., § 5.

† Ch. viii., § 4.

tranquillity and peace. They are like a man who does his work over again; or who goes out of a city that he may enter it once more; or who lets go what he has caught in hunting that he may hunt it again. Their labour is in vain; for they will find nothing, and that because they are turning back to their former ways, as I have said already.\*

3. Under these circumstances, if they meet with no one who understands the matter, these persons fall away, and abandon the right road; or become weak, or at least put hindrances in the way of their further advancement, because of the great efforts they make to proceed in their former way of meditation, fatiguing their natural powers beyond measure. They think that their state is the result of negligence or of sin. All their own efforts are now in vain, because God is leading them by another and a very different road, that of contemplation. Their first road was that of discursive reflection, but the second knows no imagination or reasoning.

4. It behoves those who find themselves in this condition to take courage, and persevere in patience. Let them not afflict themselves, but put their confidence in God, who never forsakes those who seek Him with a pure and upright heart. Neither will He withhold from them all that is necessary for them on this road until He brings them to the clear and pure light of love, which He will show them in that other dark night of the spirit, if they shall merit an entrance into it.

5. The conduct to be observed in the night of sense is this: in nowise have recourse to meditations, for, as I

\* Ascent of Mount Carmel, bk. ii., ch. xii. § 10.

have said, the time is now past, let the soul be quiet and at rest, though they may think they are doing nothing, that they are losing time, and that their lukewarmness is the reason of their unwillingness to employ their thoughts. They will do enough if they keep patience, and persevere in prayer; all they have to do is to keep their soul free, unembarrassed, and at rest from all thoughts and all knowledge, not anxious about their meditation, contenting themselves simply with directing their attention lovingly and calmly towards God; and all this without anxiety or effort, or immoderate desire to feel and taste His presence. For all such efforts disquiet the soul, and distract it from the calm repose and sweet tranquillity of contemplation to which they are now admitted.

6. And though they may have many scruples that they are wasting time, and that it may be better for them to betake themselves to some other good work, seeing that in prayer and meditation they are become helpless; yet let them be patient with themselves, and remain quiet, for that which they are uneasy about is their own satisfaction and liberty of spirit. If they were now to exert their interior faculties, they would simply hinder and ruin the good which, in that repose, God is working in the soul; for if a man while sitting for his portrait cannot be still, but moves about, the painter will never depict his face, and even the work already done will be spoiled.

7. In the same way when the soul interiorly rests, every action and passion, or anxious consideration at that time, will distract and disturb it, and make it feel the dryness and emptiness of sense. The more it strives to find help in affections and knowledge, the more will it feel



the deficiency which cannot now be supplied in that way. It is therefore expedient for the soul which is in this condition not to be troubled because its faculties have become useless, yea, rather it should desire that they may become so quickly; for by not hindering the operation of infused contemplation, to which God is now admitting it, the soul is refreshed in peaceful abundance, and set on fire with the spirit of love, which this contemplation, dim and secret, induces and establishes within it.

8. Still, I do not mean to lay down a general rule for the cessation from meditation; that should occur when meditation is no longer feasible, and only then, when our Lord, either in the way of purgation and affliction, or of the most perfect contemplation, shall make it impossible. At other times, and on other occasions, this help must be had recourse to, namely, meditation on the life and passion of Christ, which is the best means of purification and of patience and of security on the road, and an admirable aid to the highest contemplation. Contemplation is nothing else but a secret, peaceful, and loving infusion of God, which, if admitted, will set the soul on fire with the spirit of love, as I shall show in the explanation of the following verse.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### STANZA I.

*With anxious love inflamed.*

THE burning fire of love, in general, is not felt at first, for it has not begun to burn, either because of our natural impurity, or because the soul, not understanding its own

state, has not given it, as I have said,\* a peaceful rest within. Sometimes, however, whether it be so or not, a certain longing after God begins to be felt; and the more it grows, the more the soul feels itself touched and inflamed with the love of God, without knowing or understanding how or whence that love comes, except that at times this burning so inflames it that it longs earnestly after God. David in this night said of himself, 'My heart is inflamed, and my reins are changed, and I am brought to nothing, and knew not.'† That is, 'my heart hath been inflamed' in the love of contemplation; 'my reins,' that is, my tastes and affections also, have been changed from the sensual to the spiritual way by this holy dryness, and in my denial of them, and 'I am brought to nothing, and I knew not.' The soul, as I have just said, not knowing the way it goeth, sees itself brought to nothing as to all things of heaven and earth, wherein it delighted before, and on fire with love, not knowing how.

2. And because occasionally this fire of love grows in the spirit greatly, the longings of the soul for God are so deep that the very bones seem to dry up in that thirst, the bodily health to wither, the natural warmth and energies to perish in the intensity of that thirst of love. The soul feels it to be a living thirst. So was it with David when he said, 'My soul hath thirsted after God, the strong, living.'‡ It is as if he had said, the thirst of my soul is a living thirst. We may say of this thirst, that being a living thirst, it kills. Though this thirst is not continuously, but only

\* Ascent of Mount Carmel, bk. ii., ch. 13, § 4.

† Ps. lxxii. 21, 22.

‡ Ps. xli. 3.

occasionally, violent, nevertheless it is always felt in some degree.

3. I commenced by observing that this love, in general, is not felt at first, but only the dryness and emptiness of which I am speaking; and then, instead of love, which is afterwards enkindled, what the soul feels in the dryness and the emptiness of its faculties is a general painful anxiety about God, and a certain painful misgiving that it is not serving Him. But a soul anxious and afflicted for His sake, is a sacrifice not a little pleasing unto God. Secret contemplation keeps the soul in this state of anxiety, until, in the course of time, having purged the sensual nature of man, in some degree, of its natural forces and affections by means of the aridities it occasions, it shall have kindled within it this divine love. But in the meantime, like a sick man in the hands of his physician, all it has to do, in the dark night and dry purgation of the desire, is to suffer, healing its many imperfections and practising many virtues, that it may become meet for the divine love, of which I shall speak while explaining the following line :

O happy lot !

4. When God establishes the soul in the dark night of sense, that He may purify, prepare, and subdue its lower nature, and unite it to the spirit, by depriving it of light, and causing it to cease from meditation—as He afterwards establishes it also in the spiritual night, that He may purify the spirit, and prepare it for union with Himself—the soul makes a gain so great, though it does not think so, that it looks upon it as great happiness to

have escaped from the bondage of the senses of its lower nature in that happy night, and therefore it sings—‘O happy lot!’

5. It is necessary now for us to point out the benefits which accrue to the soul in this night, and for the sake of which it pronounces itself happy in having passed through it. All these benefits are comprised in these words :

Forth unobserved I went.

6. This going forth of the soul is to be understood of that subjection to sense under which it laboured when it was seeking after God in weak, narrow, and fitful ways, for such are the ways of man’s lower nature. It then fell at every step into a thousand imperfections and ignorances, as I showed while speaking of the seven capital sins, from all of which the spiritual man is delivered in the dark night which quenches all desire in all things whatsoever, and deprives him of all his lights in meditation, and brings with it other innumerable blessings in the acquirement of virtue, as I shall now show.

7. It will be a great joy and comfort to him who travels on this road, to observe how that which seemed so rugged and harsh, so contrary to spiritual sweetness, works in him so great a good. This good flows from going forth, as I am saying, as to all affections and operations of the soul, from all created things, in this night, and journeying towards those which are eternal, which is a great happiness and a great good. In the first place, because the desires are extinguished in all things; and in the second place, because they are few who persevere and enter in through the narrow gate, by the



strait way that leadeth to life: 'How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it!'\* are words of our Lord.

8. The narrow gate is this night of sense. The soul detaches itself from sense that it may enter on it, directing itself by faith, which is a stranger to all sense, that it may afterwards travel along the strait road of the other night of the spirit, by which it advances towards God in most pure faith, which is the means of union with Him. This road, because so strait, dark, and terrible—for there is no comparison, as I shall show,† between its trials and darkness and those of the night of sense—is travelled by very few, but its blessings are so much the more. I shall begin now to say somewhat, with the utmost brevity, of the blessings of the night of sense, that I may pass on to the other.

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## CHAPTER XII.

Of the benefits which the night of sense brings to the soul.

THIS night and purgation of the appetite is full of happiness to the soul, involving grand benefits, though, as I have said,‡ it seems to it as if all were lost. As Abraham made a great feast on the day of Isaac's weaning,§ so there is joy in heaven when God takes a soul out of its swaddling-clothes; when He takes His arms from under it, and makes it walk alone; when He denies it the sweet milk of the breast and the delicate food of children, and gives it bread with the crust to eat;

\* S. Matt. vii. 14.    † Bk. ii. ch. xii.    ‡ Ch. x. § 3.    § Gen. xxi. 8.

when it begins to taste the bread of the strong, which, in the aridities and darkness of sense, is given to the spirit emptied and dried of all sensible sweetness; namely, the bread of infused contemplation, of which I have spoken.\* This is the first and chief benefit which the soul gains here, and from which almost all the others flow.

2. Of these, the first is the knowledge of self and its own vileness. For over and above that those graces which God bestows on the soul, are ordinarily included in this knowledge of self, these aridities and the emptiness of the faculties as to their former abounding, and the difficulty which good works present, bring the soul to a knowledge of its own vileness and misery, which in the season of prosperity it saw not. This truth is vividly shadowed forth in the book of Exodus. There we read that God, about to humble the children of Israel and bring them to a knowledge of themselves, commanded them to lay aside their ornaments and festival attire, which they ordinarily wore in the wilderness, saying,† ‘Now, lay aside thy ornaments;’ that is, lay aside thy festival attire, and put on thy working dress, that thou mayest know what treatment thou hast deserved.

3. It is as if He said to the people: ‘Inasmuch as the ornaments you wear, being those of joy and festivity, are the cause why you think not meanly of yourselves—you really are mean—lay them aside; so that henceforth clad in vile garments, you may acknowledge that you deserve nothing better, and also who and what you are.’

4. Hereby the soul learns the reality of its own misery, which before it knew not. For in the day of festivity,

\* Ch. vii. § 8.

† Exod. xxxiii. 5.

when it found great sweetness, comfort, and help in God, it was highly satisfied and pleased, thinking that it rendered some service to God. For though it may not then explicitly say so, yet, on account of the satisfaction it finds, it is not wholly free from feeling it. But when it has put on the garments of heaviness, of aridity and abandonment, when its previous lights have become darkness, it possesses and retains more truly that excellent and necessary virtue of self-knowledge, counting itself for nothing, and having no satisfaction in itself, because it sees that of itself it does and can do nothing.

5. This diminished satisfaction with self, and the affliction it feels because it thinks that it is not serving God, God esteems more highly than all its former delights and all its good works, however great they may have been; for they were occasions of many imperfections and ignorances. But in this garb of aridity, not only these, of which I am speaking, but other benefits also of which I shall presently speak, and many more than I can speak of, flow as from their proper source and fount, that of self-knowledge.

6. In the first place, the soul learns to commune with God with more respect and reverence; always necessary in converse with the Most High. Now, in its prosperous days of sweetness and consolation, the soul was less observant of reverence, for the favours it then received, rendered the desire somewhat bold with God, and less reverent than it should have been. Thus it was with Moses, when he heard the voice of God; for carried away by the delight he felt, he was venturing, without further consideration, to draw near, if God had not commanded

him to stop, and put off his shoes, saying, ‘Come not nigh hither; put off the shoes from thy feet.’\* This teaches us how reverently and discreetly in spiritual detachment we are to converse with God. When Moses had become obedient to the voice, he remained so reverent and considerate, that not only did he not venture to draw near, but, in the words of Scripture, ‘durst not look at God.’† For having put off the shoes of desire and sweetness, he recognised profoundly his own wretchedness in the sight of God, for so it became him when about to listen to the words of God.

7. The condition to which God brought Job in order that he might converse with God, was not that of delight and bliss, of which he there speaks, and to which he had been accustomed. God left him in misery, naked on a dung-hill, abandoned and even persecuted by his friends, filled with bitterness and grief, covered with worms;‡ then it was that the Most High, Who lifteth up ‘the poor out of the dung-hill,’§ was pleased to communicate Himself to Job in greater abundance and sweetness, revealing to him ‘the deep mysteries of His wisdom,’|| as He had never done before in the days of Job’s prosperity.

8. And now that I have to speak of it, I must here point out another great benefit of the dark night and aridity of the sensual appetite; the fulfilment of the words of the prophet, ‘Thy light shall rise up in darkness,’¶ God enlightens the soul, making it see not only its own misery and meanness, as I have said, but also His grandeur and majesty. When the desires are

\* Exod. iii. 5.

† Ib. 6.

‡ Job ii. 8; xxx. 17, 18.

§ Ps. cxii. 7.

|| Job xxxviii.

¶ Is. lviii. 10.

quelled, and sensible joy and consolation withdrawn, the understanding remains free and clear for the reception of the truth, for sensible joy and the desire even of spiritual things darken and perplex the mind, but the trials and aridities of sense also enlighten and quicken the understanding in the words of Isaias,\* ‘Vexation alone shall give understanding in the hearing.’ Vexation shall make us understand how God in His divine wisdom proceeds to instruct a soul, emptied and cleansed—for such it must be before it can be the recipient of the divine inflowing—in a supernatural way, in the dark and arid night of contemplation, which He did not do, because it was given up to its former sweetness and joy.

9. The same prophet Isaias sets this truth before us with great clearness, saying, ‘Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand the thing heard? Them that are weaned from the milk, that are plucked away from the breasts.’† The temper of mind, then, meet for the divine inflowing is not so much the milk of spiritual sweetness, nor the breasts of sweet reflections in the powers of sense, which the soul once had, as the failure of the first and withdrawal from the other. Therefore, if we would listen to the voice of the great King with due reverence, the soul must stand upright, and not lean on the affections of sense for support. As the prophet Habacuc said of himself, ‘I will stand upon my watch, and fix my step upon the munition, and I will behold to see what may be said to me.’‡ To stand upon the watch, is to cast off all desires; to fix the step, is to cease from reflections of sense, that I may behold and

\* Is. xxviii. 19.

† Ib. 9.

‡ Habac. ii. 1.



understand what God will speak to me. Thus out of this night springs first the knowledge of one's self, and on that, as on a foundation, is built up the knowledge of God. 'Let me know myself,' saith St. Augustin, 'and I shall then know Thee, O my God,' for, as the philosophers say, one extreme is known by another.

10. In order to show more fully how effectual is the night of sense, in its aridity and desolation, to enlighten the soul more and more, I produce here the words of the Psalmist, which so clearly explain how greatly efficacious is this night in bringing forth the knowledge of God: 'In a desert land, and inaccessible, and without water; so in the holy have I appeared to Thee, that I might see Thy strength and Thy glory.'\* The Psalmist does not say here—and it is worthy of observation—that his previous sweetness and delight were any dispositions or means whereby he might come to the knowledge of the glory of God, but rather that aridity and emptying of the powers of sense spoken of here as the barren and dry land.

11. Moreover, he does not say that his reflections and meditations on divine things, with which he was once familiar, had led him to the knowledge and contemplation of God's power, but, rather, his inability to meditate on God, to form reflections by the help of his imagination; that is the inaccessible land. The means, therefore, of attaining to the knowledge of God, and of ourselves, is the dark night with all its aridities and emptiness; though not in the fulness and abundance of the other night of the spirit; for the knowledge that comes by this is, as it were, the beginning of the other.

\* Ps. lxii. 3.

12. Amid the aridities and emptiness of this night of the desires, the soul acquires also spiritual humility, which is the virtue opposed to the first capital sin, which, I said,\* is spiritual pride. The humility acquired by self-knowledge purifies the soul from all the imperfections into which it fell in the day of its prosperity. For now, seeing itself so parched and miserable, it does not enter into its thoughts, even for a moment, to consider itself better than others, or that it has outstripped them on the spiritual road, as it did before; on the contrary, it acknowledges that others are better.

13. Out of this grows the love of our neighbour, for it now esteems them, and no longer judges them as it used to do, when it looked upon itself as exceedingly fervent, and upon others as not. Now it sees nothing but its own misery, which it keeps so constantly before its eyes that it can look upon nothing else. This state is admirably shown by David himself, when in this dark night, saying, 'I was dumb, and was humbled, and kept silence from good things, and my sorrow was renewed.'† All the good of his soul seemed to him so mean that he could not speak of it; he was silent as to the good of others, because of the pain of the knowledge of his own wretchedness.

14. In this state, too, men are submissive and obedient in the spiritual way, for when they see their own wretchedness they not only listen to instruction, but desire to have it from any one who will guide their steps and tell them what they ought to do. That presumption which sometimes possessed them in their prosperity is

\* Ch. ii.

† Ps. xxxviii. 3.

now gone ; and, finally, all those imperfections are swept clean away to which I referred when I was treating of spiritual pride.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

Of other benefits which the night of sense brings to the soul.

THE imperfections of spiritual avarice, under the influence of which the soul coveted this and that spiritual good, and was never satisfied with this or that practice of devotion, because of its eagerness for the sweetness it found therein, become now, in this arid and dark night, sufficiently corrected. For when the soul finds no sweetness and delight, as it was wont to do, in spiritual things, but rather bitterness and vexation, it has recourse to them with such moderation as to lose now, perhaps, through defect, what it lost before through excess. Though, in general, to those who are brought to this night, God gives humility and readiness, but without sweetness, in order that they may obey Him solely through love. Thus they detach themselves from many things, because they find no sweetness in them.

2. The soul is purified, also, from those impurities of spiritual luxury of which I have spoken before,\* in this aridity and bitterness of sense which it now finds in spiritual things ; for those impurities are commonly said to proceed generally from the sweetness which flowed occasionally from the spirit into the sense.

3. The imperfections of the fourth sin, spiritual gluttony, from which the soul is delivered in the dark

\* Ch. iv.

night, have been discussed in a former chapter,\* though not all, because they cannot be numbered. Nor shall I speak of them here, for I wish to conclude the subject of this night, that I may pass on to the other, with regard to which I have serious things to write. Let it suffice for a knowledge of the innumerable advantages which the soul, in addition to those already mentioned, gains, in this night, wherewith to resist spiritual gluttony, to say that it is set free from the imperfections there enumerated, and from many other and greater evils than those described, into which many fall, as we learn by experience, because they have not corrected their desires in the matter of spiritual gluttony.

4. For when God has brought the soul into this arid and dark night, He so curbs desire and bridles concupiscence that it can scarcely feed at all upon the sensible sweetness of heavenly or of earthly things, and this so continuously that it corrects, mortifies, and controls its concupiscence and desires, so that the forces of its passions seem to be destroyed. Marvellous benefits flow from that spiritual soberness, in addition to those I have mentioned; for because it mortifies concupiscence and desire, the soul dwells in spiritual tranquillity and peace; for, where concupiscence and desire have no sway, there is no trouble, but, rather, the peace and consolation of God.

5. Another benefit comes from this; a constant remembrance of God, with the fear and dread that it is, as I have said,† going back on the spiritual way. This is a great benefit, and not one of the least, of aridity and

\* Ch. vi.

† Ch. ix § 3.

purgation of the appetite, for the soul is purified and cleansed thereby, from those imperfections which clung to it because of the affections and desires, the effect of which is to darken and deaden the soul.

6. Another very great benefit to the soul in this night is, that it practices many virtues at once, as patience and longsuffering, which are well tried in these aridities, the soul persevering in its spiritual exercises without sweetness or comfort. The love of God is practised, because it is no longer attracted by sweetness and consolation, but by God only. The virtue of fortitude also is practised, because amid these difficulties, and the absence of sweetness in good works from which the soul now suffers, it gathers strength from weakness, and so becomes strong: finally, all the virtues, cardinal, theological, and moral, are practised amidst these aridities.

7. In this night the soul obtains these four benefits here mentioned, namely, delight of peace, constant remembrance of God, purity and cleanness of soul, the practice of all the virtues of which I have just spoken. So David speaks from his own experience when he was in this night. ‘My soul,’ he saith, ‘refuses to be comforted; I was mindful of God and was delighted, and was exercised, and my spirit fainted.’ He adds forthwith: ‘I meditated in the night with my own heart, and I was exercised, and I swept my spirit’\* clean of all affections.

8. The soul is purified also in this aridity of the desires from the imperfections of the other three capital sins of which I have spoken,† envy, anger, and sloth, and

\* Ps. lxxvi. 3, 4, 7.

† Ch. vii.



acquires the opposite virtues. Softened and humbled by these aridities, by the hardships, temptations, and afflictions which in this night try it, it becomes gentle with God, with itself, and with its neighbour. It is no longer impatiently angry with itself because of its own faults, nor with its neighbour because of his; neither is it discontented or given to unseemly complaints against God because He does not sanctify it at once. As to envy, the soul is in charity with everyone, and if any envy remain, it is no longer vicious as before, when the soul was afflicted when it saw others preferred to it, and raised higher; for now it yields to everyone considering its own misery, and the envy it feels, if it feels any, is a virtuous envy, a desire to emulate them, which is great virtue.

9. The sloth and weariness now felt in spiritual things are no longer vicious as they were once. They were once the fruit of spiritual delights which the soul experienced at times, and sought after when it had them not. But this present weariness proceeds not from the failure of sweetness, for God has taken it all away in this purgation of the desire.

10. Other innumerable benefits beside these, flow from this arid contemplation; for, in the midst of these aridities and hardship, God communicates to the soul, when it least expects it, spiritual sweetness, most pure love, and spiritual knowledge of the most exalted kind, of greater worth and profit than any of which it had previous experience, though at first the soul may not think so, for the spiritual influence now communicated is most delicate, and imperceptible by sense.

11. Finally, as the soul is purified from all sensual

affections and desires, it attains to liberty of spirit, wherein the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost are had. It is also delivered in a most wonderful way from the hands of its three enemies—the devil, the world, and the flesh; for when all the delight and sweetness of sense are quenched, the devil, the world, and the flesh have no weapons and no strength wherewith to assail it.

12. These aridities, then, make the soul love God in all pureness, for now it is influenced not by the pleasure and sweetness which it found in its works—as perhaps it was when that sweetness was present—but by the sole desire to please God. It is not presumptuous and self-satisfied, as perhaps it may have been in the day of its prosperity, but timid and diffident, without any self-satisfaction. Herein consists that holy fear by which virtues are preserved and grow. This aridity quenches concupiscence, and our natural spirits, as I said before;\* for now, when God infuses, from time to time, His own sweetness into the soul, it would be strange if it found by any efforts of its own as has been already said,† any comfort or sweetness in any spiritual act or practice.

13. The fear of God and the desire to please Him increase in this arid night; for as the breasts of sensuality which nourished and sustained the desires which the soul followed after, become dry, nothing remains in that aridity and detachment but an anxious desire to serve God, which is most pleasing unto Him, as it is written: ‘a sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit.’‡

14. When the soul beholds the many and great benefits which have fallen to its lot in this arid purification

\* Ch. iv. § 9.

† Ch. ix. § 11.

‡ Ps. l. 19.

through which it passed, it cries out with truth, ‘oh, happy lot, forth unobserved I went.’ I escaped from the bondage and thralldom of my sensual desires and affections, unobserved, so that none of my three enemies were able to hinder me. These enemies of the soul already spoken of\* so bind and imprison it in sensual desires and affections, that it cannot go forth out of itself to the liberty of the perfect love of God; without them they cannot attack it.

15. Hence, when by continual mortification the four passions of the soul are calmed, that is, joy, grief, hope, and fear, when the natural desires are lulled to sleep in our sensual nature by persistent aridities, when the senses and the interior powers of the soul cease to be active, and meditation no longer pursued, as has been already said,† which is the household of the lower part of the soul, then the liberty of the spirit is unassailable by these enemies and the house remains calm and tranquil as the words that follow show.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

The last line of the first stanza explained.

‘My house being now at rest.’ When the house of sensuality was at rest, that is, when the passions were mortified, concupiscence quenched, the desires subdued and lulled to sleep in the blessed night of the purgation of sense, the soul began to set out on the way of the spirit, the way of proficients, which is also called the

\* § 11.

† Ch. ix. 8.

illuminative way, or the way of infused contemplation, wherein God Himself teaches and refreshes the soul without meditation or any active efforts that itself may deliberately make. Such, as I have said, is this night and purgation of the senses.

2. But this night, in their case who are to enter into that other more awful night of the spirit, that they may go forward to the divine union of the love of God—it is not everyone, but only a few who do so in general—is attended with heavy trials and temptations of sense of long continuance, in some longer than in others; for to some is sent the angel of satan, the spirit of impurity, to buffet them with horrible and violent temptations of the flesh, to trouble their minds with filthy thoughts, and their imaginations with representations of sin most vividly depicted; which, at times, becomes an affliction more grievous than death.

3. At other times this night is attended by the spirit of blasphemy; the thoughts and conceptions are overrun with intolerable blasphemies, which now and then are suggested to the imagination with such violence as almost to break forth in words; this, too, is a heavy affliction.

4. Again, another hateful spirit, called by the prophet, ‘the spirit of giddiness,’\* comes to torment them. This spirit so clouds their judgment that they are filled with a thousand scruples and perplexities so embarrassing that they can never satisfy themselves about them, nor submit their judgment therein to the counsel and direction of others. This is one of the most grievous stings and

\* Is. xix. 14.

horrors of this night, approaching very nearly to that which takes place in the night of the spirit.

5. God ordinarily sends these violent storms and temptations, in the night of the purgation of the sense to those whom He is about to lead afterwards into the other night—though all do not enter in—that being thus chastened and buffeted they may prove themselves, dispose and inure sense and faculties for the union of the divine wisdom to which they are to be then admitted. For if the soul be not tempted, tried, and proved in temptations and afflictions, sense will never attain to wisdom. That is why it is said in Ecclesiasticus,\* ‘What doth he know,’ asks the wise man, ‘that hath not been tried? . . . he that hath no experience knoweth little. . . . he that hath not been tried, what manner of things doth he know?’ Jeremias also bears witness to the same truth, saying: ‘thou hast chastised me, and I was instructed.’† The most proper form of this chastening, for him who will apply himself unto wisdom, are those interior trials of which I am now speaking. They are that which most effectually purges sense of all sweetness and consolations, to which, by reason of our natural weakness, we are addicted, and by them the soul is really humbled that it may be prepared for its coming exaltation.

6. But how long the soul will continue in this fast and penance of sense, cannot with certainty be told, because it is not the same in all, neither are all subjected to the same temptations. These trials are measured by the divine will, and are proportioned to the imperfections,

\* Eccles. xxxiv. 9, 10, 11.

† Jerem. xxxi. 18.



many or few, to be purged away : and also to the degree of union in love to which God intends to raise the soul ; that is the measure of its humiliations, both in their intensity and duration.

7. Those who are strong and more able to bear suffering, are purified in more intense trials, and in less time. But those who are weak are purified very slowly, with weak temptations, and the night of their purgation is long : their senses are refreshed from time to time lest they should fall away ; these, however, come late to the pureness of their perfection in this life, and some of them never. These persons are not clearly in the purgative night, nor clearly out of it ; for though they make no progress, yet in order that they may be humble and know themselves, God tries them for a season in aridities and temptations, and visits them with His consolations at intervals lest they should become faint-hearted, and seek for comfort in the ways of the world.

8. From other souls, still weaker, God, as it were, hides Himself, that He may try them in His love, for without this hiding of His face from them they would never learn how to approach Him. But those souls that are to enter so blessed and high a state as this of the union of love, however quickly God may lead them, tarry long, in general, amidst aridities, as we see by experience. Having now brought the first book to a close, I proceed to treat of the second night,

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## BOOK II.

## OF THE NIGHT OF THE SPIRIT.

## CHAPTER I.

The Second Night ; that of the spirit. When it begins.

THE soul, which God is leading onwards, enters not into the union of love at once when it has passed through the aridities and trials of the first purgation and night of sense ; yea, rather it must spend some time, perhaps years, after quitting the state of beginners, in exercising itself in the state of proficients. In this state—as one released from a rigorous imprisonment—it occupies itself in divine things with much greater freedom and satisfaction, and its joy is more abundant and interior than it was in the beginning before it entered the night of sense ; its imagination and faculties are not held, as hitherto, in the bonds of meditation and spiritual reflections ; it now rises at once to most tranquil and loving contemplation, and finds spiritual sweetness without the fatigue of meditation.

2. However, as the purgation of the soul is still somewhat incomplete—the chief part, the purgation of the spirit, being wanting, without which, by reason of the union of our higher and lower nature, man being an individual, the purgation of sense, however violent it may have been, is not finished and perfect—the soul will never

be free from aridities, darkness, and trials, sometimes much more severe than in the past, which are, as it were, signs and heralds of the coming night of the spirit, though not so lasting as that expected night ; for when the days or the season of this tempestuous night have passed, the soul recovers at once its wonted serenity. It is in this way that God purifies some souls who are not to rise to so high a degree of love as others. He admits them at intervals into the night of contemplation or spiritual purgation, causing the sun to shine upon them, and then to hide its face, according to the words of the Psalmist : ‘ He sendeth His crystal,’ that is contemplation, ‘ like morsels.’\* These morsels of dim contemplation are, however, never so intense as is that awful night of contemplation of which I am speaking, and in which God purposely places the soul, that He may raise it to the divine union.

3. That sweetness and interior delight, which proficients find so easily and so plentifully, come now in greater abundance than before, overflowing into the senses more than they were wont to do previous to the purgation of sense. The senses now being more pure, can taste of the sweetness of the spirit in their way with greater ease. But as the sensual part of the soul is weak, without any capacity for the strong things of the spirit, they who are in the state of proficients by reason of the spiritual communications made to the sensual part, are subject therein to great infirmities and sufferings, and physical derangements, and consequently weariness of mind, as it is written : ‘ the corruptible body . . . presseth

\* Ps. cxlvii. 17.

down the mind.\* Hence the communications made to these cannot be very strong, intense, or spiritual, such as they are required to be for the divine union with God, because of the weakness and corruption of the sensual part which has a share in them.

4. Here is the source of ecstasies, raptures, and dislocation of the bones which always happen whenever these communications are not purely spiritual; that is, granted to the mind alone, as in the case of the perfect, already purified in the second night of the spirit. In these, raptures and physical sufferings have no place, for they enjoy liberty of spirit with unclouded and unsuspended senses. To make it clear how necessary it is for proficients to enter into the night of the spirit, I will now proceed to point out certain imperfections and dangers which beset them.

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## CHAPTER II.

### Of certain imperfections of proficients.

PROFICIENTS labour under two kinds of imperfections; one habitual, the other actual. The habitual imperfections are their affections and imperfect habits which still remain, like roots, in the mind, where the purgation of sense could not penetrate. The difference between the purgation of these and of the others, is like the difference between plucking out a root, and tearing off a branch, or removing a fresh, and an old stain. For, as I have said,† the purgation of sense is, for the

\* Wisd. ix. 15.

† Bk. I, ch. xi., § 3.

spirit, merely the gate and entrance of contemplation, and serves rather to bend sense to the spirit than to unite the latter with God. The stains of the old man still remain in the spirit, though not visible to it, and if they be not removed by the strong soap and lye of the purgation of this night, the spirit cannot attain to the pureness of the divine union.

2. They suffer also from dulness of mind, and natural rudeness which every man contracts by sin; from distraction and dissipation of mind, which must be refined, enlightened, and made recollected in the sufferings and hardships of this night. All those who have not advanced beyond the state of proficients are subject to these habitual imperfections, which cannot co-exist with the perfect state of union with God in love.

3. But all are not subject to actual imperfections in the same way; some, whose spiritual good is so much on the surface, and so much under the influence of sense, fall into certain unseemlinesses and dangers, of which I spoke in the beginning of this book. For as their mind and sense and feelings are full of fancies whereby they very often see imaginary and spiritual visions—all this, together with other pleasurable impressions, befall many of them in this state, wherein the devil and their own proper fancy most frequently delude the soul—and as satan is wont with so much sweetness to insinuate, and impress these imaginations, they are easily deluded and influenced by him, because they do not take the precaution to resign themselves into the hands of God, and defend themselves vigorously against these visions and impressions. For now the devil causes them both to believe in many vain



visions and false prophecies, and to presume that God and His saints are speaking to them : they also frequently believe in their own fancies.

4. Now, too, satan is wont to fill them with pride and presumption ; and they, led on by vanity and arrogance make a show of themselves in the performance of exterior acts which have an air of sanctity, such as ecstasies and other appearances. They thus become bold with God, losing holy fear, which is the key and guard of all virtue. Some of them become so entangled in manifold falsehoods and delusions, and so\* persist in them, that their return to the pure road of virtue and real spirituality is exceedingly doubtful. They fall into this miserable condition because they gave way to these spiritual imaginations and feelings with over much confidence when they began to advance on the road of spirituality.

5. I have much to say of these imperfections of theirs, and how much more incurable these are than the others, because they consider them as more spiritual than those ; but I shall pass on. One thing, however, I must say, to establish the necessity of the spiritual night which is the purgation of the soul that is to go on to perfection, that there is not one among the proficient, however great may be his exertions, who can be free from many of these natural affections and imperfect habits, the purification of which must, as I have said, necessarily precede the divine union.

6. Besides, and I have said it before,\* because the spiritual communications reach also to the lower part of the soul, they cannot be as intense, pure, and strong, as

\* Bk. ii., ch. ii., § 3 : Bk. i., ch. i., § 4.

the divine union demands, and, therefore, if that is to be attained, the soul must enter the second night of the spirit where—perfectly detaching sense and spirit from all sweetness and from all imaginations—it will travel on the road of faith dark and pure, the proper and adequate means of union, as it is written: ‘I will espouse thee to Me in faith,’\* that is, I will unite Myself to thee in faith.

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### CHAPTER III.

Notes on that which is to follow.

PROFICIENTS, then, experienced during the past time these sweet communications, in order that the sensual part of the soul, allured and attracted by the spiritual sweetness overflowing from the spirit, may be united and made one with the spiritual part; both parts eating the same spiritual food, each in its own way, off the same dish of their one being, that, thus in a certain way become one and concordant, they might be prepared for the sufferings of the sharp and rough purgation of the spirit which is before them. In that purgation the two parts of the soul, the spiritual and the sensual, are to be wholly purified, for neither of them can be perfectly purified without the other, and the purgation of sense is then effectual when that of the spirit commences in earnest.

2. Hence it is that the night of sense may and should be called a certain re-formation and bridling of desire, rather than purgation, because all the imperfections and disorders of the sensual part having their strength and

\* Os. ii., 20.

roots in the mind, can never be wholly purged away until the evil habits, rebelliousness and perverseness of the mind are corrected. Therefore, in this night ensuing, both parts of the soul are purified together: this is the end for which it was necessary to have passed through the re-formation of the first night, and to have attained to that tranquillity which is its fruit, in order that sense and spirit, made one, may both be purified and suffer together with the greater courage, most necessary for so violent and sharp a purgation. For if the weakness of the lower part be not redressed, and if it have acquired no courage in God, in the sweet communions with Him subsequently enjoyed, nature would have been unprepared and without strength for the trials of this night.

3. The intercourse of proficients with God is, however, still most mean, because the gold of the spirit is not purified and refined. They think, therefore, and speak of Him as children, and their feelings are those of children, as described by the Apostle: ‘When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child;’\* because they have not reached perfection, which is union with God in love. But in the state of union, having grown to manhood, they do great things in spirit—all their actions and all their faculties being now rather divine than human, as I shall hereafter explain†—for God is stripping them of the old man, and clothing them with the new, as it is written: ‘Put on the new man, who is created according to God;’‡ and again, ‘Be reformed in the newness of your mind.’§

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

‡ Ephes. iv. 24.

† Ch. iv. § 2.

§ Rom. xii. 2.

4. He now denudes the faculties, the affections, and feelings, spiritual and sensual, interior and exterior, leaving the understanding in darkness, the will dry, the memory empty, the affections of the soul in the deepest affliction, bitterness, and distress; withholding from it the former sweetness it had in spiritual things, in order that this privation may be one of the principles, of which the mind has need, that the spiritual form of the spirit, which is the union of love, may enter into it and be one with it.

5. All this our Lord effects in the soul by means of contemplation, pure and dark, as it is described by it in the first stanza. That stanza, though explained in the beginning of the night of sense, the soul understands it principally of this second night of the spirit, because that is the chief part of the purification of the soul. I shall, therefore, apply it in this sense, and explain it here again.

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## CHAPTER IV.

Explanation of the first stanza.

*In a dark night,  
With anxious love inflamed.  
O, happy lot!  
Forth unobserved I went,  
My house being now at rest.*

TAKING these words, then, with reference to purgation, contemplation, or detachment, or poverty of spirit—these are, as it were, one and the same thing—they may be

thus explained in this way, as if the soul were saying : In poverty, without help in all my powers, the understanding in darkness, the will under constraint, the memory in trouble and distress, in the dark, in pure faith, which is the dark night of the natural faculties, the will alone touched by grief and affliction, and the anxieties of the love of God, I went forth out of myself, out of my low conceptions and lukewarm love, out of my scanty and poor sense of God, without being hindered by the flesh or the devil.

2. This was to me a great blessing, a happy lot, for by annihilating and subduing my faculties, passions, and affections—the instruments of my low conceptions of God—I went forth out of the scanty works and ways of my own to those of God : that is, my understanding went forth out of itself, and from human became divine ; for united to God in that purgation, it understands no more within its former limits and narrow bounds, but in the divine wisdom to which it is united.

3. My will went forth out of itself becoming divine, for now, united with the divine love, it loves no more with its former scanty powers and circumscribed capacity, but with the energy and pureness of the divine spirit. Thus the will acts now in the things of God, not in a human way, and the memory also is transformed in eternal apprehensions of glory. Finally, all the energies and affections of the soul are in this night and purgation of the old man, renewed into a divine temper and delight.

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## CHAPTER V.

Explains how this dim contemplation is not a night only, but pain and torment also for the soul.

*In a dark night.*

THE dark night is a certain inflowing of God into the soul, which cleanses it of its ignorances and imperfections, habitual, natural, and spiritual. Contemplatives call it infused contemplation, or mystical theology, whereby God secretly teaches the soul and instructs it in the perfection of love, without efforts on its own part beyond a loving attention to God, listening to His voice and admitting the light He sends, but without understanding how this is infused contemplation. And inasmuch as it is the loving wisdom of God, it produces special effects in the soul, for it prepares it, by purifying and enlightening it, for union with God in love: it is the same loving wisdom, which by enlightening purifies the blessed spirits, that here purifies and enlightens the soul.

2. But it may be asked: Why does the soul call the divine light, which enlightens the soul and purges it of its ignorances, the dark night? I reply, that the divine wisdom is, for two reasons, not night and darkness only, but pain and torment also to the soul. The first is, the divine wisdom is so high that it transcends the capacity of the soul, and therefore is, in that respect, darkness. The second reason is based on the meanness and impurity of the soul, and in that respect the divine wisdom is painful to it, afflictive and dark also.

3. To prove the truth of the first reason, we take for granted a principle of the philosopher, namely, the more

clear and evident divine things are, the more dark and hidden they are to the soul, naturally. Thus the more clear the light the more does it blind the eyes of the owl,\* and the stronger the sun's rays the more it blinds the visual organs; overcoming them, by reason of their weakness, and depriving them of the power of seeing. So the divine light of contemplation, when it beats on the soul, not yet perfectly enlightened, causes spiritual darkness, because it not only surpasses its strength, but because it blinds it and deprives it of its natural perceptions.

4. It is for this reason that St. Dionysius and other mystic theologians call infused contemplation a ray of darkness, that is, for the unenlightened and unpurified soul, because this great supernatural light masters the natural power of the reason and takes away its natural way of understanding. Therefore, David also said: 'Clouds and darkness are round about Him;†' not that this is so in reality, but in reference to our weak understanding, which, in light so great, becomes dimmed and blind, unable to ascend so high. He repeats it, saying: 'At the brightness that was before Him the clouds passed,‡' that is, between Him and our understanding. This is the reason why the illuminating ray of hidden wisdom, when God sends it from Himself into the soul not yet transformed, produces thick darkness in the understanding.

\* [Aristot. Metaphysic. lib. 1. *prope finem*. 'Ωαπερ γὰρ τὰ τῶν νυκτερίδων ὄμματα πρὸς τὸ φέγγος ἔχει τὸ μεθ' ἡμέραν, οὕτω καὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας ψυχῆς ὁ νοῦς πρὸς τὰ τῇ φύσει φανερώτατα πάντων.']

† Ps. xcvi. 2.

‡ Ib. xvii. 13.

5. This dim contemplation is, in its beginnings, painful also to the soul. For as the infused divine contemplation contains many excellences in the highest degree, and the soul, which is the recipient, because not yet pure, is involved in many miseries the result is—as two contraries cannot co-exist in the same subject—that the soul must suffer and be in pain, being the subject in which the two contraries meet, and resist each other because of the purgation of the soul from its imperfections, which is being wrought by contemplation. I shall show it to be so by the following induction.

6. In the first place, because the light and wisdom of contemplation is most pure and bright, and because the soul, on which it beats, is in darkness and impure, that soul which is the recipient must greatly suffer. As eyes weakened and clouded by humours suffer pain when the clear light beats upon them, so the soul, by reason of its impurity, suffers exceedingly when the divine light really shines upon it. And when the rays of this pure light strike upon the soul, in order to expel its impurities, the soul perceives itself to be so unclean and miserable that it seems as if God had set Himself against it, and itself were set against God. So grievous and painful is this feeling—for it thinks now that God has abandoned it—that it was one of the heaviest afflictions of Job during his trial. ‘Why hast Thou set me contrary to Thee, and I become burdensome to myself?’\* The soul seeing distinctly in this bright and pure light, though dimly, its own impurity, acknowledges its own unworthiness before God and all creatures.

7. That which pains it still more is the fear it has that

\* Job. vii. 20.

it never will be worthy, and that all its goodness is gone. This is the fruit of that deep impression, made on the mind, in the knowledge and sense of its own wickedness and misery. For now the divine and dim light reveals to it all its wretchedness, and it sees clearly that of itself it can never be other than it is. In this sense we can understand the words of the Psalmist: 'For iniquities Thou hast chastised man, and Thou hast made his soul pine away as a spider.'\*

8. In the second place, the pain of the soul comes from its natural and spiritual weakness; for when this divine contemplation strikes it with a certain vehemence, in order to strengthen it and subdue it, it is then so pained in its weakness as almost to faint away, particularly at times when the divine contemplation strikes it with greater vehemence; for sense and spirit, as if under a heavy and gloomy burden, suffer and groan in agony so great that death itself would be a desired relief.

9. This was the experience of Job, and he said, 'I will not that He contend with me with much strength, nor that He oppress me with the weight of his greatness.'† The soul under the burden of this oppression feels itself so removed out of God's favour that it thinks—and so it is—that all things which consoled it formerly have utterly failed it, and that no one is left to pity it. Job also speaks to the same purport, 'Have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me, at the least you my friends, because the hand of our Lord hath touched me.'‡ Wonderful and piteous sight! So great are the weakness and impurity of the soul that the hand of God, so soft and so gentle, is

\* Ps. xxxviii. 12. † Job xxiii. 6. ‡ Job. xix. 21.

felt to be so heavy and oppressive, though neither pressing nor resting on it, but merely touching it, and that, too, most mercifully; for He touches the soul not to chastise it, but to load it with His graces.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### Of other sufferings of the soul in this night.

THE third kind of suffering and pain for the soul comes from the meeting of two extremes, the human and the divine: the latter is the purgative contemplation; the human, is the soul itself. The divine touches the soul to renew it and to ripen it, in order to make it divine, to detach it from the habitual affections and qualities of the old man, to which it clings and conforms itself. The divine extreme so breaks and bruises the soul, swallowing it up in profound darkness, that the soul, at the sight of its own wretchedness, seems to perish and waste away, by a cruel spiritual death, as if it were swallowed up and devoured by a wild beast, suffering the pangs of Jonas in the belly of the whale. For it must lie buried in the grave of a gloomy death that it may attain to the spiritual resurrection for which it hopes. David describes this kind of pain and suffering—though it really baffles description—when he says, ‘The sorrows of death have compassed me . . . the sorrows of hell have compassed me. . . . In my tribulation I have called upon our Lord, and have cried to my God.’\*

\* Ps. xvii. 5, 6, 7.



2. But the greatest affliction of the sorrowful soul in this state is the thought that God has abandoned it, of which it has no doubt; that He has cast it away into darkness as an abominable thing. The thought that He has abandoned it is a grievous and pitiable affliction. David experienced the same trials when he said, 'As the wounded sleeping in the sepulchres, of whom Thou art mindful no more; and they are cast off from Thy hand. They have put me in the lower lake, in the dark places, and in the shadow of death. Thy fury is confirmed upon me; and all Thy waves Thou hast brought in upon me.'\*

3. For, in truth, when the soul is in the pangs of the purgative contemplation, the shadow of death and the pains and torments of hell are most acutely felt, that is, the sense of being without God, being chastised and abandoned in His wrath and heavy displeasure. All this and even more the soul feels now, for a fearful apprehension has come upon it that thus it will be with it for ever. It has also the same sense of abandonment with respect to all creatures, and that it is an object of contempt to all, especially to its friends; and so the Psalmist continues, saying, 'Thou hast put away my acquaintance far from me; they have set me an abomination to themselves.'†

4. The prophet Jonas also, as one who had experience of this, both bodily and spiritually, witnesses to the same truth, saying, 'Thou hast cast me forth into the depth, in the heart of the sea, and a flood hath compassed me: all Thy surges and Thy waves have passed over me. And I said, I am cast away from the sight of Thine eyes: but

\* Ib. lxxxvii. 6, 7, 8.

† Ib. 9.

yet I shall see Thy holy temple again,'—this is the purgation of the soul that it may see God—'the waters have compassed me even to the soul, the depth hath enclosed me, the sea hath covered my head. I am descended to the extreme parts of the mountains: the bars of the earth have shut me up for ever.\*' The bars of the earth here are the imperfections of the soul which hinder it from having any joy in this sweet contemplation.

5. The fourth kind of pain is caused by another excellence peculiar to this dim contemplation, a sense of God's majesty and greatness, which makes it conscious of the other extreme, its own poverty and misery; this is one of the chief sufferings of this purgation. The soul is conscious of a profound emptiness, and destitution of the three kinds of goods, natural, temporal, and spiritual, which are ordained for its comfort; it sees itself in the midst of the opposite evils, miserable imperfections and aridities, emptiness of the understanding, and abandonment of the spirit in darkness.

6. Inasmuch as God is now purifying the soul in its sensual and spiritual substance, its interior and exterior powers, it is necessary for it that it should be in all its relations empty, poor and abandoned, in aridity, emptiness, and darkness. For the sensual part is purified in aridities, the faculties in the emptiness of their powers, and the spirit in the thick darkness.

7. All this God brings about by means of this dim contemplation, in which the soul is made to suffer from the failure and withdrawal of its natural powers, which is a most distressing pain. It is like that of a person

\* Jon. ii. 4—7.

being suffocated, or hindered from breathing. But this contemplation is also purifying the soul, undoing or emptying it, or consuming in it, as fire consumes the rust and mouldiness of the metal, all the affections and habits of imperfection which it had contracted in the whole course of its life. But inasmuch as these habits are deeply rooted in the soul, the interior sufferings and trials it has to undergo are heavy, and are, in addition to the destitution and emptiness, natural and spiritual, of which I have spoken.

8. The words of the prophet Ezechiel are now fulfilled: ‘Heap together the bones which I will burn with fire: the flesh shall be consumed, and the whole composition shall be sodden, and the bones shall dry away.’\* This describes the pain which the soul suffers in the sensual and spiritual parts when in this state of emptiness and poverty. Then the prophet proceeds, saying: ‘Set it also upon hot burning coals empty, that the brass thereof may wax hot and be melted; and let the filth of it be melted in the midst thereof, and let the rust thereof be consumed.’†

9. This is the heavy trial of the soul in the purifying fires of contemplation. The prophet says that, in order to purge away and consume the filth of the affections which are within the soul, it is necessary for it, in a certain way to be annihilated and undone, because its passions and affections have become natural to it. The soul, therefore, because it is purified in this furnace, like gold in a crucible, according to the words of Wisdom, ‘as gold in the furnace He hath proved them,’‡ feels itself

\* Ezech. xxiv. 10.

† Ib. xxiv. 11.

‡ Wisd. iii. 6.

utterly consumed in its innermost substance in this absolute poverty wherein it is as it were lost. This is taught us by the Psalmist, saying of himself: 'Save me, O God, because waters are entered unto my soul. I stick fast in the mire of the depth; and there is no sure standing. I am come into the depth of the sea: and a tempest hath overwhelmed me. I have laboured crying, my jaws are made hoarse, my eyes have failed, whilst I hope in my God.'\*

10. Here God is humbling the soul that He may exalt it much hereafter, and if it were not His will that these feelings, when they rise, should be quickly lulled again, the soul would almost immediately depart from the body, but they occur only at intervals in their greatest violence. They are occasionally felt so acutely that the soul seems to see hell and perdition open before it. Of these, are they who go down alive into hell, and have their purgatory in this life; for this is the purgation to be endured there for venial sins. And thus the soul which passes through this state in the present life, and is perfectly purified, either enters not into purgatory, or is detained there but a moment, for one hour here is of greater profit than many there.

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## CHAPTER VII.

The same subject continued. Other afflictions and trials of the will.

THE afflictions and distress of the will now are also very great; they occasionally pierce the soul with a sudden

\* Ps. lxxviii. 2—4.

recollection of the evils that environ it, and of the uncertainty of relief. To this is superadded the memory of past happiness; for they who enter this night have, generally, had much sweetness in God, and served Him greatly; but now, to see themselves strangers to so much happiness, and unable to recover it, causes them the greatest affliction.

2. Job also, having learnt this by experience, declares it in these words: 'I sometime that wealthy one, suddenly am broken; He hath held my neck, broken me, and set me to Himself as it were a mark. He hath compassed me with His spears, He hath wounded my loins, He hath not spared, and hath poured out on the earth my bowels. He hath cut me with wound upon wound: He hath come violently upon me as it were a giant. I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, and have covered my flesh with ashes. My face is swollen with weeping, and my eyelids are dim.\* So many and so great are the torments of this night, and so many the places in the Holy Writings, which may be quoted to this effect, that time and strength would fail me were I to enumerate them. For no doubt, all that can be said will fall short; something may be gathered on the matter from the texts already before us.

2. And now to conclude the subject of the first line of the stanza, and to show what this night is to the soul, I will repeat how it was felt by the prophet Jeremias: 'I, the man that see my poverty in the rod of His indignation. He hath led me and brought me into darkness, and not into light. Only against me He hath turned, and hath converted His hand all the day. He

\* Job xvi. 13—17.



hath made my skin old and my flesh; He hath broken my bones. He hath built round about me, and He hath compassed me with gall and labour. In dark places He hath placed me as the everlasting dead. He hath built round about against me, I go not forth. He hath aggravated my fetters. Yea, and when I shall cry and ask, He hath excluded my prayer. He hath shut up my ways with square stones. He hath subverted my paths. He is become unto me a bear lying in wait; a lion in secret places. He hath subverted my paths, and hath broken me; He hath made me desolate. He hath bent His bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He hath shot in my reins the daughters of His quiver. I am made a derision to all my people, their song all the day. He hath replenished me with bitterness, He hath inebriated me with wormwood. And He hath broken my teeth by number; He hath fed me with ashes. And my soul is repelled from peace; I have forgotten good things. And I said: Mine end is perished and mine hope from our Lord. Remember my poverty and transgression, the wormwood and the gall. Remembering I will be mindful; and my soul shall languish in me.\*

3. These are the lamentations of the prophet over these pains and trials, whereby he most vividly depicts the sufferings of the soul, which come upon it in this purgation and spiritual night. That soul is worthy of all compassion which God leads into this dreadful and horrible night. For, although it is well with it because of the great blessing of which this night is the source, for as Job saith, God will raise up good things for it out of

\* Lament. iii. 1—20.

this darkness, and bring light over the shadow of death : ‘ Who revealeth profound things out of darkness, and bringeth forth the shadow of death into light ; ’\* so that His light shall be as the darkness ; ‘ the darkness thereof so also the light thereof,’ as David speaks.† Nevertheless, because of the excessive pain it endures, and the great uncertainty of relief, it imagines now, as the prophet says, that its calamities will never come to an end. God, in the words of David, having made it to ‘ dwell in darkness as those that have been dead of old,’ the spirit being in anguish within it, and ‘ the heart within ’ it ‘ troubled,’ it is a very painful and pitiable state.

4. Besides, the soul derives no consolation now in the advice that may be given it, or from its spiritual director, because of the loneliness and desolation of this dark night. Though its confessor may set before it in many ways good reasons why it should be comforted because of the blessings which these pains supply, the soul will not believe him. For as it is so filled with and overwhelmed by its sense of these evils, whereby it discerns so clearly its own misery, it imagines that its spiritual director, not seeing that which itself sees and feels, speaks as he does without comprehending its state, and, instead of being comforted, is pained anew, for it considers that his counsel cannot relieve its misery ; and in truth so it is, for until our Lord shall have perfected the purification of the soul, according to His will, no help and no remedy can be of any service or profit in this pain.

5. Moreover, the soul can do so little in this state ; like a prisoner in a gloomy dungeon, bound hand and

\* Job xii. 22.

† Ps. cxxxviii. 12.

foot, it cannot stir, neither can it see or feel any relief, either from above or below, until the spirit is softened, humbled, and purified; until it becomes so refined, simple, and pure, as to become one with the Spirit of God in that degree of the union of love which He in His mercy intends for it, and corresponding to which is the greater or less violence, the longer or shorter duration, of this purgation.

6. But if this purgation is to be real it will last, notwithstanding its vehemence, for some years, but admitting of intermissions and relief, during which, by the dispensation of God, the dim contemplation divested of its purgative form and character assumes that of the illuminative and of love. Under this form of it, the soul, like one escaped from the dungeons of its prison into the comfort of space and freedom, enjoys the sweetness of peace, and the loving tenderness of God in the flowing abundance of spiritual communications. This is to the soul a sign of the spiritual health which is being wrought within by this purgation, and a foretaste of the abundance it hopes for. So much so is this at times that it thinks all its trials are over. For such is the nature of spiritual things in the soul, when they are most purely spiritual, that the soul thinks when trials return, they will never end, and that all its blessings have perished; and when it prospers in its spiritual course it thinks all its calamities are past, and that it shall always abound in good things. Thus it was with David when he said: 'In my abundance I said: I shall never be moved.'\*

7. The reason of this is that the actual presence of

\* Ps. xxix. 7.

one thing in the mind is naturally inconsistent with the presence and sense of its contrary ; this is not so much so in the sensual part of the soul, because of the weakness of its apprehension. But as the spirit is not yet wholly purified and cleansed from the imperfections contracted by its lower nature, though more resolute and consistent now, it is liable to further sufferings, so far as it is under the dominion of these affections, as we see in the many afflictions and distress of David after the change, though he had said in the day of his prosperity, ‘ I shall never be moved.’

8. In the same way the soul, amidst the abundance of spiritual blessings, but not observing the root of imperfection and impurity which still remains, thinks that all its trials are over. This thought, however, is of rare occurrence, for until the spiritual purgation is complete, the sweet communications are rarely so abundant as to conceal the root that remains behind, in such a way that the soul shall not be inwardly conscious of some deficiency, or that something still is to be done. Nor is the communication such as to allow it to enjoy the relief that is offered it perfectly, for it feels as if an enemy were lurking within, who, though he may be as if subdued and asleep, the soul fears it may yet return in his strength and assault it as before.

9. And so it comes to pass, for when the soul is most secure it returns, drags down the soul and then plunges it at once into another affliction heavier, darker, and sadder than the previous one, and which, perhaps, will be of longer continuance. The soul again is convinced that all its good is gone from it for ever. Experience cannot

teach it: the blessings that followed its former trials, during which it thought that its sufferings would never end, cannot hinder it from believing, during its present trials, that all its good has perished, and that it will never be again with it as it was before. For, as I am saying, this belief, so persistent, is wrought in the soul by the present impression made on the mind, which destroys within it all the occasions of joy.

10. Thus the soul in this purification, though it seems to love God greatly, and is ready to die for Him a thousand deaths—and that is true, for souls thus tried love God with great sincerity, nevertheless they find no relief, but rather an increase of pain herein. For seeking God alone, and nought else, seeing also its own great misery, it doubts whether God be not angry with it. It cannot then persuade itself that there is anything in it worthy of love, but rather is convinced that there is that in it which should make it hated not only of God, but of all creatures also for ever; it grieves to see that of itself it deserves to be abandoned of Him Whom it so loves and so longs for.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

Of other sufferings which distress the soul in this state.

ANOTHER source of much affliction and distress to the soul in this state is that, as the dark night hinders the exercise of the faculties and affections, it cannot lift up the heart and mind to God as before, nor pray to Him.



It thinks itself to be in that state described by Jeremias when he said, 'Thou hast set a cloud before Thee, that prayer may not pass.'\* This is the meaning of the words quoted before†—'He hath shut up my ways with square stones.'‡ If at any time it prays, it prays with so much aridity, and without sweetness, so as to think that God neither hears nor regards it; as the prophet tells us in the same place, saying, 'Yea, and when I shall cry, and ask, He excludeth my prayer.'§ And, in truth, this is the time for the soul, in the words of Jeremias, to put its 'mouth in the dust,'|| suffering in patience this purgation.

2. It is God Himself Who is now working in the soul, and the soul is therefore powerless. Hence it comes that it cannot pray or give much attention to divine things. Neither can it attend to temporal matters, for it falls into frequent distractions, and the memory is so profoundly weakened, that many hours pass by without its knowing what it has done or thought, what it is doing or is about to do; nor can it give much heed to what it is occupied with, notwithstanding all its efforts.

3. Inasmuch, then, as not only the understanding is purified from its imperfect perceptions, and the will from its affections, but the memory, also, from all its knowledge and reflections, it is necessary that the soul should be annihilated herein, that the words of the Psalmist, when he was in this purgation may be fulfilled: 'I am brought to nothing, and I knew not.'¶ This 'knowing not' extends to these follies and failures of the memory.

\* Lam. iii. 44.

† Ch. vii. § 2.

‡ Ib. iii. 9.

§ Ib. iii. 8.

|| Ib. iii. 29.

¶ Ps lxxii. 22.

These wanderings and failures of the memory are the result of interior recollection, by which the soul is absorbed in contemplation. For in order to prepare the soul, and temper it divinely in all its powers for the divine union of love, it must, first of all, be absorbed with all its powers in the divine and dim spiritual light of contemplation, and be thus detached from all affection for, and apprehension of, created things. This continues ordinarily in proportion to the intensity of its contemplation.

4. Thus, then, the more pure and simple the divine light when it beats on the soul, the more does it darken it, empty it, and annihilate it, as to all its apprehensions and affections, whether they regard heavenly or earthly things. And also, the less pure and simple the light, the less is the soul darkened and annihilated. It seems strange to say, that the purer and clearer the supernatural and divine light the more is it in the soul, and that it is less so when less pure.

5. But this may be easily explained; if we keep in mind the saying of the philosopher that supernatural things are more dark to the understanding the more clear and evident they are in themselves. Thus the ray of high contemplation, transcending as it does the natural powers, striking the soul with its divine light, makes it dark, and deprives it of all the natural affections and apprehensions which it previously entertained in its own natural light. Under these circumstances, the soul is left not only in darkness but in emptiness also, as to its powers and desires, both natural and spiritual, and in this emptiness and darkness is purified and enlightened by the divine

spiritual light, but it does not imagine that it has it ; yea, rather, it thinks itself to be in darkness.

6. As a ray of light, if pure, and if there be nothing to reflect it, or against which it strikes, is almost invisible, and is by reflection better seen, so the spiritual light, which beats on the soul is, of itself, neither visible nor perceptible, because it is so pure, but when it beats upon anything that reflects it, that is, upon any matter of perfection which presents itself to the understanding or a decision to be made as to the truth or falsehood of anything, the soul sees it at once, and understands the matter more clearly than it ever did before it entered into this darkness. In the same way the soul discerns the spiritual light which is given it that it may easily recognize its own imperfection ; thus, when a ray of light is of itself not so visible, but when the hand or any other object is held before it, the hand is seen forthwith, and the light of the sun is known to be there.

7. Then, because this spiritual light is so clear, pure and diffused, neither confined to, nor specially related to, any particular matter of the understanding—seeing that with respect to all such matters the powers of the soul are empty and as if they did not exist—the soul in great ease and freedom discerns and searches into every thing high or low, that is presented to it ; and for that reason the Apostle said, ‘ The Spirit searcheth all things, even the profundities of God ; ’\* for it is of this pure and diffused wisdom that we are to understand that which the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of the wise man, ‘ Wisdom reacheth everywhere by reason of her clearness ; ’† that is,

\* 1 Cor. ii. 10.

† Wisd. vii. 24.

because not connected with any particular object of the understanding or affection. The characteristic of a mind purified and annihilated as to all particular objects of affection and of the understanding, is to have no pleasure in, or knowledge of, anything in particular; to abide in emptiness and darkness; to embrace all things in its grand comprehensiveness, that it may fulfil mystically the words of the Apostle, ‘having nothing and possessing all things,’\* for such poverty of spirit merits such a blessing.

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## CHAPTER IX.

How this night enlightens the mind though it brings darkness over it.

IT remains for me now to explain that this blessed night, though it darkens the mind, does so only to give it light in every thing; and though it humbles it and makes it miserable, does so only to raise it up and set it free; and though it impoverishes it and empties it of all its natural self and liking, it does so only to enable it to reach forward divinely to the possession and fruition of all things, both of heaven and earth, in perfect liberty of spirit. As it is fitting that the primary elements, that they may enter into the composition of all natural substances, should have no colour, taste, nor smell peculiar to themselves, in order that they may combine with all colours, all tastes, and all smell, so the mind must be pure, simple, and detached from all kinds of

\* 2 Cor. vi. 10.

natural affections, actual and habitual, in order that it may be able to participate freely in the largeness of spirit of the divine wisdom, wherein by reason of its pureness it tastes of the sweetness of all things in a certain pre-eminent way. And without this purgation it is altogether impossible to taste of the abundance of these spiritual delights. For one single affection remaining in the soul, or any one matter to which the mind clings either habitually or actually, is sufficient to prevent all perception and all communication of the tender and interior sweetness of the spirit of love, which contains within itself all sweetness supremely.

2. As the children of Israel, merely on account of that single affection for, and remembrance of, the fleshpots of Egypt, could not taste the delicious bread of angels, the manna in the desert, which as the divine writings tell us, had 'the sweetness of all taste,' and 'turned to that every man would,'\* so the mind which is still subject to any actual or habitual affection or particular or narrow mode of apprehending, or understanding anything, cannot taste the sweetness of the spirit of liberty, according to the desire of the will. The reason is this: the affections, feelings, and apprehensions of the perfect spirit, being of so high an order and specially divine, are of another kind and different from those which are natural; and in order to be actually and habitually enjoyed, require the annihilation of the latter.

3. It is therefore very expedient and necessary, if the soul is to advance to these heights, that the dark night of contemplation should first bring it to nothing, and undo

\* Wisd. xvi. 20, 21.



it in all its meannesses, bringing it into darkness, aridities, loneliness, and emptiness; for the light that is to be given it is a certain divine light of the highest nature, surpassing all natural light, and not naturally cognisable by the understanding. If the understanding is to be united with that light, and become divine in the state of perfection, it must first of all be purified and annihilated as to its natural light, which must be brought actually into darkness by means of this dim contemplation.

4. This darkness must continue so long as it is necessary to destroy the habit, long ago contracted, of understanding things in a natural way, and until the divine enlightening shall have taken its place. And therefore inasmuch as the power of understanding, previously exerted, is natural, the result is that the darkness now endured is awful, and most afflictive, because it reaches to, and is felt in, the innermost depths of the spirit. In the same way, inasmuch as the affection of love, communicated in the divine union, is divine, and therefore most spiritual, subtile, delicate, and most interior, surpassing all sense and affection, natural and imperfect, of the will and every desire of the same, it is necessary for the fruition, in the union of love, of this divine affection and most exquisite delight, that the will should be first purified and annihilated, as to all its affections and feelings, left in darkness and distress proportional to the intensity of the habit of natural affections it had acquired, in respect both of human and divine things.

5. And this must be done, in order that the will, in

the fire of dim contemplation, wasted, withered, and deprived of all selfishness—like the liver of the fish which Tobias laid on the burning coals\*—may acquire a pure and simple disposition, a purified and sound taste, so as to feel those sublime and wonderful touches of divine love when it shall be divinely transformed; all its former contrarieties actual and habitual being expelled.

6. Moreover, in order to attain to the divine union, for which the dark night disposes it, the soul must be endowed and replenished with a certain glorious magnificence in the divine communication, which includes innumerable blessings and joys, surpassing all the abundance which the soul can naturally possess—so speak the prophet Isaias and S. Paul, ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him’† it is necessary for it that it should be first brought into a state of emptiness and spiritual poverty, detached from all help and consolation in all the things of heaven and earth, that being thus empty it may be really poor in spirit and divested of the old man, and may live that new and blessed life to which it attains in this dark night which is the state of union with God.

7. And because the soul is to attain to the possession of a certain sense, and divine knowledge, most generous and full of sweetness, of all human and divine things which do not fall within the common-sense and natural perceptions of the soul—it views them with different eyes now; as the light and grace of the Holy Ghost differ from those of sense, the divine from the human—it is necessary

\* Tob. viii. 2.

† Is. lxiv. 4; 1 Cor. ii. 9.

that the spirit should be brought low, and inured to hardships in all that relates to the natural and common sense. It must suffer hardships and afflictions in the purgative contemplation, and the memory must become a stranger to all pleasing and peaceful knowledge, with a most interior sense and feeling of being a stranger and a pilgrim here, so that all things shall seem strange to it, and other than they were wont to seem.

8. For this night is drawing the spirit away from its ordinary and common sense of things, that it may draw it towards the divine sense, which is a stranger and an alien to all human ways; so much so that the soul seems to be carried out of itself. At other times it looks upon itself as if under the influence of some charm or spell, and is amazed at all that it hears and sees, which seem to it to be most strange and out of the way, though in reality they are as they usually are, the same. The reason is this: the soul has become a stranger to the ordinary sense of things, in order that being brought to nothing therein, it might be informed in the divine. Now this belongs more to the next life than to this.

9. The soul suffers all these afflictive purgations of the spirit that it may be born again to the life of the spirit through the divine inflowing, and in these pangs bring forth the spirit of salvation, fulfilling the words of Isaias: 'So are we become in Thy presence, O Lord. We have conceived, and been as it were in labour, and have brought forth the spirit'\* of salvation. Moreover, as in the night of contemplation the soul is prepared for that tranquillity and inward peace which is such and

\* Is. xxvi. 17, 18.

so full of delight as, in the words of Scripture, to 'pass all understanding,'\* it is necessary for the soul that all its former peace, which, because involved in so many imperfections, was no peace, though it seemed to be a twofold peace, namely, of sense and spirit, because it was pleasing, should first of all be purified, and the soul withdrawn from and disturbed in that imperfect peace, as Jeremias felt and lamented in the words cited before to express the trials of the night that is now past, namely: 'My soul is repelled from peace.'†

10. This is a painful unsettling, full of misgivings, imaginations, and inward struggles, in which the soul, at the sight and in the consciousness of its own misery, imagines itself to be lost, and all its good to have perished for ever. In this state the spirit is pierced by sorrow so profound as to occasion strong spiritual groans and cries, to which at times it gives utterance, and tears break forth, if there be any strength left for them, though this relief is but rarely granted. The royal prophet David has well described this state, being one who had great experience of it, saying, 'I am afflicted and humbled exceedingly; I roared with the groaning of my heart.'‡ This roaring proceeds from great pain; for sometimes the sudden and sharp recollection of the miseries that environ the soul, makes it feel such pain and grief that I know not how it can be explained otherwise than by the words of Job: 'as overflowing waters so is my roaring.'§ For as waters sometimes overflow, drown and fill all places, so this roaring, and sense of pain, become occasionally so

\* Phil. iv. 7.

† Lam. iii. 17.

‡ Ps. xxxvii. 9.

§ Job iii. 24.

strong as to flow over and into the soul, filling all its deepest affections and energies with spiritual pain and sorrow which defy all exaggeration.

11. Such is the work wrought in the soul by this night that hideth the hopes of the light of day. It was in reference to it that Job said, 'In the night my mouth is pierced with sorrows, and they that feed upon me do not sleep.'<sup>\*</sup> The mouth here is the will, pierced by these sorrows which cease not to tear the soul, neither do they sleep, for the doubts and misgivings which harass it are never at rest.

12. This warfare and combat are deep, because the peace hoped for is most deep: the spiritual sorrow is interior, refined, and pure, because the love to be enjoyed must be also most interior and pure. The more interior and perfect the work, the more interior, perfect, and pure must the labour be that produces it; and the stronger the building, the more solid it is. 'My soul fadeth within myself,' saith Job, 'and the days of affliction possess me.'<sup>†</sup> So, in the same way, because the soul has to attain to the enjoyment and possession, in the state of perfection to which it journeys in this purgative night, of innumerable blessings, of gifts, and virtues, both in the substance of the soul and in the powers thereof, it is necessary that it should first consider and feel itself generally a stranger to and deprived of them all, and regard them as so far beyond its reach as to be persuaded that it never can attain to them, and that all goodness is perished from it. This is the meaning of those words of Jeremias, 'I have forgotten good things.'<sup>‡</sup>

\* Job xxx. 17.

† Ib. xxx. 16.

‡ Lam. iii. 17.



13. Let us now see why the light of contemplation, so sweet and lovely to the soul that nothing is more desirable—for it is that, as I said before,\* whereby the divine union takes place, and whereby the soul in the state of perfection finds all the good it desires—produces, when it strikes the soul, these painful beginnings and terrible effects? The answer is easy, and is already given in part; there is nothing in contemplation and the divine inflowing, to cause pain, but rather much sweetness and joy, as the soul will find later. The cause is the imperfection and weakness of the soul, and dispositions not fit for the reception of this sweetness. And so, when the divine light beats upon the soul, it makes it suffer in the way described.

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## CHAPTER X.

Explanation of this purgation by a comparison.

To make what I have said, and what I have still to say, more clear, it is well to observe here that this purgative and loving knowledge, or divine light, of which I have spoken, is to the soul which it is purifying, in order to unite it perfectly to itself, as fire is to fuel which it is transforming into itself. The first action of material fire on fuel is to dry it, to expel from it all water and all moisture. It blackens it at once and soils it, and drying it by little and little, makes it light and consumes all its foulness and blackness which are contrary to itself. Finally, having heated and set on fire its outward surface,

\* Bk. ii. ch. v. §§ 1, 2.

it transforms the whole into itself, and makes it beautiful as itself. The fuel under these conditions retains neither active nor passive qualities of its own, except bulk and weight, and assumes all the properties and acts of fire. It becomes dry, being dry it glows, and glowing, burns; luminous, it gives light, and burns more quickly than before. All this is the property and effect of fire.

2. It is in this way we have to reason about the divine fire of contemplative love which, before it unites with, and transforms the soul into, itself, purges away all its contrary qualities. It expels its impurities, blackens it and obscures it, and thus its condition is apparently worse than it was before. For while the divine purgation is removing all the evil and vicious humours, which, because so deeply rooted and settled in the soul, were neither seen nor felt, but now in order to their expulsion and annihilation, are rendered clearly visible in the dim light of the divine contemplation, the soul—though not worse in itself, nor in the sight of God—seeing at last what it never saw before, looks upon itself not only as unworthy of His regard, but even as a loathsome object and that God does loathe it. By this comparison we shall be able to understand much that I have said, and purpose to say.

3. In the first place, we can see how that very light, and that loving knowledge which unites the soul and transforms it into itself, is the same which purifies and prepares it; for the fire that transforms the fuel and incorporates it with itself, is the very same which also at the first prepared it for that end.

4. In the second place, we may see that these

sufferings of the soul do not proceed from the divine wisdom—it being written, ‘All good things came to me together with her,’\*—but from its own weakness and imperfection, being incapable, previous to its purgation, of receiving this divine light, sweetness, and delight; and that is the reason why its sufferings are so great. The fuel is not transformed into fire, at the instant of their contact, if it be not previously prepared for burning.

5. This is the experience of the Wise Man, who thus describes his sufferings before his union with, and possession of, wisdom: ‘My soul hath wrestled in it. . . My belly was troubled in seeking it; therefore shall I possess a good possession.’†

6. In the third place we learn by the way how souls suffer in purgatory. The fire would have no power over them if they were perfectly prepared for the kingdom of God, and union with Him in glory, and if they had no faults for which they must suffer, for these are the matter on which that fire seizes; when that matter is consumed there is nothing more to burn. So is it here, when all imperfections are removed, the suffering of the soul ceases, and in its place comes joy as deep as it is possible for it to be in this life.

7. In the fourth place, we learn that the soul, the more it is purified and cleansed in the fire of love, the more it glows with it. The better the fuel is prepared for the fire the better it burns. The soul, however, is not always conscious of this burning of love within it, but only now and then, when the contemplation is less profound, for the soul is then able to observe, and even to

\* Wisd. vii. 11.

† Ecclus. li. 25—29.

delight in, the work that is being wrought, because it is visible ; the hand of the artificer seems to be withdrawn from the work, and the iron taken out of the furnace, so as to show in some measure the work that is being wrought. Then, too, the soul is able to see in itself that good which it did not see while the process was going on. Thus, when the flame ceases to envelope the fuel, it is possible to see clearly how much of it has been burnt.

8. In the fifth place, we shall also find by this comparison that which has been said before,\* namely, how true it is that after these consolations, the soul suffers again more intensely and keenly than it did before. For after the manifestation of the work that has been done, when the more outward imperfections have been expelled, the fire of love returns again to purge and consume that which is more interior. The suffering of the soul herein becomes more penetrating, deep, and spiritual, according as it refines away the more profound, subtle, and deeply rooted interior imperfections of the spirit. It is here as with the fuel in the fire, the deeper the fire penetrates the greater is its force and energy in disposing the inmost substance of the fuel for its own possession of it.

9. In the sixth place, we shall learn that the soul, though it rejoices intensely in these intervals of peace—so much so that it seems at times, as we have said, to think its trials over, never to return, even while it is certain that they will soon return—cannot but feel, if it observes a single root of imperfection behind—and sometimes it must do so—that its joy is not full. It seems as if that

\* Ch. vii. § 9.

root threatened to spring up anew, and when that is so, it does so quickly.

10. Finally, that which still remains to be purified and enlightened within cannot well be concealed from the soul in the presence of that which has been already purified ; so also that portion of the fuel which is still to be set on fire is very different from that which the flame has purified. And when this purgation commences anew in the inmost soul, it is not strange that it should consider all its goodness to have perished, and think that it can never recover its former prosperity ; for in most interior sufferings all outward goodness is hidden from it.

11. Keeping this comparison, then, before our eyes, with that which I have already said,\* on the first line of this stanza, concerning this dark night and its fearful characteristics, it may be well to leave the subject of these afflictions of the soul, and to enter on the matter of the fruit of its tears and their blessed properties, of which the soul sings in the second line.

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## CHAPTER XI.

Begins the explanation of the second line of the first, and shows how a vehement passion of divine love is the fruit of these sharp afflictions of the soul.

*With anxious love inflamed.*

IN this line the soul speaks of the fire of love of which we have spoken,† and which, in the night of painful contemplation, seizes upon it as material fire on the fuel it burns. This burning, though in a certain way

\* Ch. iii.

† Ch. x.



resembling that which, as we explained before,\* takes place in the sensual part of the soul, is still, in one sense, as different from this, of which I am now speaking, as the soul is from the body, the spiritual from the sensual. For this is a certain fire of love in the spirit whereby the soul, amidst these dark trials, feels itself wounded to the quick by this strong love<sup>†</sup> divine with a certain sense and foretaste of God, though it understands nothing distinctly, because, as I have said,† the understanding is in darkness.

2. The spirit is now conscious of deep love, for this spiritual burning produces the passion of it. And inasmuch as this love is infused in a special way, the soul corresponds only passively with it, and thus a strong passion of love is begotten within it. This love has in it something of the most perfect union with God, and thus partakes in some measure of its properties, which are more especially actions of God received in the soul rather than of the soul, consenting unto them in simplicity and love.

3. But this warmth and force and temper and passion of love, or burning, as the soul calls it, are solely the work of God Who is entering into union with it. The more the desires are restrained, subdued, and disabled for the enjoyment of the things of heaven and earth, the more room does this love find in the soul, and better the dispositions for its reception, so that it may unite itself with that soul, and wound it. This takes place, as has been said before,‡ during the dark purgation in a wonderful way, for God has so weaned the faculties, and

\* Bk. I, ch. viii. § 1.

† Ch. ix. § 3.

‡ Bk. I, ch. i., § 2.

they are now so recollected in Him, that they are unable to take pleasure as they like in anything whatever.

4. All this is the work of God ; wrought with a view to withdraw the faculties of the soul from all objects whatever, and to concentrate them upon Himself, that the soul may acquire greater strength and fitness for the strong union of love of God which He is communicating in the purgative way ; and in which the soul must love Him with all its strength and desire of sense and spirit, which it could never do if the faculties thereof were dissipated by other satisfactions. The Psalmist, therefore, that he might be able to receive this strong love of the union with God, said unto Him, ‘ I will keep my strength for Thee ; ’ \* that is, all my capacity and desires, the strength of my faculties, neither will I suffer them to do or rejoice in anything but Thee.

5. Here we may perceive, in some degree, how great and how vehement is this burning of love in the spirit when God gathers and collects together all the strength, faculties, and desires of the soul, both spiritual and sensual, so that all this unison may use all its energies and all its forces in this love, and so come to satisfy truly, and in perfection, the first commandment, which, neglecting nothing that belongs to man, and shutting out nothing that is his from this love, saith, namely, ‘ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength.’ †

6. When all the desires and energies of the soul are thus recollected in this burning of love, and the soul

\* Ps. lviii. 10.

† Deut. vi. 5.

itself touched, wounded, and set on fire with love, in them all, what must the movements and affections of these desires and energies be when they are thus wounded and burning in this strong love, when that love does not satiate them, when they are in darkness and doubt about it, and suffering also, beyond all question, a more grievous hunger, in proportion to the past experience of God? For the touch of this love and of the divine fire so dries up the spirit, and enkindles its longing to satisfy its thirst, that it turns upon itself a thousand times, and longs for God in a thousand ways, as David did when he said, ‘For Thee my soul hath thirsted, for Thee my flesh, O how many ways;’\* that is, in desire. Another version reads, ‘My soul thirsteth after Thee, my soul is dying for Thee.’

7. This is the reason why the soul says, ‘With anxious love inflamed.’ In all its works and thoughts, in all its employments and on every occasion, the soul loves and longs in many ways, and this longing also is manifold in its forms, always and everywhere present; the soul has no rest, feeling itself to be wounded, and on fire with anxious love; its state is thus described by holy Job: ‘As a servant desireth the shadow, as the hired man tarrieth for the end of his work, so I also have had vain months, and have numbered to myself laborious nights. If I sleep, I shall say, When shall I arise? and again I shall expect the evening, and shall be replenished with sorrows even until darkness.’† The soul is discontented with itself, with heaven and with earth, being replenished with sorrows even until the darkness of which Job is here

\* Ps. lxii. 2.

† Job vii. 2—4.

speaking. That darkness, speaking in a spiritual sense, and according to the matter which I am discussing, is distress and suffering without the comfort of any certain hope of any light and spiritual good.

8. The anxieties and sufferings of the soul while thus on fire with love are the greater, because of their twofold origin: the spiritual darkness which envelopes it is one, and that afflicts it with doubts and misgivings. The love of God which sets it on fire is the other, which stirs it with the wound of love and makes it burn marvellously. These two kinds of suffering are thus referred to by Isaias, being in a like condition: 'My soul hath desired Thee in the night;' that is, in misery. This is one kind of pain which proceeds from the dark night, 'Yea, and with my spirit in my heart I will watch to Thee in the morning.'\* This is the other kind of suffering in desire and anxiety, which proceed from love, in the bowels of the spirit; that is, the spiritual affections. The soul, however, amidst these gloomy and loving pains, is conscious of a certain companionship and inward strength which attends upon it and so invigorates it that if the burden of this oppressive darkness be removed, it oftentimes feels itself desolate, empty, and weak. The reason is that the force and courage communicated to the soul flow passively from the dark fire of love which assails it, and so, when that fire ceases to assail it, the darkness, the strength, and fire of love at the same time cease in the soul.

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\* Is. xxvi. 9.

## CHAPTER XII.

Shows how this awful night is a purgatory, and how in it the divine wisdom illuminates men on earth with that light in which the angels are purified and enlightened in heaven.

WHAT I have said will enable us to see how the dark night of loving fire purifies in the darkness, and how the soul in the darkness is set on fire. We shall also see that, as the dark and material fires in the next life, so the loving, dark, and spiritual fires here, purify and cleanse the predestinate. The difference is that in the next world they are purified by fire, and here, purified and enlightened by love. David prayed for this love when he said, 'Create a clean heart in me, O God!'<sup>\*</sup> for cleanness of heart is nothing else but the love and grace of God. 'The clean of heart,' are called blessed by our Saviour, and it is as if He had said, blessed are those who love, for blessedness can come of nothing less than love.

2. The following words of Jeremias, 'From on high He hath cast a fire in my bones, and hath taught me,'<sup>†</sup> show plainly that the soul is purified when it is enlightened in the fire of loving wisdom, for God never grants the mystical wisdom without love; it being love itself that infuses it into the soul. David also saith that the wisdom of God is silver tried in the purifying fire of love; 'words of our Lord are chaste words, silver examined by fire,'<sup>‡</sup> for the dim contemplation infuses into the soul love and wisdom, in every one according to its necessity and capacity, enlightening the soul, and cleansing it of all its ignorances,

<sup>\*</sup> Ps. l. 12.

<sup>†</sup> Lam. i. 13.

<sup>‡</sup> Ps. xi. 7.



according to the words of the Wise Man, 'He hath enlightened my ignorances.'\*

3. Here, also, we learn that the wisdom which purifies the ignorances of the angels, flowing from God through the highest, down to the lowest, in the order of the heavenly hierarchy, and thence to men, is that very wisdom which purifies these souls and enlightens them. All the works of the angels, and all the inspirations they suggest, are, therefore, in Holy Scripture, truly and properly said to be their work and God's work: for, ordinarily, His inspirations come through the angels; they receiving them one from another instantaneously,† as the light of the sun penetrates many windows at once, arranged one behind the other. For though it is true that the light of the sun pierces all, yet each window conveys and pours that light into the next, somewhat modified, according to the nature of the glass, somewhat weaker and fainter, according to the distance from the sun.

4. Hence it follows, with respect to the higher and lower angels, the nearer they are to God the more they are purified and enlightened in the general purgation; the lowest in rank receiving their illumination in a less perfect degree. But man, being lower than the angels, must, when God raises him to the state of contemplation, receive that enlightenment according to his capacity in a

[\* 'Ignorantias meas illuminavit.' These words have been expunged from Ecclus. li. 26, by the Roman censure.]

[† Scot. 2. Sent. dist. 10, qu. unic. Secundum communem processum et ordinem revelantur majora Dei mysteria superioribus priusquam inferioribus, et ita superiores mittuntur ad inferiores, loquendo et illuminando eos interius, et alii inferiores mittuntur exterius ad illa revelata nuncianda hominibus vel explenda.]

limited degree, and with suffering. For the light of God which illumines an angel enlightens him, and sets him on fire with love, for he is a spirit already prepared for the infusion of that light; but man, being impure and weak, is ordinarily enlightened, as I said before,\* in darkness, in distress and pain—the sun's rays are painful in their light to weak eyes—till the fire of love, purifying him, shall have spiritualised and refined him, so that being made pure he may be able to receive with sweetness, like the angels, the union of this inflowing love; for, as we shall explain, with the help of our Lord, there are souls who, in this life, are more perfectly enlightened than even the angels. But, in the meantime, this contemplation and loving knowledge come upon the soul through trials and loving anxiety, of which I am now speaking.

5. The soul is not always conscious of this burning and anxious love; for in the beginning of the spiritual purgation all the divine fire is employed in drying up and preparing the soul, rather than in setting it on fire. But when the soul has become heated in the fire, it then feels most commonly this burning and warmth of love. And now, as the understanding is being purified more and more in this darkness, it happens occasionally that this mystical and affective theology, while inflaming the will, wounds also by enlightening the other faculty of the understanding with a certain divine light and knowledge, so sweetly and so divinely, that the will, aided by it, glows in a marvellous manner, the divine fire of love burning within it with living flames, so that the soul appears to have received a living fire with a living understanding.

\* Ch. x. § 1.

This is what David referred to when he said, ‘My heart waxed hot within me, and in my meditation a fire shall burn,\* so vehemently that I thought it to be already on fire.’

6. This kindling of love, in the union of these two powers, the understanding and the will, is to the soul a great treasure and delight, because it is certain that the foundations of the perfection of the union of love, for which the soul hopes, are now laid in that darkness. Thus the soul does not reach this sublime sense and love of God without passing through many tribulations, and accomplishing a great part of its purgation. But for other degrees of this union, lower than this, which are of ordinary occurrence, so intense a purgation is not required.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

Other sweet effects wrought in the soul in the dark night of contemplation.

By the expression ‘burning’ we understand some of the sweet effects which are wrought in the soul by the dark night of contemplation; for occasionally, amid the darkness, the soul receives light—‘light shineth in darkness’†—the mystical inflowing streaming directly into the understanding, and the will in some measure partaking of it, with a calmness and pureness so exquisite and so delicious to the soul as to be utterly indescribable: now God is felt to be present in one way, and again in another. Sometimes, too, it wounds the will at the same

\* Ps. xxxviii. 4.

† St. John i. 5.

time, and enkindles love deeply, tenderly, and strongly ; for, as I have said, the more the understanding is purified the more perfectly and delicate, at times, is the union of the understanding and the will. But, before the soul attains to this state, it is more common for the touch of the fire of love to be felt in the will than for the touch of the perfect intelligence to be felt in the understanding.

2. This burning, and thirst of love, inasmuch as it now proceeds from the Holy Ghost, is very different from that of which I spoke in describing the night of sense.\* For though sense also has now its part in this, because it cannot but share in the afflictions of the spirit ; yet the root and living force of the thirst of love are felt in the higher part of the soul, that is, in the spirit. The spirit perceives and understands what it feels, and that it possesses not that which it longs for, so that it counts as nothing all the pain it feels, though it is beyond comparison greater than the pain of the first night, which is the night of sense ; for it thoroughly understands that one great good is absent, and that there is no remedy possible.

3. It may be observed here that, although at first, in the beginning of the spiritual night, this burning love is not felt because the fire of love has not yet done its work, God communicates to the soul, instead of it, a reverent love of Himself so great that, as I have said,† the heaviest trials and deepest afflictions of this night are the distressing thought that it has lost God, and that He has abandoned it. It may, therefore, be always said that

\* Bk. I, ch. xi. § 2.

† Ch. v. § 7.

from the beginning of this night the soul is full of the anxieties of love, at one time that of reverence, at another that of burning. It is evident that the greatest of its sufferings is this doubt: for if it could be persuaded that all is not lost and over, and that the trials it undergoes are, as in truth they are, for its greater good, and that God is not angry, it would make no account whatever of all these afflictions; on the contrary, it would rejoice, knowing that by them it is serving God.

4. This reverential love of God is so strong in the soul—though in the darkness and unaware of it—that it would be glad not only to endure its trials, but also to die a thousand deaths to serve Him. But when the fire of love and the reverent love of God together have set the soul in a flame, it is wont to gain such strength and energy, and such eager longing after God—effects of this glowing love—that it boldly disregards all considerations, and sets everything aside, in the inebriating force of love, and, without much consideration of its acts, it conducts itself strangely and extravagantly in every way that it may come to Him whom the soul loveth.

5. This is the reason why Mary Magdalene, though so noble, heeded not the many guests, high and low, who were feasting, as we read in St. Luke, in the house of the Pharisee. She considered not that she was not welcome, and that tears were unseemly at the feast, provided she could, without an hour's delay, or waiting for another occasion, reach Him for whom her soul was wounded and on fire.\* This is that inebriating and daring force of love, which, when she knew that

\* St. Luke vii. 37.



her Love was in the sepulchre, guarded by soldiers, and a stone rolled over it and sealed, allowed none of these things to move her; for she went thither before dawn with the ointments to anoint her Beloved. And, finally, it was under the inebriating influence and anxieties of love that she asked Himself, Whom she took for the gardener, who, she thought, had robbed the sepulchre, to tell her, if he had taken Him away, where he had laid Him. 'If thou hast carried Him away, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.'\* She did not reflect upon the imprudence of her words; for it is clear that if the gardener had stolen the Body he would not have told her, still less would he have allowed her to take Him away.

6. This conduct of Mary Magdalene proceeded from the vehemence and energy of her love: for love thinks all things possible, and that all are of the same mind with itself; for it cannot believe that there is anything to occupy men, or anything to be sought for by them, except that which itself seeks and loves; it considers that there can be no other occupation or desire except its own. Thus, when the bride went out into the streets and highways seeking her beloved, she, believing that all were employed, like herself, in searching for him, adjured them, if they found him, to tell him that she languished with love.†

7. So strong was Mary's love that she intended, if the gardener had told her where he had hidden our Lord, to go and take Him away, in spite of any prohibition. Of

\* St. John xx. 15.

† Cant. iii. 2 v. 8.

this kind are those anxieties of love which the soul feels when it has made some progress in the spiritual purgation. The soul rises by night—that is, in the purifying darkness—in the affections of the will. As a lioness or a bear, robbed of its whelps, whom it cannot find, seeks them anxiously and earnestly, so does the wounded soul seek after God. Being in darkness, it feels His absence, and is dying of love. This is that impatient love which no man can endure long without obtaining his wishes or dying. It is like Rachel's longing for children, when she said to Jacob, 'Give me children, otherwise I shall die.'\*

8. We have now to consider how it is that the soul, conscious of its own misery and unworthiness before God, can be so bold, amid the purifying darkness, as to aspire after union with Him. The reason is, that love gives it strength to love in earnest, it being the nature of love to seek for union, companionship, equality with, and likeness to the object beloved, so as to attain to the perfection of itself. Hence it is that the soul not yet made perfect in love, because it has not attained to union, hungers and thirsts for that which it has not—namely, union; and the strength which love communicates to the will, which is on fire, renders it bold and daring as to the will, though as to the understanding, because that is in darkness, it feels itself to be an unworthy and miserable object.

9. I must not omit here to say why it is that the divine light, being always light to the soul, does not illumine it the moment it strikes it, as it does at a later time, instead of bringing with it the darkness and misery of which I am speaking.† Something has been already

\* Gen. xxx. 1.

† Ch. ix. § 1.

said, but I now speak of it directly. The darkness and other miseries of which the soul is conscious proceed not from the divine light when it strikes the soul, but from the soul itself, and it is the light which enables it to see them. The divine light gives light at once, but the soul sees nothing at first but that which is immediately before it, or rather within itself; its own darkness and misery, which, by the mercy of God, it sees now, and formerly saw not, because this supernatural light had not been granted it.

10. This is the reason why, in the beginning, the soul is conscious of nothing but of darkness and misery. But when it has been purified by the knowledge and sense of its misery it will have eyes to discern the blessings of the divine light, and being delivered and set free from all darkness and imperfections, the great blessings and profit will become known which the soul is gaining for itself in this blessed night.

11. This shows how great is the mercy of God to the soul when He thus purifies it in this strong lye and bitter purgation, as to its sensual and spiritual part, from all its affections and imperfect habits in all that relates to time, nature, sense, and spirit; by darkening its interior faculties, and emptying them of all objects, by correcting and drying up all affections of sense and spirit, by weakening and wasting the natural forces which the soul never could have done of itself as we shall immediately show. God makes it die, in this way, to all that is not God, that, being denuded and stripped of its former clothing, it may clothe itself anew. Thus the soul's 'youth shall be renewed like the eagle's,'\* clothed with

\* Ps. cii. 5.

‘the new man, which, in the words of the Apostle, is created according to God in justice.’\*

12. Now this is nothing else but the supernatural light giving light to the understanding, so that the human understanding becomes divine, made one with the divine. In the same way divine love inflames the will so that it becomes nothing less than divine, loving in a divine way, united and made one with the divine will and divine love. The memory is affected in like manner; all the desires and affections also are changed divinely according to God. Thus the soul will be of heaven, heavenly, divine rather than human.

13. All this, as is clear from what I have said, is the work of God in the soul, during this night, enlightening it and setting it on fire in a divine way with an anxious solicitude for God alone, and for nought besides.

14. It is with great propriety and justice, therefore, that the soul repeats the third line of the stanza, which, together with those that follow, I repeat again and explain in the following chapter.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

Repeats and explains the last three lines of the first stanza.

*O happy lot!  
Forth unobserved I went,  
My house being now at rest.*

THE happy lot of which the soul is singing in the first of these three lines befel it through those means of which it speaks in the two lines that follow it; making use of a metaphor, it describes itself as one who, for the better

\* Ephes. iv. 24.

execution of his purpose, goes out of his house by night, in the dark, the inmates of which are at rest, in order that none might hinder him. The soul having to perform so heroic and so rare an act, that of being united to the divine Beloved, sallies forth, because the Beloved is to be found only without, in solitude. The bride therefore desired to find him alone, saying: 'Who shall give Thee to me for my brother, sucking the breasts of my mother, that I may find Thee without and kiss Thee?'\* It is necessary for the enamoured soul, in order to obtain the end desired, to act in the same way; to go out by night when all the inmates of its house repose and sleep; that is, when its lower operations, passions, and desires are at rest and asleep in this night. These are the inmates of its house which when awake ever hinder its good, enemies of its freedom. These are they of whom our Saviour said in the holy gospel, 'A man's enemies shall be they of his own household.'†

2. Thus it is necessary that their operations and motions should be lulled to sleep in this night in order that they may be no hindrance to the supernatural blessings of union with God in love, for while they continue to energise and act, that is unattainable. All movement and action on their part, instead of helping, hinder the reception of the spiritual blessings of the union of love, because all natural exertion is defective with regard to those supernatural blessings which God alone secretly and silently infuses into the passive soul. Hence it is necessary that the powers of the soul should be at rest, if it is to receive what God infuses, and should not

\* Cant. viii. 1.

† St. Matt. x. 36.



interfere with their own inferior actions and base inclinations.

3. It was a happy lot for the soul when God in this night put all its household to sleep, that is, all the powers, passions, affections, and desires of the sensual and spiritual soul, that it may attain to the spiritual union of the perfect love of God ‘unobserved,’ that is, unhindered by them, because they were all asleep and mortified in that night. O how happy must the soul then be, when it can escape from the house of its sensuality! None can understand it, I think, except that soul which has experienced it. That soul clearly sees how wretched was its former slavery, and how great its misery when it lay at the mercy of its passions and desires; it learns now that the life of the spirit is true liberty and riches, with innumerable blessings in its train, some of which I shall speak of while explaining the following stanzas, when it will more clearly appear, what good reasons the soul has for describing the passage of this awful night as a happy lot.

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## CHAPTER XV.

The second stanza and its explanation.

*In darkness and in safety,  
By the secret ladder, disguised,  
O happy lot!  
In darkness and concealment,  
My house being now at rest.*

IN this stanza the soul goes on singing still of certain properties of the darkness of this night, speaking again of the happy lot which befel it through them. It speaks of them in answering an implied objection, observing that

no one is to think that because in this dark night it passed through so many storms of affliction, doubt, fear and horror, as I said before\*, it had therefore run any risk of being lost; yea rather, it found safety in the darkness, because in the darkness it was free and skilfully escaped from its enemies who were ever hindering its departure.

2. In the darkness of the night it changed its garments, and disguised itself in three colours, of which I shall speak hereafter.† It sallied forth unknown to the whole of its household by a most secret ladder, which, as I shall show in the proper place, is a living faith—in such secrecy and silence, for the better execution of its purpose, that it could not possibly be in greater security; especially now, because in the purgative night, the desires, passions, and affections of the soul are asleep, mortified, and subdued; and these are they which, awake and active, would never have consented to that departure.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

Showeth how the soul journeys securely when in darkness.

*In darkness and in safety.*

THE darkness of which the soul here speaks, relates, as I have said,‡ to the desires and powers of sense, interior and spiritual, all of which are deprived of their natural light in this night, that, being purified as to this, they may be supernaturally enlightened. The desires of sense and spirit are lulled to sleep and mortified, unable to relish anything either human or divine: the affections of the soul are thwarted and brought low, become

\* Ch. v. § 8.

† Ch. xxi.

‡ Ch. iii.

helpless, and have nothing to rest upon ; the imagination is fettered, and unable to make any profitable reflections, the memory is gone, and the will, too, is dry and afflicted, and all the faculties are empty, and, moreover, a dense and heavy cloud overshadows the soul, distresses it and holds it as if it were far away from God. This is the darkness in which the soul says that it travels in safety.

2. The reason of this safety has been clearly shown : for usually the soul never errs, except under the influence of its desires, or tastes, or reflections, or understanding, or affections, wherein it generally is overabundant, or defective, changeable, or inconsistent ; hence the inclination to that which is not becoming. It is therefore clear that the soul is secure against being led astray by them, when all these operations and movements have ceased. Because then the soul is delivered, not only from itself, but also from its other enemies—the world and the devil—who, when the affections and operations of the soul have ceased, cannot assault it by any other way or by any other means.

3. It follows from this, that the greater the darkness and emptiness of its natural operations in which the soul travels, the greater is its security. For as the prophet saith, ‘Perdition is thine own, O Israel ; only in Me is thy help.’\* The perdition of the soul is exclusively its own work—the result of its own operations, of its unsubdued desires, interior and sensual—and its salvation, saith God, cometh from Me only. When the soul is hindered from giving way to its imperfections there descend upon it forthwith the blessings of union with God,

\* Os. xiii. 9.

in its desires and faculties which that union will render heavenly and divine.

4. If, therefore, while this darkness lasts, the soul will look within, it will very clearly see how slightly the desires and the faculties have been diverted towards vain and unprofitable matters, and that it is secure itself against vainglory, pride and presumption, empty rejoicing, and many other evils. It is quite clear, therefore, that the soul which is in this darkness is not only not lost, but that it gains much, for now it acquires virtue.

5. But here a question arises: Why is it—seeing that the things of God are profitable and beneficial to the soul, and a source of security—that the desires and faculties are so darkened by Him in this night that they cannot have any joy in spiritual things or occupy themselves with them as with other things, but are, in some way, less able to do so? To this I reply, that it is then very necessary for the soul not to act and be devoid of pleasure even in spiritual things, seeing that its faculties and desires are base and impure; and even if they have pleasure in, and are familiar with, divine and supernatural things, that can be only in a mean way.

6. It is a philosophical axiom that all that is received is received according to the condition of the recipient. From this it follows that the natural faculties—being without the requisite purity, strength, and capacity for the reception and fruition of divine things in their way, which is divine, but only in their own, which is mean and vile—must be in darkness with regard to the divine way, so as to secure their perfect purgation. That being weaned, purified, and brought to nothing, they may lose their own

mode of acting and receiving, and may be thus disposed and tempered for the reception and fruition of that which is divine in a high and noble way ; which cannot be if the old man do not die first. Hence it is that all spiritual graces if they do not descend from the Father of lights upon the human will and desire, however much a man may exercise his taste, desire, and faculties about God, and however much he may seem to succeed, are still not divinely nor perfectly enjoyed.

7. As to this I might here show, were this the proper place, that there are many whose tastes and affections, and the operations of whose faculties are directed to God and to spiritual things, who may imagine all this to be supernatural and spiritual, when in reality it is nothing more, perhaps, than acts and desires most natural and human. As they regard ordinary matters, so also do they regard good things, with a certain natural facility which they have in directing their faculties and desires to anything, whatever it may be. If I can find an opportunity in the course of this discussion, I propose to enter upon this question,\* and describe some of the signs by which we may know when the motives and interior acts of the soul in the things of God are natural only, when they are spiritual only, and when they are natural and spiritual together. It is enough for us here to know that the interior acts and movements of the soul, if they are to be divinely influenced by God, must be first of all lulled to sleep, darkened and subdued, in their natural state, so far as their capacity and operations are concerned, until they lose all their strength.

\* Living Flame, St. iii. Bk. 4.



8. O spiritual soul, when thou seest thy desire obscured, thy will arid and constrained, and thy faculties incapable of any interior act, be not grieved at this, but look upon it rather as a great good, for God is delivering thee from thyself, taking the matter out of thy hands ; for however strenuously thou mayest exert thyself, thou wilt never do anything so faultlessly, perfectly, and securely as now—because of the impurity and torpor of thy faculties—when God, taking thee by the hand, is guiding thee in the dark as one that is blind, along a road and to an end thou knowest not, and whither thou couldst never travel by the help of thine own eyes and thine own feet, however strong thou mayest be.

9. The reason why the soul not only travels securely when it thus travels in the dark, but makes even greater progress, is this: In general the soul makes greater progress when it least thinks so, yea, most frequently when it imagines that it is losing. Having never before experienced the present novelty which dazzles it, and disturbs its former habits, it considers itself as losing, rather than as gaining ground, when it sees itself lost in a place it once knew, and in which it delighted, travelling by a road it knows not, and in which it has no pleasure. As a traveller into strange countries goes by ways strange and untried, relying on information derived from others, and not upon any knowledge of his own—it is clear that he will never reach a new country but by new ways which he knows not, and by abandoning those he knew—so in the same way the soul makes the greater progress when it travels in the dark, not knowing the way. But inasmuch as God Himself is here the guide of the soul in its

blindness, the soul may well exult and say, 'In darkness and in safety,' now that it has come to a knowledge of its state.

10. There is another reason also why the soul has travelled safely in this obscurity; it has suffered: for the way of suffering is safer, and also more profitable, than that of rejoicing and of action. In suffering God gives strength, but in action and in joy the soul does but show its own weakness and imperfections. And in suffering, the soul practises and acquires virtue, and becomes pure, wiser, and more cautious.

11. There is another and stronger reason why the soul travels securely when in darkness. This reason is derived from the consideration of the light itself, or dark wisdom. The dark night of contemplation so absorbs the soul, and brings it so near unto God, that He defends it, and delivers it from all that is not God. For the soul is now, as it were, under medical treatment for the recovery of its health, which is God Himself: God compels it to observe a particular diet, and to abstain from all hurtful things, the very desire for them being subdued. The soul is treated like a sick man respected by his household, who is so carefully tended that the air shall not touch him, nor the light shine upon him, whom the noise of footsteps and the tumult of servants shall not disturb, and to whom the most delicate food is given most cautiously by measure, and that nutritious rather than savoury.

12. All these advantages—they all minister to the safe-keeping of the soul—are the effects of this dim contemplation, for it brings the soul nearer to God. The truth is, that the nearer the soul comes to Him it

perceives that darkness is greater and deeper because of its own weakness; thus the nearer the sun the greater the darkness and distress wrought by its great brightness, because our eyes are weak, imperfect, and defective. Hence it is that the spiritual light of God is so immeasurable, so far above the understanding, that when it comes near to it, it dims and blinds it.

13. This is the reason why David said that God made darkness His hiding-place and covert, His tabernacle around Him, dark water in the clouds of the air.\* The dark water in the clouds of the air is the dim contemplation and divine wisdom in souls, as I am going to explain, of which they have experience as a thing near to the pavilion where He dwells, when God brings them nearer to Himself. Thus, that which in God is light and supreme splendour, is to man thick darkness, as S. Paul saith,† and as the royal prophet David explains it in the same psalm, saying: ‘Because of the brightness of His presence the clouds passed,’‡ that is, clouds and darkness over the natural understanding, ‘the light of which,’ saith the prophet Isaias, ‘is darkened in the mist thereof.’§

14. O wretched condition of this life wherein it is so difficult to find the truth! That which is most clear and true, is to us most obscure and doubtful, and we therefore avoid it though it is most necessary for us. That which shines the most, and dazzles our eyes, that we embrace and follow after, though it is most hurtful to us, and makes us stumble at every step. In what fear and danger then must man be living, seeing that the very light of his

\* Ps. xvii. 12.

† Acts xxii. 11. ‘I did not see for the brightness of that light.’

‡ Ps. xvii. 13.

§ Is. v. 30.

natural eyes, by which he directs his steps, is the very first to bewilder and deceive him when he would draw near unto God. If he wishes to be sure of the road he travels on, he must close his eyes and walk in the dark, if he is to journey in safety from his domestic foes, which are his own senses and faculties.

15. Well hidden and protected then is the soul in the dark waters close to God. For as the dark waters are a tabernacle and dwelling-place for God Himself, so they are also to the soul perfect safety and protection, though in darkness, where it is hidden and protected from itself, as I have said,\* and from all the injuries that created things may inflict. It is of souls thus protected that David spoke when he said in another psalm: 'Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy face, from the disturbance of men. Thou shalt protect them in Thy tabernacle from the contradiction of tongues.'† These words comprehend all kinds of protection; for to be hidden 'in the secret of the face' of God 'from the disturbance of men,' is to be strengthened in the dim contemplation against all the assaults of men. To be protected in His 'tabernacle from the contradiction of tongues,' is to be engulfed in the dark waters, which is the tabernacle of which David speaks. That soul, therefore, whose desires and affections are weaned, and whose faculties are in darkness, is set free from all the imperfections which war against the spirit, whether they proceed from the flesh, or from any other created thing. The soul, therefore, may well say, 'In darkness and in safety.'

16. Another reason, not less conclusive, why the soul,

\* § I.

† Ps. xxx. 21, 22.

though in darkness, travels securely, is derived from that courage which it acquires as soon as it enters within the dark, painful, and gloomy waters of God. Though it be dark, still it is water, and therefore cannot but refresh and strengthen the soul in all that is most necessary for it, though it does so painfully and in darkness. For the soul immediately discerns in itself a certain courage and resolution to do nothing which it knows to be displeasing unto God, and to leave nothing undone which ministers to His service, because this love, which is dim, is most watchful and careful of what it is to do, and what it is to leave undone, for His sake, so as to please Him. It looks around and considers in a thousand ways whether it has done anything to offend Him, and all this with much more solicitude and carefulness than it ever did before, as I said when speaking of this anxious love.\* Here all the desires, all the strength, and all the powers of the soul, recollected from all besides, direct all their efforts and all their energies to the service of God only. Thus the soul goes forth out of itself, away from all created things, to the sweet and delightful union of the love of God, 'in darkness and in safety.'

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## CHAPTER XVII.

Gives the second line and explains how this dim contemplation is secret.

*By the secret ladder, disguised.*

I HAVE three things to explain in reference to the three words of this line. Two of them—'secret' and 'ladder'

\* Bk. I ch. xi. § 3, and ch. xi. *supr.*



—belong to the dark night of contemplation of which I am speaking, but the third—‘disguised’—belongs to the way of the soul therein. As to the first, the soul calls the dim contemplation, by which it goes forth to the union of love, a secret ladder, and that because of two properties of it which I am going to explain. First, this dark contemplation is called secret, because it is, as I have said before,\* the mystical theology which theologians call secret wisdom, and which according to St. Thomas† is infused into the soul more especially by love. This happens in a secret hidden way in which the natural operations of the understanding and the other faculties have no share. And, therefore, because the faculties of the soul cannot compass it, it being the Holy Ghost Who infuses it into the soul, in a way it knoweth not, as the Bride saith in the Canticle,‡ we call it secret.

2. And, in truth, it is not the soul only that knows it not, but every one else, even the devil; because the Master who now teaches the soul dwells substantially within it. This is not the only reason why it is called secret, for it is secret also in its effects. It is not only secret beyond the powers of the soul to speak of it, during the darkness and sharpness of the purgation, when the secret wisdom is purifying the soul, but afterwards also,

\* Ch. v. § 1.

† [S. Thom. 2<sup>dæ</sup> qu. 180, art 1. Et propter hoc Gregorius—Hom. 14 in Ezech. ante med. constituit vitam contemplativam in charitate Dei . . . . . ideo vita contemplativa terminatur ad dilectionem, quæ est in affecta, ex quo etiam amor intenditur.]

‡ Cant. vi. 11.

during the illumination, when that wisdom is most clearly communicated, it is so secret that it cannot be discerned or described. Moreover, the soul has no wish to speak of it, and besides, it can discover no way or proper similitude to describe it by, so as to make known a knowledge so high, a spiritual impression so delicate and infused. Yea, and if it could have a wish to speak of it, and find terms to describe it, it would always remain secret still.

3. Because this interior wisdom is so simple, general, and spiritual, that it enters not into the understanding under any form or image subject to sense, as is sometimes the case, the imagination, therefore, and the senses—as it has not entered in by them, nor is modified by them—cannot account for it, nor form any conception of it, so as to speak in any degree correctly about it, though the soul be distinctly conscious that it feels and tastes this sweet and strange wisdom. The soul is like a man who sees an object for the first time, the like of which he has never seen before; he handles it and feels it, yet he cannot say what it is, or tell its name, do what he can, though it be at the same time an object cognisable by the senses. How much less then can that be described which does not enter in by the senses?

4. Such is the nature of the divine language that the more interior, infused, and spiritual it is, the more it transcends every sense; the powers of the senses, interior and exterior, cease, and their harmonies become mute.

5. The Holy Writings supply both proofs and illustrations of this principle. Jeremias shows the impossibility of manifesting and expressing it in words: for when

God had spoken to him he knew not what to say, except, 'Ah, ah, ah, Lord God.'\* Moses, also, is an instance of the interior helplessness, that is, of the interior imaginative sense, and of the exterior also at the same time : for when God spoke to him out of the bush, he not only saw that he could not speak, but as is said in the Acts of the Apostles,† he 'durst not behold ; ‡ that is, the imagination itself was weak and silent. The wisdom of this contemplation is the language of God addressed to the soul, as pure spirit, and as the senses are not spiritual, so they do not perceive it ; it remains therefore a secret from them, they cannot understand it nor express it.

6. This explains why some persons, walking in this way, good and timid souls, who, when they would give an account of their interior state to their directors, know not how to do it, neither have they the power to do it, and so feel a great repugnance to explain themselves, especially when contemplation is the more simple and with difficulty discernible by them. All they can say is that their soul is satisfied, calm, or contented, that they have a sense of the presence of God, and that all goes well with them, as they think ; but they cannot explain their state, except by general expressions of this kind. But it is a different matter when they have a consciousness of particular things, such as visions, impressions, and the like ; these in general are communicated under some species, in which the senses participate ; in that case they are able to describe them. But it is not in the nature of pure contemplation that it can be described ; for it can scarcely be spoken of in words, and therefore we call it secret.

\* Jerem. i. 6.

† Exod. iv. 10.

‡ Acts. vii. 32.

7. This is not the only reason why it is called secret, and why it is so. There is another, namely the mystical wisdom has the property of hiding the soul within itself. For beside its ordinary operation, it sometimes so absorbs the soul and plunges it in this secret abyss that the soul sees itself distinctly as far away from, and abandoned by, all created things; it looks upon itself as one that is placed in a wild and vast solitude whither no human being can come, as in an immense wilderness without limits; a wilderness, the more delicious, sweet, and lovely, the more it is wide, vast, and lonely, where the soul is the more hidden, the more it is raised up above all created things.

8. This abyss of wisdom now so exalts and elevates the soul—orderly disposing it for the science of love—that it makes it not only understand how mean are all created things in relation to the supreme wisdom and divine knowledge, but also, how low, defective, and, in a certain sense, improper, are all the words and phrases by which in this life we discuss divine things, and how utterly impossible by any natural means, however profoundly and learnedly we may speak, to understand and see them as they are, except in the light of mystical theology. And so the soul in the light thereof, discerning this truth, namely, that it cannot reach it, and still less explain it by the terms of ordinary speech, justly calls it secret.

9. This property of being secret, and of surpassing all natural capacity, belongs to divine contemplation, not only because it is itself supernatural, but also because it is the guide of the soul to the perfections of union with God, which not being humanly known, we must reach by not

knowing the way, and being divinely ignorant. For, to use the language of mystical theology, as we are doing, these things are neither understood nor known when they are sought, but when they are found and practised. For thus the prophet Baruch speaks of the divine wisdom : ‘There is none that can know her ways, nor that can search out her paths.’\* The royal prophet also, speaking of this way of the soul, says unto God : ‘Thy lightnings enlightened the round world, the earth was moved and trembled, Thy way is in the sea, and Thy paths in many waters, and Thy steps shall not be known.’† All this in a spiritual sense explains the matter I am discussing.

10. The lightnings that enlightened the round world is the illumination of the faculties of the soul in the divine contemplation, the moving and trembling of the earth is the painful purgation of which it is the cause. To say that the way of God, by which the soul draws near unto Him, is in the sea, and His paths in many waters, and therefore not known, is to say that this way to God is as secret, and as hidden from the senses of the soul, as the way of one who walks on the waters is from the senses of the body, and whose paths and steps are not known. The paths and steps of God in those souls which He is drawing to Himself, making them great in the union of His wisdom, have this property, that they are not known. That is the meaning of these words in the book of Job, impressing upon us this truth, ‘Knowest thou the great paths of the clouds, and perfect knowledges?’‡ that is, the paths and ways of God, in

\* Baruch iii. 31.

† Ps. lxxvi. 19, 20.

‡ Job xxxvii. 16.



which He makes souls great and perfect in His wisdom; these are the clouds. This contemplation, therefore, which guides the soul to God is secret wisdom.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

Shows how this secret wisdom is also a ladder.

IT remains for me to explain the second property, namely, how this secret wisdom is also a ladder. There are many reasons for calling secret contemplation a ladder. In the first place, as men employ ladders to mount up to those strong places where treasures are laid up, so also by secret contemplation, without knowing how, the soul ascends, and mounts upwards, to the knowledge and possession of the goods and treasures of heaven. This is well expressed by the royal prophet David when he says, 'Blessed is the man whose help is from Thee: he hath disposed ascensions in his heart, in the vale of tears, in the place which he hath appointed. For the Lawgiver shall give blessing; they shall go from virtue into virtue: the God of gods shall be seen in Sion;\*' He is the treasure of the citadel of Sion which is blessedness.

2. We may also call it a ladder, for as the steps of one and the same ladder serve to descend as well as to ascend by, so, too, those very communications which the soul receives in secret contemplation raise it up to God and make it humble. For the communications which really come from God have this property: they humble and exalt the soul at one and the same time. In the spiritual

\* Ps. lxxxiii. 6, 7, 8.

way, to descend is to ascend, and to ascend is to descend, 'because everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.'\* Moreover, as the virtue of humility is an exaltation, for the trial of the soul therein, God is wont to make it ascend by this ladder that it may descend, and make it descend that it may ascend; for thus are fulfilled the words of the Wise Man, 'Before he be broken the heart of a man is exalted, and before he be glorified it is humbled.'†

3. If the soul will reflect on the nature of a ladder—I omit the spiritual which is not perceptible—it will easily see how uneven is the road; how after prosperity, which makes it glad, storms and trials follow at once, so that its previous repose seems to have been given it to prepare it and strengthen it for its present sufferings; how also, after misery and distress, come abundance and ease, so that the soul shall seem to have kept a vigil before the feast. This is the ordinary course of the state of contemplation, for until the soul attains to repose it never continues in one state; for all is ascending and descending. The reason is this; the state of perfection, which consists in the perfect love of God and contempt of self, can only subsist on two conditions, the knowledge of God and of oneself. The soul, therefore, must of necessity be tried in the one and the other, in the first which exalts it, by giving it to taste the sweetness of God, in the second which, by trials, humbles it, until, perfect habits having been acquired, it ceases to ascend and descend, having arrived at the summit, united with God, Who is at the top of it, and on Whom, too, the ladder rests.

\* St. Luke xiv. 11.

† Prov. xviii. 12.

4. The ladder of contemplation, which, as I have said, comes down from God, is shadowed forth by that ladder which Jacob saw in a dream, and the angels ascending and descending by it, from God to man and from man to God, Who was Himself leaning upon it.\* This took place by night, when Jacob slept, as the Scriptures declare, that we may learn from it how secret is the way and ascent unto God, and how different from all human conception. This is plain enough, for, in general, that which is to our greater profit—the loss and annihilation of self—we esteem a calamity; and that which is of but little value—comfort and sweetness, where, in general, we lose instead of gaining—we look upon as the more advantageous for us.

5. But, to speak with more accuracy, and to the purpose, of the ladder of secret contemplation, I must observe that the chief reason why it is called a ladder is, that contemplation is the science of love, which is an infused loving knowledge of God, and which enlightens the soul and at the same time kindles within it the fire of love till it shall ascend upwards step by step unto God its Creator; for it is love only that unites the soul and God. With a view to the greater clearness of this matter, I shall mark the steps of this divine ladder, explaining concisely the signs and effects of each, that the soul may be able to form some conjecture on which of them it stands. I shall distinguish between them by their effects with St. Bernard and St. Thomas,† and

\* Gen. xxviii. 12, 13.

† [S. Thom. de dilectione Dei et Proximi, cap. xxvii. Ut dicit Bernardus, magna res est amor, sed sunt in eo gradus, Loquendo ergo aliquantulum magis moraliter quam realiter decem amoris gradus distinguere possumus, per quos contingit a statu viæ ad statum patriæ scandere ordinate, quos gradus cognoscas per actus.]

because it is not naturally possible to know them as they are in themselves, because the ladder of love is so secret that it can be weighed and measured by God only.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

Begins the explanation of the ten degrees of the mystic ladder according to St. Bernard and St. Thomas.

THE steps of the ladder of love, by which the soul, ascending from one to another, rises upwards to God, we say are ten. The first degree of love makes the soul languish to its great profit. On this the bride is speaking when she says, 'I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love.'\* This languishing is not unto death, but to the glory of God; for the soul faints away as to sin and all things whatsoever that are not God, for God's sake, as the Psalmist testifies, saying: 'My spirit hath fainted away'† from all things after Thy salvation; as he says in another place: 'My soul hath fainted after Thy salvation.'‡

2. As a sick man loses the desire for, and the taste of all food, and the colour vanishes from his face, so the soul in this degree of love loses all pleasure in earthly things, and all desire of them, and, like one in love, changes its colour. The soul does not fall into this languishing state if the vehement heat descends not into it from above, which is the mystic fever, according to the words of the

\* Cant. v. 8.

† Ps. cxlii. 7.

‡ Ps. cxviii. 81.

Psalmist, 'Voluntary rain shalt Thou separate, O God, to thine inheritance, and it was weakened, but Thou hast perfected it.'\* This languishing and fainting away as to all things—it is the first and earliest step to God—I have already explained,† when I spoke of that annihilation to which the soul is brought when it begins to stand upon the ladder of contemplative purgation, when it finds no comfort, pleasure, nor support anywhere. In consequence of which it begins immediately to climb the other steps of the ladder.

3. On the second step the soul is unremitting in its search after God. Thus the bride speaks of her seeking Him in her bed by night—she had fainted away when on the first step of the ladder—and had not found Him, says : 'I will rise ; I will seek Him whom my soul loveth.'‡ This is now the unceasing occupation of the soul, 'Seek ye the Lord, seek His face evermore,'§ is the counsel of the Psalmist, and never rest until He be found ; like the bride who, when she had questioned the watchmen, passed on in her search,|| and left them. Mary Magdalene did not remain even with the angels at the sepulchre.¶ So anxious is the soul now that it seeks the Beloved in all things ; all its thoughts, words, and works are referred to Him ; in eating, sleeping, and waking, all its anxieties are about Him, as I have already described it when speaking of the anxieties of love.\*\* As love becomes strong, regaining health, it commences the ascent to the third step by a new purgation in the night—as I shall hereafter explain††—and which issues in the effects that follow.

\* Ps. lxvii. 10.

† Bk. I ch. xi.

‡ Cant. iii. 1, 2.

§ Ps. civ. 4.

|| Cant. iii. 4.

¶ St. John xx. 14.

\*\* Bk. 2 ch. xi. § 7.

†† Spirit. Cant. stanza xiii.



4. The third step of the ladder of love renders the soul active and fervent, so that it faints not. Of this step the royal prophet said, 'Blessed is the man that feareth our Lord, he shall delight exceedingly in His commandments.'\* If then, fear, being the fruit of love, produces this delight, what will be the effect of love itself? On this step the soul looks on great things as little, on many as few, its long service as short, by reason of the fire of love which is burning. It is with the soul as it was with Jacob, who 'served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed but a few days, because of the greatness of his love.'† If the love of a created being did so much in Jacob, what will the love of the Creator Himself do, when it shall have taken possession of the soul on the third step of the ladder?

5. Here the soul, because of the great love it has for God, is in great pain and suffering because of the scantiness of its service; if it could lawfully die for Him a thousand times it would be comforted. It looks upon itself therefore as unprofitable in all it does, and on its life as worthless. Another most wonderful effect is that it looks upon itself as being in truth the very worst of all, because its love continues to show it what is due to God; and then, because as it labours much in the service of God and sees how faulty and imperfect are its works, it is ashamed and distressed, seeing that the service it renders to God Who is so high, is so exceedingly mean. On this third step the soul is very far from giving way to vainglory or presumption, or from condemning others. These anxious effects and other of the same kind are wrought in

\* Ps. cxi. 1.

† Gen. xxix. 20.

the soul when on the third step of the ladder, and so the soul acquires strength and courage to ascend to the fourth.

6. When the soul is on the fourth step of the ladder of love, it falls into a state of suffering, but without weariness, on account of the Beloved; for, as St. Augustine saith, love makes all that is grievous and heavy to be light as nothing.\* It was on this step that the bride stood when longing for the last, she said: 'Put me as a seal upon Thy heart, as a seal upon Thy arm; for love'—that is, the acts and operations of love—'is strong as death; jealousy is hard as hell.'†

7. The spirit is now so strong, and has so subdued the flesh, and makes so little of it, that it is as regardless of it as a tree is of one of its leaves. It seeks not for consolation or sweetness either in God or elsewhere, neither does it pray for God's gifts through any motive of self-interest, or its own satisfaction. For all it cares for now is how it shall please God, and serve Him in some measure in return for His goodness, and for the graces it has received, and this at any and every cost.

8. It is now saying with heart and mind, my God and my Lord, how many there are who seek their own comfort and joy in Thee and who pray for gifts and graces, but those who strive to please Thee, who offer Thee that which costs them something, and who cast their own interests aside, are very few; it is not Thy will to show mercy that fails, O my God! but it is we who fail in using Thy mercies in Thy service, so as to bind Thee to show us Thy mercy continually.

\* Serm. LXX. de Verb. Evan. Matth. Opp. tom. v. p. 383. Lib. de Viduitate, Cap. 21, Tom. vi. p. 384. Ed. Ben.

† Cant. viii. 6.

9. This degree of love is exceedingly high, for now as the soul, earnest in its love, always follows after God in the spirit of suffering for His sake, God frequently and, as it were, continually gives it joy, visiting it sweetly in spirit, for the boundless love of Christ, the Word, cannot look on the sufferings of the souls that love without coming to their relief. He has promised this by the mouth of the prophet Jeremias, saying, ‘I have remembered thee, pitying thy youth . . . when thou followedst me in the desert,’\* which in its spiritual sense is that detachment of the soul from all created things, not resting upon them nor at ease among them. On this fourth step of the ladder the soul is so inflamed with love, and so set on fire with the desire after God, that it ascends upwards to the fifth, which is the next.

10. On the fifth step of the ladder the soul longs after God, and desires Him with impatience. So great is the eagerness of the soul on this step to embrace, and be united to, the Beloved, that all delay, how slight soever, seems to it long, tedious, and oppressive, and it is ever thinking that it has found its love; but when it sees that its desires are disappointed—which is almost continually the case—it faints away through its longing, as the Psalmist says, speaking of this step: ‘My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of our Lord.’† On this step the soul must either obtain its desires or die, as Rachel, because of her great longing for children said to Jacob, her husband, ‘Give me children, otherwise I shall die.’‡ The soul is now nourished by love, for as was its hunger so is its abundance, and so it ascends to the sixth step, the effects of which are as follows.

\* Jerem. ii. 2.

† Ps. lxxxiii. 2.

‡ Gen. xxx. 1.

## CHAPTER XX.

## Of the other five degrees.

WHEN the soul has ascended to the sixth step, it runs swiftly to God; and hope too runs without fainting, for love that has made it strong makes it fly rapidly. Of this step also Isaias speaks, saying: 'They that hope in our Lord shall change their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not labour, they shall walk and not faint,'\* to this step also the Psalmist refers: 'As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God.'† The hart when thirsty runs very swiftly to the water. The cause of this swiftness which the soul experiences on this step is, that charity is enlarged, and the soul is now almost wholly purified, as it is written in the psalm: 'without iniquity have I run,'‡ and in another psalm, 'I ran the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst dilate my heart,'§ and thus the soul ascends immediately from the sixth to the seventh degree which follows.

2. On the seventh step the soul becomes vehemently bold, in this intense and loving exaltation, no prudence can withhold it, no counsel control it, no shame restrain it; for the favour which God hath shown it has made it vehemently bold. This explains to us those words of the Apostle, that charity 'believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.'|| It was on this step that Moses spoke, when he said unto God: 'Either forgive

\* Is. xl. 31.

† Ps. xli. 1.

‡ Ib. lviii. 5.

§ Ps. cxviii. 32.

|| 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

them this trespass, or if Thou do not, strike me out of the book that Thou hast written.’\* Men of this spirit obtain from God what they so lovingly pray for. Hence the words of David; ‘Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart’†

3. Standing on this step, the bride was bold, and said ‘Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth.’‡ But consider well here, it is not lawful to be thus bold, unless the soul feels that the interior favour of the king’s sceptre is extended to it,§ lest it should fall down the steps already ascended; in all of which humility must ever be preserved. From this boldness and courage which God grants to the soul on the seventh step, that it may be bold with Him in the vehemence of its love, the soul ascends to the eighth, where it lays hold of the Beloved and is united to Him.

4. On the eighth step the soul embraces the Beloved and holds Him fast, according to the words of the bride: ‘I found Him whom my soul loveth; I held Him; and I will not let Him go.’|| On this step of union the desires of the soul are satisfied, but not without interruption. Some souls ascend to this step and at once fall back, if they did not, and remained there, they would have attained to a certain state of blessedness in this life, and thus the soul tarries but briefly on this step of the ladder. Daniel, being a man of desires, was bidden, on the part of God, to remain here: ‘Daniel thou man of desires, stand upright.’¶ After this comes the ninth step, which is that of the perfect.

\* Ex. xxxii. 31, 32.

† Ps. xxxvi. 4.

‡ Cant. i. 1.

§ Esth. v. 2; viii. 4.

|| Cant. iii. 4.

¶ Dan. x. 11.



5. On the ninth step the soul is on fire sweetly. This step is that of the perfect who burn away sweetly in God, for this sweet and delicious burning is the work of the Holy Ghost because of the union of the soul with God. St. Gregory says of the Apostles, that they burned interiorly with love sweetly, when the Holy Ghost descended upon them.\* The blessings and the riches of God which the soul now enjoys cannot be described. And if we were to write many books on the subject there would still be more to say. For this reason, and because I intend to speak of it hereafter†, I shall now say no more of this step, except that it is immediately followed by the tenth and the last, which does not belong to this life.

6. On the tenth step of the ladder the soul becomes wholly assimilated unto God in the beatific vision which it then enjoys; for having ascended in this life to the ninth, it goeth forth out of the body. Love works in such souls—they are few, and perfectly purified in this life—that which purgatory works in others in the next. For according to St. Matthew ‘Blessed are the clean in heart, for they shall see God.’‡ As I have said, the vision is the cause of the soul’s perfect likeness unto God. ‘We know,’ saith St. John, ‘that, when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is.’§ And thus, whatever the soul is, it will be like unto God, and so is called, and is, by participation, God.

7. This is the secret ladder of which the soul speaks, though in the higher steps no longer secret, for love reveals itself exceedingly in the great effects it produces.

\* Hom. 30, in Evang.

† Spirit. Cant. Stanza xiv.

‡ St. Matt. v. 8.

§ 1 St. John iii. 2.

But on the highest step, the beatific vision, the last of the ladder, where God is leaning, as I said before,\* nothing remains secret from the soul, by reason of its perfect likeness. And, therefore, our Saviour saith, ‘In that day you shall not ask me anything.’† Until that day come, notwithstanding the heights to which the soul ascends, something still remains secret from it, and that in proportion to the distance from its perfect likeness to the Divine Essence. In this way, then, by means of mystical theology and secret love, the soul goeth forth from all things and from itself, ascending upwards unto God. For love is like fire, which ever ascends, hastening to be absorbed in the centre of its sphere.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

The meaning of ‘disguised.’ The colours in which the soul disguises itself in this night.

HAVING now explained why contemplation is called a secret ladder, I have further to explain what is meant by the word ‘disguised;’ for the soul says that it went forth by the secret ladder ‘disguised.’

2. For the understanding of the whole matter it is necessary to keep in mind that to be disguised is nothing else but to hide oneself under another form than our own, either for the purpose of showing, under that concealment the will and purpose of the heart with a view to gain the goodwill and affection of the person beloved, or for the purpose of escaping the observation of rivals, and thereby

\* Ch. xviii. § 4.

† S. John xvi. 23.

the better effect our object. Such a person assumes the disguise which shall most represent and manifest the affection of his heart, and which shall the best conceal him from his rivals.

3. The soul, then, touched with the love of its Bridegroom Christ, that it may gain His favour and goodwill, sallies forth in that disguise which shall most vividly represent the affections of the mind and secure it against the assaults of its enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh. The disguise it assumes is, therefore, a garment of three principal colours, white, green, and purple, emblems of the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity ; by the help of which it shall not only enter into the good graces of the Beloved, but shall also be most secure and protected against its three enemies.

4. The faith is a garment of such surpassing whiteness as to dazzle the eyes of every understanding : for when the soul has put on faith it becomes invisible and inaccessible to the devil, because it is then most securely defended against him, its strongest and most cunning foe.

5. St. Peter knew of no better defence against the devil than faith, for he said, ‘whom resist, stedfast in faith.’\* And with a view of entering into favour and union with the Beloved, the soul cannot put on a better garment, as the ground of the other virtues, than the white garment of faith, for without it, the Apostle saith, ‘it is impossible to please God.’† But with a living faith the soul is pleasing and acceptable unto God, for He says so Himself by the mouth of the prophet : ‘I will espouse

\* 1 S. Pet. v. 9

† Heb. xi. 6.

thee to Me in faith.’\* It is as if He said to the soul, If thou wilt be united, and betrothed to Me, thou must draw near inwardly clad in faith.

6. The soul put on the white robe of faith on its going forth in this dark night, when walking in the darkness amidst interior trials, as I said before,† it received no ray of light from the understanding; not from above, because heaven seemed shut and God hidden; not from below, because its spiritual directors gave it no comfort. It bore its trials patiently and persevered, without fainting, or falling away from the Beloved, Who by these crosses and tribulations tried the faith of His bride, that it might be able hereafter truly to say with the Psalmist, ‘For the words of Thy lips, I have kept hard ways.’‡

7. Over the white robe of faith the soul puts on forthwith that of the second colour, green, emblem of the virtue of hope, by which it is delivered and protected from its second enemy, the world. The freshness of a living hope in God fills the soul with such energy and resolution, with such aspirations after the things of eternal life, that all this world seems to it—as indeed it is—in comparison with that which it hopes for, dry, withered, dead, and worthless. The soul now denudes itself of the garments and trappings of the world, by setting the heart upon nothing that is in it, and hoping for nothing that is, or may be, in it, living only in the hope of everlasting life. And, therefore, when the heart is thus lifted up above the world, the world cannot touch it or lay hold of it, nor even see it. .

8. The soul then, thus disguised and clad in the

\* Os. ii. 20.

† Ch. vii. §4.

‡ Ps. xvi. 4.

vesture of hope, is secure from its second foe, the world, for St. Paul calls hope the helmet of salvation.\* Now a helmet is armour which protects and covers the whole head, and has no opening except in one place, where the eyes may look through. Hope is such a helmet, for it covers all the senses of the head of the soul in such a way that they cannot be lost in worldly things, and leaves no part of them exposed to the arrows of the world. It has one loophole only through which the eyes may look upwards only; this is the ordinary work of hope, to direct the eyes of the soul to God alone; as David saith, 'My eyes are always to our Lord,'† looking for succour nowhere else; as he saith in another Psalm, 'As the eyes of the handmaid on the hands of her mistress, so are our eyes to our Lord God until he have mercy on us,'‡ hoping in Him.

9. The green vesture of hope—for the soul is then ever looking upwards unto God, disregarding all else, and delighting only in Him—is so pleasing to the Beloved that the soul obtains from Him all it hopes for. This is why He tells the soul in the Canticle, 'Thou hast wounded My heart in one of thine eyes,'§ It would have been useless for the soul, if it had not put on the green robe of hope in God, to claim such love, for it would not have succeeded, because that which influences the Beloved, and prevails, is persevering hope. It is in the vesture of hope that the soul goes forth disguised in this secret and dark night; seeing that it goes forth so detached from all possession, without any consolations,

\* 1 Thess. v. 8.

† Ps. cxxii. 2.

‡ Ps. xxiv. 15.

§ Cant. iv. 9.



that it regards nothing, and that its sole anxiety is about God, putting its ‘mouth in the dust if so be there may be hope,’ in the words of Jeremias quoted already.\*

10. Over the white and green robes, as the crown and perfection of its disguise, the soul puts on the third, the splendid robe of purple. This is the emblem of charity, which not only enhances the beauty of the others, but which so elevates the soul and renders it so lovely and pleasing in His eyes that it ventures to say to Him, ‘I am black but beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem, therefore hath the king loved me and brought me into His secret chamber.’† This robe of charity, which is that of love, not only defends and protects the soul from its third enemy, the flesh—for where the true love of God is there is no room for self-love or for selfishness—but strengthens the other virtues also, and makes them flourish for the protection of the soul, beautifying it and adorning it with grace, so that it shall please the Beloved; for without charity no virtue is pleasing unto God. This is the purple, spoken of in the Canticle, by which the soul ascends to the seat where God reposes: ‘the seat of gold, the going up of purple.’‡ It is vested in this robe of purple that the soul journeys, as the first stanza declares, when in the dark night it went out of itself, and from all created things, with anxious love inflamed, by the secret ladder of contemplation to the perfect union of the love of God its beloved Saviour.

11. This, then, is that disguise which the soul says it puts on in the night of faith on the secret ladder; and

\*. Ch. viii. § 1.

† Cant. i. 4. Off. B. M. V. ant. ad Vesp.

‡ Cant. iii. 10.

these are the three colours of it, namely, a certain most fitting disposition for its union with God in its three powers, memory, understanding and will. Faith blinds the understanding, and empties it of all natural intelligence, and thereby disposes it for union with the divine wisdom. Hope empties the memory and withdraws it from all created things which can possess it; for as St. Paul saith, 'Hope that is seen is not hope.'\* Thus the memory is withdrawn from all things on which it might dwell in this life, and is fixed on what the soul hopes to possess. Hope in God alone, therefore, purely disposes the memory according to the measure of the emptiness it has wrought for union with Him.

12. Charity in the same way empties the affections and desires of the will of everything that is not God, and fixes them on Him alone. This virtue of charity, then, disposes the will and unites it with God in love. And because these virtues—it being their special work—withdraw the soul from all that is not God, so also do they serve to unite the soul to Him. It is impossible for the soul to attain to the perfection of the love of God unless it journeys, in earnest, in the robes of these three virtues. This disguise, therefore, which the soul assumed when it went forth in order to obtain that which it aimed at, the loving and delightful union with the Beloved, was most necessary and expedient. And it was also a great happiness to have succeeded in thus disguising itself and persevering in it until it obtained the desired end, the union of love, as it declares in the next line.

\* Rom. viii. 24.

## CHAPTER XXII.

Explains the third line of the second stanza.

*O happy lot!*

IT is very evident that it was a blessed thing for the soul to have succeeded in such an enterprise as this, by which it was delivered out of the hands of satan, from the world, and from its own sensuality, in which, having gained that liberty of spirit so precious and desirable, it rose from meanness to dignity, from being earthly and human became heavenly and divine, having its ‘conversation in Heaven,’\* like unto those who are in a state of perfection, as I shall proceed to explain.

2. I shall, however, be brief, because the most important point—that which chiefly determined me to explain this dark night to many souls who enter on it without knowing it, as I said in the preface—has been already in some degree explained, and I have also shown, though not in adequate terms, how great are the blessings that descend upon the soul in this night, and what a great happiness it is to be passing through it. This I did that when such souls are alarmed at the trials that have come upon them, they may be encouraged by the certain hope of the numerous and great blessings of God which they receive in this night. Beside this, it was a happy lot for the soul for the reason assigned in the following line.

\* Philipp. iii. 20.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

Explains the fourth line—describes the wonderful hiding place of the soul in this night, and how the devil, though he enters other most secret places, enters not this.

*In darkness and concealment.*

‘IN concealment,’ that is, secretly or hidden. So when the soul says that it went forth in darkness and concealment, it explains more clearly the great safety spoken of in the first line of this stanza—which it finds in this dim contemplation on the road of the union of the love of God.

2. The words of the soul ‘darkness and concealment’ mean here that the soul, because it went forth in the dark, travelled in secret, undiscovered by the evil one, beyond the reach of his wiles and stratagems. The reason why the soul is free, concealed from the devil and his wiles in the dimness of this contemplation, is, that infused contemplation, to which it is now admitted, is passively infused into it, in secret, without the cognisance of the senses, and of the interior and exterior powers of the sensual part. And that, too, is the reason why it escapes, not only from the embarrassments which the faculties, and naturally, through their weakness, present before it, but also from the evil one who, were it not for the sensual faculties, could never know what is passing in the soul. The more spiritual therefore the communication is, and the further it is removed beyond the reach of sense, the less able is the devil to perceive it.

3. This being so, it greatly concerns the soul’s security,

that the lower senses should be in the dark, and have no knowledge of the interior conversation of the soul with God, and that for two reasons; first, that the spiritual communication may be the more abundant, for then the weakness of the sensual part hinders not liberty of spirit. The second is, that the soul is more secure because the evil one cannot know what is passing within it. The words of our Lord, 'Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth,'\* may be, in a spiritual sense, understood of this, and we may understand Him to say: Let not thy left hand, that is man's lower nature, know what is passing in the higher and spiritual part of the soul. That is, let the divine communications remain unknown to the lower senses, and a secret between the spirit and God.

4. It is very true, that oftentimes when these interior and most secret spiritual communications are made to the soul, the devil, though he knows neither their nature nor their form, ascertains their presence, and that the soul is then receiving some great blessings, merely from observing the silence and repose some of them effect in the senses, and in the powers of our lower nature. And then, when he sees that he cannot thwart them in the inmost depth of the soul, he does all he can to disquiet and disturb the sensual part which is accessible to him, now by pain and at another time by horrible dread, intending thereby to trouble the higher and spiritual part of the soul, and to frustrate the blessings it then receives and enjoys.

5. But very often when this contemplation pours its light purely into the spirit and exerts its strength therein,

\* St. Matt. vi. 3.



the devil, with all his efforts, is not able to disturb it, for then the soul becomes the recipient of renewed benefits, love, and a more secure peace ; for, wonderful to tell ! in its consciousness of the disturbing presence of the foe, it enters deeply into itself, without knowing how it comes to pass, and feels assured of a certain refuge where it can hide itself beyond the reach of the evil one ; and thus its peace and joy are increased, of which the devil attempted to rob it. All those terrors assail it only from without ; it sees clearly, and exults, that it can in the meanwhile securely enjoy in secret the calm peace and sweetness of the Bridegroom, which the world and the devil can neither give nor take away. The soul is now experiencing the truth of that which the bride says in the Canticle, ‘Behold, threescore valiants . . . compass the bed of Solomon . . . for fears by night.’\* Strength and peace abound within the soul, though it feels the flesh and the bones frequently tormented without.

6. At other times, when the spiritual communications flow over into the senses, the devil succeeds the more easily in disquieting the mind, and in disturbing it with the terrors with which he assails it through the senses. At that time the mental agonies are great, and occasionally surpassing all description ; for when spirit has to do with spirit, the evil one causes an intolerable horror in the good one, that is, in the soul, when it succeeds in disturbing it. This is the meaning of the bride in her account of that which happened to her when she tried to be interiorly recollected, so as to have the fruition of these goods : ‘I came down,’ she says, ‘into the garden of nuts

\* Cant. iii. 7, 8.

to see the fruits of the valleys, and to look if the vineyard had flourished . . . I knew not; my soul troubled me for the chariots and the noise of Aminadab,' that is the devil.\*

7. This attack of the devil takes place also when God bestows His favours upon a soul by the instrumentality of a good angel. The devil sees this occasionally, because God in general permits it to become known to the enemy, that he may do what he can, according to the measure of justice, against that soul, and that he may be debarred from pleading that he had no opportunity of seizing on that soul as he did in the case of Job. It is, therefore, expedient that God should place these two combatants, the good angel and the devil, on an equality when they contend for the soul, in order that the victory may be of greater worth, and that the soul, triumphant and faithful in temptation, may be the more abundantly rewarded.

8. This is the reason—and it is right we should observe it—why God, in the order of grace, permits satan to disquiet and tempt the soul which He is guiding therein. When such a soul has real visions, through the instrumentality of an angel, God suffers the evil spirit to represent false visions of the same kind, in such a way that an incautious soul may be very easily deluded, as it has happened to many. We have an instance of this in Exodus, where we read that the magicians of Pharaoh wrought apparently signs and wonders resembling those really wrought by Moses. For when Moses turned water into blood, the magicians of Egypt did the same; and when he brought forth frogs, so did the magicians.†

\* Cant. vi. 10, 11. . . . † Ex. vii. 11, 22; viii. 6, 7.

9. It is not in bodily visions only that the evil spirit apes God, but in spiritual communications also, which are effected through the instrumentality of an angel, whenever he succeeds in discovering them. For as Job saith, ‘He seeth every high thing,’\* that is, he apes them, and insinuates himself among them as well as he can. Spiritual visions have neither form nor figure—that is the characteristic of spirit—and, therefore, satan cannot imitate them, nor occasion others which shall in any way represent them. And so when the good angel communicates spiritual contemplation, the evil spirit, in order to attack it while the soul is being thus visited, presents himself before it with a certain horror and spiritual confusion, which is occasionally exceedingly painful. Sometimes the soul can quickly disembarass itself, so that the terror of the evil spirit shall have no time to make any impression upon it, and recollects itself, favoured herein by that spiritual grace which the good angel then communicates.

10. Sometimes, too, God permits this horror and trouble to last a long time, and this is a greater torment to the soul than all the evils of this life can be; the remembrance of which afterwards is sufficient to produce great pain. All this passes in the soul without its doing or undoing anything of itself to bring about these representations or impressions. But we must remember that, when God suffers the evil spirit thus to afflict the soul, it is with a view to purify and prepare it by that spiritual vigil for some great festival and spiritual grace which it is His will to bestow upon it, for He never

\* Job xli. 25.

mortifies but to give life, and never humbles but to exalt. This speedily ensues; for the soul, according to the measure of the dark purgation it has undergone, enters on the fruition of sweet spiritual contemplation, and that so sublime at times that no language can describe it. This is to be understood of those visitations which God makes by the ministry of an angel, and wherein the soul, as I said before,\* is not wholly secure, nor in such darkness and concealment as to be altogether unobserved by the enemy.

II. But when God visits the soul Himself, the words of the stanza are then true, for, in perfect darkness, hidden from the enemy, it receives, at such times, the spiritual graces of God. The reason of the difference is that God, being the sovereign Lord, dwells substantially in the soul, and that neither angel nor devil can discover what is going on there, nor penetrate the profound and secret communications which take place between Him and the soul. These communications, because the work of our Lord Himself, are wholly divine and supreme, and, as it were, substantial touches of the divine union between Himself and the soul; in one of these, because it is the highest possible degree of prayer, the soul receives greater good than in all the rest. These are the touches for which the bride in the Canticle prayed, saying, ‘Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth.’†

12. This being a state so near unto God, into which the soul so anxiously longs to enter, one touch of the Godhead is prized and desired by it above all the other gifts which God grants it. For this reason the bride in the Canticle, after the great things wrought in her, of

\* § 8.

† Cant. i. 1.

which she there sings, not finding them enough, prays for the divine touches, saying: 'Who shall give to me Thee my brother, sucking the breasts of my mother, that I may find Thee without, and kiss Thee' with the mouth of my soul, 'and now no man despise me'\* or presume to assail me. These words relate to that communication which God makes alone, without, and hidden from all creatures; that is the meaning of the words 'alone,' 'without,' and 'sucking.' This occurs when the soul in liberty of spirit enjoys these blessings in sweetness and inward peace, the sensual part thereof unable to hinder it, and the devil by means of it not able to disturb it.

13. Then indeed, the evil spirit would not venture to assail the soul, because he could not succeed, neither can he know of those divine touches in the substance of the soul with the substance of God, which is wrought by loving knowledge. No man can arrive at this blessed condition but by the most perfect purgation and detachment, by being spiritually hidden from all created things. It is a work wrought in the dark, in the hiding place, wherein the soul is confirmed more and more in union with God by love; and, therefore, the soul sings, 'In darkness and concealment.'

14. When these favours are granted to the soul in secret, that is, in the spirit only, the higher and lower portions of the soul seem to it during some of them—it knows not how—to be so far apart that it recognises two parts in itself, each so distinct from the other, that neither seems to have anything in common with the other, being in appearance so far removed and apart. And, in reality,

\* Cant. viii. 1.



this is in a certain manner true, for in its present operations, which are wholly spiritual, it has no commerce with the sensual part.

15. Thus the soul becomes wholly spiritual, and the spiritual passions and desires are in a high degree suppressed in this hiding place of unitive contemplation. The soul then, speaking of its higher part, sings the last line of this stanza, ‘My house being now at rest.’

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

Concludes the explanation of the second stanza.

*My house being now at rest.*

THIS is as much as saying, My higher nature and my lower nature also, each in its desires and powers, being now at rest, I went forth to the divine union of the love of God.

2. As in the warfare of the dark night, as I said before,\* the soul undergoes a twofold contest and purgation: that is, in the sensual and the spiritual part, with their senses, powers, and passions, so also, in the sensual and spiritual parts, with all their powers and desires, does it attain to a twofold peace and rest. For this reason it repeats the words, as I said before,† ‘My house being now at rest,’ at the end of the second stanza, because of the two parts of the soul, spiritual and sensual, which, if they are to go forth into the divine union of love, must first of all be changed, ordered, and

\* Bk. 1 ch. viii. § 1, Bk. 2, ch.. i. § 1      † Ch. xiv. § 1.

tranquillised with regard to all the things of sense and spirit, after the likeness of the state of innocence in Adam, notwithstanding that the soul be not wholly delivered from the temptations of the lower part. These words, therefore, which in the first stanza are understood of the tranquillity of the lower and sensual part, now, in the second stanza, are understood particularly of the higher and spiritual part; and this is the reason of the repetition.

3. The soul obtains this tranquillity and rest of the spiritual house, habitually and perfectly—so far as it is possible in this life—through the substantial touches of the divine union, of which I have just spoken,\* and which, in secret, hidden from the turmoil of satan, sense, and passion, it receives from the Divinity, whereby it has been tranquillised, purified, strengthened, and confirmed, so as to become an effectual partaker of that union which is its divine betrothal to the Son of God. The instant the two houses of the soul are tranquil and confirmed, with the whole household of its powers and desires sunk in sleep and silence, as to all things of heaven and earth, the divine Wisdom, immediately in a new bond of loving possession, unites itself to the soul, and that is fulfilled which is written, ‘While quiet silence contained all things and the night was in the mid-way of her course, Thy omnipotent Word sallying out of heaven from the royal seats.’† The same truth is set before us in the Canticle, where the bride, after passing by those who took her veil away and wounded her, saith, ‘When I had a little passed by them, I found Him whom my soul loveth.’‡

4. This union is unattainable without great purity,

\* Ch. xxiii. § 11.

† Wisd. xviii. 14.

‡ Cant. iii. 4.

and this purity is attainable only by detachment from all created things and sharp mortifications. This is signified by the robbery of the veil and the wounding of the bride in the night when she went forth searching after her beloved; for the new veil of the betrothal cannot be put on till the old veil be taken away. He, therefore, who will not go out in this dark night to seek the Beloved, who will not deny and mortify his own will, but seek Him at his ease on his bed, as the bride once did,\* will never find Him. The soul says here that it found Him, as the soul says of itself that it found him by going forth in the dark, and in the anxieties of love.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

In which the third stanza is briefly explained.

*In that happy night,  
In secret, seen of none,  
Seeing nought myself,  
Without other light or guide  
Save that which in my heart was burning.*

THE soul still continues the metaphor of natural night in celebrating and magnifying the blessings of the night of the spirit, by means of which it has been able quickly and securely to compass the desired end. Three of these blessings are set before us in this stanza.

2. The first is that in this blessed night of contemplation God is guiding the soul by a road so solitary and so secret, so remote and alien from sense, that nothing belonging thereto, nor any created thing, can approach it so as to disturb it or detain it on the road of the union of love.

\* Cant. iii. 1.

3. The second blessing is that because of the spiritual darkness of this night, in which all the faculties of the higher part of the soul are in darkness, the soul, seeing nothing, and unable to see, is not detained by anything which is not God from drawing near unto Him, and, therefore, advances unhindered by forms and figures and natural apprehensions: for these are the things which usually hinder the soul, from being always in union with God.

4. The third blessing is, that though the soul is supported by no particular interior light of the understanding, nor by any exterior guide comforting it on this high road—the thick darkness has deprived it of all this—yet love and faith, now burning within it, drawing the heart towards the Beloved, influence and guide it, and make it fly upwards to God along the road of solitude, while it knows neither how nor by what means that is done.

END OF THE DARK NIGHT.

A

SPIRITUAL CANTICLE OF THE SOUL  
AND THE BRIDEGROOM CHRIST.\*

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PROLOGUE.

INASMUCH as this canticle seems to have been written with some fervour of love of God, whose wisdom and love are, as is said in the book of Wisdom,† so vast that they reach “from end unto end” and as the soul, taught and moved by Him manifests the same abundance and strength in the words it uses, I do not purpose here to set forth all that greatness and fulness the spirit of love, which is fruitful, embodies in it. Yea, rather it would be foolishness to think that the language of love and the mystical intelligence—and that is what these stanzas are—can be at all explained in words of any kind, for the Spirit of our Lord who helps our weakness,—as St. Paul saith‡—dwelling in us makes petitions for us with groanings unutterable for that which we cannot well

\* [This canticle was made by the Saint when he was in the prison of the Mitigation, in Toledo. It came into the hands of the Venerable Anne of Jesus, at whose request he wrote the following commentary on it, and addressed it to her.]

† Wisdom, viii. 1.

‡ Rom. viii. 26.



understand or grasp so as to be able to make it known. 'The Spirit helpeth our infirmity . . . the Spirit Himself requesteth for us with groanings unspeakable.' For who can describe that which He shows to loving souls in whom He dwells? Who can set forth in words that which He makes them feel? and lastly who can explain that for which they long?

2. Assuredly no one can do it; not even they themselves who experience it. That is the reason why they use figures of special comparisons and similitudes; they hide somewhat of that which they feel and in the abundance of the Spirit utter secret mysteries rather than express themselves in clear words.

3. And if these similitudes be not received in the simplicity of a loving mind, and in the sense in which they are uttered, they will seem to be effusions of folly rather than the language of reason; as any one may see in the divine Canticle of Solomon, and in others of the sacred books, wherein the Holy Ghost, because ordinary and common speech could not convey His meaning, uttered His mysteries in strange terms and similitudes. It follows from this, that after all that the holy doctors have said, and may say, no words of theirs can explain it; nor can words do it; and so, in general, all that is said falls far short of the meaning.

4. The stanzas that follow having been written under the influence of that love which proceeds from the overflowing mystical intelligence, cannot be fully explained. Indeed I do not purpose any such thing, for my sole object is to throw some general light over them, which in my opinion is the better course. It is better to leave the

outpourings of love in their own fulness, that every one may apply them according to the measure of his spirit and power, than to pare them down to one particular sense which is not suited to the taste of every one. And though I do put forth a particular explanation, still others are not to be bound by it. The mystical wisdom—that is, the love, of which these stanzas speak—does not require to be distinctly understood in order to produce the effect of love and tenderness in the soul, for it is in this respect like faith, by which we love God without a clear comprehension of Him.

5. I shall therefore be very concise, though now and then unable to avoid some prolixity where the subject requires it, and when the opportunity is offered of discussing and explaining certain points and effects of prayer: many of which being referred to in these stanzas, I must discuss some of them. I shall, however, pass over the more ordinary ones, and treat briefly of the more extraordinary to which they are subject who, by the mercy of God, have advanced beyond the state of beginners. This I do for two reasons: the first is, that much is already written concerning beginners; and the second is, that I am addressing those who have received from our Lord the grace of being led on from the elementary state and are led inwards to the bosom of His divine love.

6. I therefore trust, though I may discuss some points of scholastic theology relating to the interior commerce of the soul with God, that I am not using such language altogether in vain, and that it will be found profitable for pure spirituality. For though some may be altogether

ignorant of scholastic theology by which the divine verities are explained, yet they are not ignorant of mystical theology, the science of love, by which those verities are not only learned, but at the same time are relished also.

7. And in order that what I am going to say may be the better received, I submit myself to higher judgments, and unreservedly to that of our holy mother the Church, intending to say nothing in reliance on my own personal experience, or on what I have observed in other spiritual persons, nor on what I have heard them say—though I intend to profit by all this—unless I can confirm it with the sanction of the divine writings, at least on those points which are most difficult of comprehension.

8. The method I propose to follow in the matter is this, first of all, to cite the words of the text, and then to give that explanation of them which belongs to the subject before me. I shall now transcribe all the stanzas, and place them at the beginning of this treatise. In the next place I shall take each of them separately, and explain them line by line, each line in its proper place before the explanation.

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## SONG OF THE SOUL AND THE BRIDEGROOM.

### I

#### THE BRIDE.

Where hast Thou hidden Thyself,  
 And abandoned me in my groaning, O my Beloved?  
 Thou has fled like the hart,  
 Having wounded me.  
 I ran after Thee, crying; but Thou wert gone.

## II

O shepherds, you who go  
Through the sheepcots up the hill,  
If you shall see Him  
Whom I love the most,  
Tell Him I languish, suffer, and die.

## III

In search of my Love  
I will go over mountains and strands ;  
I will gather no flowers,  
I will fear no wild beasts ;  
And pass by the mighty and the frontiers.

## IV

O groves and thickets  
Planted by the hand of the Beloved ;  
O verdant meads  
Enamelled with flowers  
Tell me has He passed by you ?

## V

## ANSWER OF THE CREATURES.

A thousand graces diffusing  
He passed through the groves in haste,  
And merely regarding them  
As He passed  
Clothed them with His beauty.

## VI

## THE BRIDE.

Ah ! who can heal me ?  
Give me at once Thyself,  
Send me no more  
A messenger  
Who cannot tell me what I wish.

## VII

All they who serve are telling me  
Of Thy unnumbered graces ;  
And all wound me more and more,  
And something leaves me dying,  
I know not what, of which they are darkly speaking.

## VIII

But how thou perseverest, O life  
Not living where thou livest ;  
The arrows bring death  
Which thou receivest  
From thy conceptions of the Beloved.

## IX

Why, after wounding  
This heart, hast Thou not healed it ?  
And why after stealing it,  
Hast Thou thus abandoned it,  
And not carried away the stolen prey ?

## X

Quench Thou my troubles,  
For no one else can soothe them ;  
And let mine eyes behold Thee  
For Thou art their light,  
And I will keep them for Thee alone.

## XI

Reveal Thy presence,  
And let the vision and Thy beauty kill me.  
Behold the malady  
Of love is incurable  
Except in Thy presence and before Thy face.

## XII

O crystal well !  
O that on Thy silvered surface  
Thou wouldest mirror forth at once  
Those eyes desired  
Which are outlined in my heart !

## XIII

Turn them away, O my Beloved !  
I am on the wing :

## THE BRIDEGROOM.

Return, My Dove !  
The wounded hart  
Looms on the hill  
In the air of thy flight and is refreshed.

## XIV

## THE BRIDE.

My Beloved is the mountains,  
The solitary wooded valleys,  
The strange islands,  
The roaring torrents,  
The whisper of the amorous gales ;

## XV

The tranquil night  
At the approaches of the dawn,  
The silent music,  
The murmuring solitude,  
The supper which revives, and enkindles love.

## XVI

Catch us the foxes,  
For our vineyard hath flourished ;  
While of roses  
We make a nosegay,  
And let no one appear on the hill.

## XVII

O killing north wind cease !  
Come, south wind, that awakenest love !  
Blow through my garden,  
And let its odours flow,  
And The Beloved shall feed among the flowers.

## XVIII

O nymphs of Judea !  
While amid the flowers and the rose-trees  
The amber sends forth its perfume,  
Tarry in the suburbs,  
And touch not our thresholds.

## XIX

Hide thyself, O my Beloved !  
Turn Thy face to the mountains.  
Do not speak,  
But regard the companions  
Of her who is travelling amidst strange islands.



## XX

## THE BRIDEGROOM.

Light-winged birds,  
 Lions, fawns, bounding does,  
 Mountains, valleys, strands,  
 Waters, winds, heat,  
 And the terrors that keep watch by night ;

## XXI

By the soft lyres  
 And the siren strains, I adjure you,  
 Let your fury cease,  
 And touch not the wall,  
 That the bride may sleep in greater security.

## XXII

The bride has entered  
 The pleasant and desirable garden,  
 And there reposes to her heart's content ;  
 Her neck reclining  
 On the sweet arms of the Beloved.

## XXIII

Beneath the apple-tree  
 There wert thou betrothed ;  
 There I gave thee My hand,  
 And thou wert redeemed  
 Where thy mother was corrupted.

## XXIV

## THE BRIDE.

Our bed is of flowers  
 By dens of lions encompassed,  
 Hung with purple,  
 Made in peace,  
 And crowned with a thousand shields of gold.

## XXV

In Thy footsteps  
 The young ones run Thy way ;  
 At the touch of the fire,  
 And by the spiced wine,  
 The divine balsam flows.

## XXVI

In the inner cellar  
Of my Beloved have I drunk ; and when I went forth  
Over all the plain  
I knew nothing,  
And lost the flock I followed before.

## XXVII

There He gave me His breasts,  
There He taught me the science full of sweetness.  
And there I gave to Him  
Myself without reserve ;  
There I promised to be His bride.

## XXVIII

My soul is occupied,  
And all my substance in His service ;  
Now I guard no flock,  
Nor have I any other employment :  
My sole occupation is love.

## XXIX

If, then, on the common land  
I am no longer seen or found,  
You will say that I am lost ;  
That, being enamoured,  
I lost myself ; and yet was found.

## XXX

Of emeralds, and of flowers  
In the early morning gathered,  
We will make the garlands,  
Flowering in Thy love,  
And bound together with one hair of my head.

## XXXI

By that one hair  
Thou hast observed fluttering on my neck,  
And on my neck regarded,  
Thou wert captivated ;  
And wounded by one of my eyes.

## XXXII

When Thou didst regard me,  
Thine eyes imprinted in me Thy grace :  
For this didst Thou love me again,  
And thereby mine eyes did merit  
To adore what in Thee they saw.

## XXXIII

Despise me not,  
For if I was swarthy once  
Thou canst regard me now ;  
Since Thou hast regarded me,  
Grace and beauty hast Thou given me.

## XXXIV

## THE BRIDEGROOM.

The little white dove  
Has returned to the ark with the bough ;  
And now the turtle-dove  
Its desired mate  
On the green banks has found.

## XXXV

In solitude she lived,  
And in solitude built her nest ;  
And in solitude, alone  
Hath the Beloved guided her,  
In solitude also wounded with love.

## XXXVI

## THE BRIDE.

Let us rejoice, O my Beloved !  
Let us go forth to see ourselves in Thy beauty,  
To the mountain and the hill,  
Where the pure water flows ;  
Let us enter into the heart of the thicket.

## XXXVII

We shall go at once  
To the deep caverns of the rock  
Which are all secret,  
There we shall enter in  
And taste of the new wine of the pomegranate.

## XXXVIII

There thou wilt show me  
That which my soul desired ;  
And there Thou wilt give at once,  
O Thou, my life !  
That which Thou gavest me the other day.

## XXXIX

The breathing of the air,  
The song of the sweet nightingale,  
The grove and its beauty  
In the serene night,  
With the flame that consumes, and gives no pains.

## XL

None saw it ;  
Neither did Aminadab appear.  
The siege was intermitted,  
And the cavalry dismounted  
At the sight of the waters.

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## ARGUMENT.

These stanzas describe the career of a soul from its first entrance on the service of God till it comes to the final state of perfection—the spiritual marriage. They refer accordingly to the three states or ways of the spiritual training—the purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways ; some properties and effects of which they explain.

The first stanzas relate to beginners—to the purgative way. The second to the advanced—to the state of spiritual betrothal, that is, the illuminative way. The next to the unitive way—that of the perfect, the spiritual marriage. The unitive way, that of the perfect, follows

the illuminative, which is that of the advanced. The last stanzas treat of the beatific state, which only the already perfect soul aims at.

## EXPLANATION OF THE STANZAS.

### NOTE.

The soul, considering the obligations of its state, seeing that ‘the days of man are short;’\* that the way of eternal life is strait;† that ‘the just man shall scarcely be saved;’‡ that the things of this world are empty and deceitful; that all die and perish like water poured on the ground;§ that time is uncertain, the last account strict, perdition most easy, and salvation most difficult: and recognising also, on the other hand, the great debt that is owing to God, Who has created it solely for Himself, for which the service of its whole life is due, Who has redeemed it for Himself alone, for which it owes Him all else, and the correspondence of its will to His love; and remembering other innumerable blessings for which it acknowledges itself indebted to God even before it was born: and also that a great part of its life has been wasted, and that it will have to render an account of it all from the beginning unto the end, to the payment of ‘the last farthing,’|| when God shall ‘search Jerusalem with lamps;’¶ that it is already late, and perhaps the end of the day:\*\* in order to remedy so great

\* Job xiv. 5.

† St. Matt. vii. 14.

‡ 1 St. Pet. iv. 18.

§ 2 Kings xiv. 14.

|| St. Matt. v. 26.

¶ Sophon. i. 12.

\*\* St. Matt. xx. 6.

an evil, especially when it is conscious that God is grievously offended, and that He has hidden His face from it, because it would forget Him for the creature. The soul, now touched with sorrow and inward sinking of the heart at the sight of its imminent risks and ruin, renouncing everything and casting them aside without delaying for a day, or even an hour, with fear and groanings uttered from the heart, and wounded with the love of God, begins to invoke the Beloved and says :

## STANZA I.

## THE BRIDE.

*Where hast Thou hidden Thyself,  
And left me to my sorrow, O my Beloved !  
Thou hast fled like the hart,  
Having wounded me.  
I ran after Thee, crying ; but Thou wert gone.*

IN this first stanza the soul enamoured of the Word, the Son of God, the Bridegroom, desiring to be united to Him in the clear and substantial vision, sets before Him the anxieties of its love, complaining of His absence. And this the more so because, now pierced and wounded with love, for which it had abandoned all things, even itself, it has still to endure the absence of the Beloved Who has not released it from its mortal flesh, that it might have the fruition of Him in the glory of eternity. Hence it cries out,

‘Where hast Thou hidden Thyself?’

2. It is as if the soul said, show me O thou the Word, my Bridegroom, the place where Thou art hidden. It asks for the revelation of the divine Essence ; for the place where the Son of God is hidden is, according to



St. John, 'the bosom of the Father,'\* which is the divine Essence, transcending all mortal vision, and hidden from all human understanding, as Isaias saith, speaking to God, 'Verily Thou art a hidden God.'† From this we learn that the communication and sense of His presence, however great they may be, and the most sublime and profound knowledge of God which the soul may have in this life, are not God essentially, neither have they any affinity with Him, for in very truth He is still hidden from the soul; and it is therefore expedient for it, amid all these grandeurs, always to consider Him as hidden, and to seek Him in His hiding place, saying,

'Where hast Thou hidden Thyself?'

3. Neither sublime communications nor sensible presence furnish any certain proof of His gracious presence; nor is the absence thereof, and aridity, any proof of His absence from the soul. 'If He come to me, I shall not see Him; if He depart, I shall not understand.'‡ That is, if the soul have any great communication, or impression, or spiritual knowledge, it must not on that account persuade itself that what it then feels is to enjoy or see God clearly and in His Essence, or that it brings it nearer to Him, or Him to it, however deep such feelings may be. On the other hand, when all these sensible and spiritual communications fail it, and is itself in dryness, darkness, and desolation, it must not on that account suppose that God is far from it; for in truth the former state is no sign of its being in a state of grace, nor is the latter a sign that it is not; for

\* St. John i. 18.

† Is. xlv. 15.

‡ Job ix. 11.

‘man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred’\* in the sight of God.

4. The chief object of the soul in these words is not to ask only for that affective and sensible devotion, wherein there is no certainty or evidence of the possession of the Bridegroom in this life ; but principally for that clear presence and vision of His Essence, of which it longs to be assured and satisfied in the next. This, too, was the object of the bride who, in the divine song desiring to be united to the Divinity of the Bridegroom Word, prayed to the Father, saying, ‘Show me where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the midday.’† For to ask to be shown the place where He fed was to ask to be shown the Essence of the Divine Word, the Son ; because the Father feedeth nowhere else but in His only begotten Son, Who is the glory of the Father. In asking to be shown the place where he lieth in the midday, was to ask for the same thing, because the Son is the sole delight of the Father, Who lieth in no other place, and is comprehended by no other thing, but in and by His beloved Son, in Whom He reposeth wholly, communicating to Him His whole Essence, in the ‘midday’ which is eternity, where the Father is ever begetting and the Son ever begotten.

5. This pasture, then, is the Bridegroom Word, where the Father feedeth in infinite glory. He is also the bed of flowers whereupon He reposes with infinite delight of love, profoundly hidden from all mortal vision and every created thing. This is the meaning of the bride-soul when she says,

‘Where hast Thou hidden Thyself?’

\* Eccles. ix. 1.

† Cant. i. 6.

6. That the thirsty soul may find the Bridegroom, and be one with Him in the union of love in this life—so far as that is possible—and quench its thirst with that drink which it is possible to drink of at His hands in this life, it will be as well—since that is what the soul asks of Him—that we should answer for Him, and point out the special spot where He is hidden, that He may be found there in that perfection and sweetness, of which this life is capable, and that the soul may not begin to loiter uselessly in the footsteps of its companions.

7. We must remember that the Word, the Son of God, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, is hidden in essence and in presence, in the inmost being of the soul. That soul, therefore, that will find Him, must go out from all things in will and affection, and enter into the profoundest self recollection, and all things must be to it as if they existed not. Hence, St. Augustin saith:

I found Thee not without, O Lord, I sought Thee without in vain, for thou art within.\* God is therefore hidden within the soul, and the true contemplative will seek Him there in love, saying,

‘Where hast Thou hidden Thyself?’

8. O thou soul, then, most beautiful of creatures, who so longest to know the place where thy Beloved is, that thou mayest seek Him, and be united to Him. Thou knowest now that thou art thyself that very tabernacle where He dwells, the secret chamber of His retreat where He is hidden. Rejoice, therefore and exult, because all thy good and all thy hope is so near thee as to be within thee; or to speak more accurately that thou canst not be

\* Soliloq. c. 31. Opp. Ed. Ben. tom. vi. app. p. 98.

without it, 'for lo, the kingdom of God is within you.'\* So saith the Bridegroom Himself, and His servant, St. Paul, adds: 'You are the temple of the living God.†' What joy for the soul to learn that God never abandons it even in mortal sin, how much less in a state of grace?‡

9. What more canst thou desire, what more canst thou seek without, seeing that within thou hast thy riches, thy delight, thy satisfaction, thy fulness and thy kingdom, that is, thy Beloved whom thou desirest and seekest. Rejoice then and be glad in Him with interior recollection, seeing that thou hast Him so near. Then love Him, then desire Him, then adore Him, and go not to seek Him out of thyself, for that will be but distraction and weariness, and thou shalt not find Him; because there is no fruition of Him more certain, more ready, or more intimate than that which is within.

10. One difficulty alone remains: though He is within, yet He is hidden. But it is a great matter to know the place of His secret rest, that He may be sought there with certainty. The knowledge of this is that which thou askest for here, O soul, when with loving affection thou criest:

'Where hast Thou hidden Thyself?'

11. You will still urge and say, How comes it, then, that I find Him not, nor feel Him, if He is within my soul? It is because He is hidden, and because thou hidest not thyself also that thou mayest find Him and feel Him; for he that will seek that which is hidden must

\* St. Luke xvii. 21.    † 2 Cor. vi. 16.    ‡ Mt. Carmel, Bk. 2, c. 5.

enter secretly into the secret place where it is hidden, and when he finds it, he is himself hidden like the object of his search. Seeing, then, that the Bridegroom whom thou lovest is 'the treasure hidden in the field'\* of thy soul, for which the wise merchant gave all that he had, so thou, if thou wilt find Him, must forget all that is thine, withdraw from all created things, and hide thyself in the secret retreat of the spirit, shutting the door upon thyself—that is, denying thy will in all things—and praying to thy Father in secret.† Then thou, being hidden with Him, wilt then be conscious of His presence in secret, and wilt love Him, possess Him in secret, and delight in Him in secret, in a way that no tongue or language can express.

12. Courage, then, O soul most beautiful, thou knowest now that thy Beloved, Whom thou desirest, dwelleth hidden within thy breast; strive, therefore, to be truly hidden with Him, and then thou shalt embrace Him, and be conscious of His presence with loving affection. Consider also that He bids thee, by the mouth of Isaias, to come to His secret hiding-place, saying, 'Go, . . . enter into thy chambers, shut thy doors upon thee;' that is, all thy faculties, so that no created thing shall enter: 'be hid a little for a moment,'‡ that is, for the moment of this mortal life; for, if now during this life which is short, thou wilt 'with all watchfulness keep thy heart,'§ as the Wise man saith, God will most assuredly give thee, as He hath promised by the prophet Isaias, 'hidden treasures and mysteries of secrets.'|| The

\* St. Matt. xiii. 44.

† Ib. vi. 6.

‡ Is. xxvi. 20.

§ Prov. iv. 23.

|| Is. xlv. 3.

substance of these secrets is God Himself, for He is the substance of the faith, and the object of it, and the faith is the secret and the mystery. And when that which the faith conceals shall be revealed and made manifest, that is the perfection of God, as St. Paul saith, ‘When that which is perfect is come,’\* then shall be revealed to the soul the substance and mysteries of these secrets.

13. Though in this mortal life the soul will never reach to the interior secrets as it will in the next, however much it may hide itself, still, if it will hide itself with Moses, ‘in the hole of the rock’—which is a real imitation of the perfect life of the Bridegroom, the son of God—protected by the right hand of God, it will merit the vision of the ‘back parts’† that is, it will reach to such perfection here, as to be united, and transformed by love, in the son of God, its Bridegroom. So effectually will this be wrought that the soul will feel itself so united to Him, so learned and so instructed in His secrets, that, so far as the knowledge of Him in this life is concerned, it will be no longer necessary for it to say: ‘Where hast Thou hidden Thyself?’

14. Thou knowest then, O soul, how thou art to demean thyself if thou wilt find the Bridegroom in His secret place. But if thou wilt hear it again, hear this one word full of substance and unapproachable truth: Seek Him in faith and love, without seeking to satisfy thyself in aught, or to understand more than is expedient for thee to know; for faith and love are the two guides of the blind, they will lead thee by a way thou knowest not to the secret chamber of God. Faith, the secret of which I

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

† Exod. xxxiii. 22, 23.



am speaking, is the foot that journeys onwards to God, and love is the guide that directs its steps. And while the soul meditates on the mysterious secrets of the faith, it will merit the revelation, on the part of love, of that which the faith involves, namely, the Bridegroom whom it longs for, in this life by spiritual grace, and the divine union, as we said before,\* and in the next in essential glory, face to face, hidden now.

15. But meanwhile, though the soul attains to union, the highest state possible in this life, yet inasmuch as He is still hidden from it in the bosom of the Father, as I have said, the soul longing for the fruition of Him in the life to come, ever cries: 'Where hast Thou hidden Thyself?'

16. Thou doest well, then, O soul, in seeking Him always in His secret place; for thou greatly magnifiest God, and drawest near unto Him, esteeming Him as far beyond and above all thou canst reach. Rest, therefore, neither wholly nor in part, on what thy faculties can embrace; never seek to satisfy thyself with what thou comprehendest of God, but rather with what thou comprehendest not; and never rest on the love of, and delight in, that which thou canst understand and feel, but rather on that which is beyond thy understanding and feeling: this is, as I have said, to seek Him by faith.

17. God is, as I said before,† inaccessible and hidden, and though it may seem that thou hast found Him, felt Him, and comprehended Him, yet thou must ever regard Him as hidden, serve Him as hidden, in secret. Be not thou like many unwise, who, with low views of God,

\* § 4.

† § 2.

think that when they cannot comprehend Him, or be conscious of His presence, that He is then farther away and more hidden, when the contrary is true, namely, that He is nearer to them when they are least aware of it; as the prophet David saith, 'He put darkness his covert.'\* Thus, when thou art near unto Him, the very infirmity of thy vision makes the darkness palpable; thou doest well, therefore, at all times, in prosperity as well as in adversity, spiritual or temporal, to look upon God as hidden, and to say unto Him, 'Where hast Thou hidden Thyself?

And left me to my sorrow, O my Beloved?'

18. The soul calls Him 'my Beloved,' the more to move Him to listen to its cry, for God, when loved, most readily listens to the prayer of him who loves Him. Thus He speaks Himself: 'If you abide in Me . . . you shall ask what thing soever you will, and it shall be done to you.'† The soul may then with truth call Him Beloved, when it is wholly His, when the heart has no attachments but Him, and when all the thoughts are continually directed to Him. It was the absence of this that made Delila say to Samson, 'How dost thou say thou lovest me when thy mind is not with me?'‡ The mind comprises the thoughts and the feelings. Some there are who call the Bridegroom their beloved, but He is not really beloved, because their heart is not wholly with Him. Their prayers are, therefore, not so effectual before God, and they shall not obtain their petitions until, persevering in prayer, they fix their minds more constantly upon God and their hearts more wholly in loving

\* Ps. xvii. 12.

† St. John xv. 7.

‡ Judg. xvi. 15.

affection upon Him, for nothing can be obtained from God but by love.

19. The words, 'And left me to my sorrow,' tell us that the absence of the Beloved is the cause of continual sadness in him who loves; for as such an one loves none else, so, in the absence of the object beloved, nothing can console or relieve him. This is, therefore, a test to discern the true lover of God. Is he satisfied with anything less than God? Do I say satisfied? Yea, if a man possess all things he cannot be satisfied; the greater his possessions the less will be his satisfaction, for the satisfaction of the heart is not found in possessions, but in detachment from all things and in poverty of spirit. This being so, the perfection of love in which we possess God, by a grace most intimate and special, lives in the soul in this life when it has reached it, with a certain satisfaction, which however is not full, for David, notwithstanding all his perfection, hoped for that in heaven, saying, 'I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear.'\*

20. Thus, then, the peace and tranquillity, and satisfaction of heart, to which the soul may attain in this life, are not sufficient to relieve it from its groaning, peaceful and painless though they be, while it hopes for that which is still wanting. Groaning belongs to hope, as the Apostle says of himself and others, though perfect, 'Ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God.'† The soul groans when the heart is enamoured, for where love wounds there is heard the

\* Ps. xvi. 15.

† Rom. viii. 23.

groaning of the wounded one, complaining feelingly of the absence of the Beloved, especially when, after tasting of the sweet converse of the Bridegroom, it finds itself suddenly alone, and in aridity, because He has gone away. That is why it cries,

‘Thou hast fled like the hart.’

21. Here it is to be observed that in the Cantic of Canticles the bride compares the bridegroom to the roe and the hart on the mountains, ‘My beloved is like unto a roe and to a fawn of harts,’\* not only because he is shy, solitary, and avoids companions as the hart, but also for his sudden appearance and disappearance. That is His way in His visits to devout souls in order to comfort and encourage them, and in the withdrawing and absence which He makes them feel after those visits in order to try, humble and teach them. For that purpose he makes them feel the pain of His absence most keenly, as the following words show,

‘Having wounded me.’

22. It is as if it had said, it was not enough that I should feel the pain and grief which Thy absence causes, and from which I am continually suffering, but Thou must, after wounding me with the arrow of Thy love, and increasing my longing and desire to see Thee, run away from me with the swiftness of the hart, and not permit me to lay hold of Thee, even for a moment.

23. For the clearer understanding of this we are to keep in mind that beside the many kinds of God’s visits to the soul, in which He wounds it with love, there are commonly certain secret touches of love, which, like a

\* Cant. ii. 9.

fiery arrow, pierce and penetrate the soul, and burn it with the fire of love. These are properly called the wounds of love, and it is of these the soul is here speaking. These wounds so inflame the will, that the soul becomes so enveloped with the fire of love as to appear consumed thereby. They make it go forth out of itself, and be renewed, and enter on another life, as the phoenix from the fire.

24. David, speaking of this, saith, ‘My heart hath been inflamed, and my reins have been changed; and I am brought to nothing, and I knew not.’\* The desires and affections, called the reins by the prophet, are all stirred and divinely changed in this burning of the heart, and the soul through love, melts into nothing, knowing nothing but love. At this time the changing of the reins is a great pain, and longing for the vision of God; it seems to the soul that God treats it with intolerable severity, so much so that the severity with which love treats it seems to the soul unendurable, not because it is wounded—for it considers such wounds to be its salvation—but because it is thus suffering from its love, and because He has not wounded it more deeply so as to cause death, that it may be united to him in the life of perfect love. The soul, therefore, magnifying its sorrows, or revealing them, says,

‘Having wounded me.’

25. The soul says in effect, Thou hast abandoned me after wounding me, and Thou hast left me dying of love; and then Thou hast hidden Thyself as a hart swiftly running away. This impression is most profound in the

\* Ps. lxxii. 21, 22.

soul; for by this wound of love, made in the soul by God, the affections of the will lead most rapidly to the possession of the Beloved, whose touch it felt, and as rapidly also, His absence, and its inability to have the fruition of Him here as it desires. Thereupon succeed the groaning because of His absence; for these visitations of God are not like those which recreate and satisfy the soul, because they are rather for wounding than for healing—more for afflicting than for satisfying it, seeing that they tend rather to quicken the knowledge, and increase the longing, and consequently pain with the longing for the vision of God. They are called the spiritual wounds of love, most sweet to the soul and desirable; and, therefore, when it is thus wounded the soul would willingly die a thousand deaths, because these wounds make it go forth out of itself, and enter into God, which is the meaning of the words that follow:

‘I ran after Thee, crying; but Thou wert gone.’

26. There can be no remedy for the wounds of love but from Him who inflicted them. And so the wounded soul, urged by the vehemence of that burning which the wounds of love occasion, runs after the Beloved, crying unto Him for relief. This spiritual running after God has a twofold meaning. The first is a going forth from all created things, which is effected by hating and despising them; the second, a going forth out of oneself, by forgetting self, which is brought about by the love of God. For when the love of God touches the soul with that vividness of which we are here speaking, it so elevates it, that it goes forth not only out of itself by self-forgetfulness, but is also drawn away from its own



judgment, natural ways and inclinations, crying after God, O my Bridegroom, as if saying, by this touch of Thine and wound of love hast Thou drawn me away not only from all created things, but also from myself—for, in truth, soul and body seem now to part—and raised me up to Thyself, crying after Thee in detachment from all things that I might be attached to Thee :

‘Thou wert gone.’

27. As if saying, when I sought Thy presence, I found Thee not ; and I was detached from all things without being able to cling to Thee—borne painfully by the gales of love without help in Thee or in myself. This going forth of the soul in search of the Beloved is the rising of the bride in the Canticle : ‘I will rise and go about the city ; in the streets and the high ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth. I have sought him and have not found . . . they wounded me.’\* The rising of the bride—speaking spiritually—is from that which is mean to that which is noble ; and is the same with the going forth of the soul out of its own ways and inferior love to the ennobling love of God. The bride says that she was wounded because she found him not ;† so the soul also says of itself that it is wounded with love and forsaken ; that is, the loving soul is ever in pain during the absence of the Beloved, because it has given itself up wholly unto Him, hoping for the reward of its self-surrender, the possession of the Beloved ; still the Beloved withholds Himself while the soul has lost all things, and even itself, for Him ; it obtains no compensation for its loss, seeing that it is deprived of Him whom it loveth.

\* Cant. iii. 2, v. 7.

† Ib. v. 6, 7.

28. This pain and sense of the absence of God, is wont to be so oppressive in those who are going onwards to the state of perfection, that they would die if God did not interpose when the divine wounds are inflicted upon them. As they have the palate of the will wholesome, and the mind pure and disposed for God, and as they taste in some degree of the sweetness of divine love, which they supremely desire, so they also suffer supremely ; for having but a glimpse of an infinite good which they are not permitted to enjoy, that is to them an ineffable pain and torment.

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## STANZA II.

*O shepherds, you who go  
Through the sheepcots up the hill,  
If you shall see  
Him whom I love,  
Tell Him I languish, suffer, and die.*

THE soul would now employ intercessors and mediators between itself and the Beloved, praying them to make its sufferings and afflictions known. One in love, when he cannot converse personally with the object of his love, will do so in the best way he can. Thus the soul employs its affections, desires, and groanings as messengers well able to manifest the secret of its heart to the Beloved. Accordingly, it calls upon them to do this, saying :

‘ O shepherds, you who go.’

2. The shepherds are the affections, and desires, and groanings of the soul, for they feed it with spiritual good things. A shepherd is one who feeds : and by means of

such God communicates Himself to the soul and feeds it in the divine pastures; for without these groans and desires He communicates but slightly with it.

‘You who go.’

You who go forth in pure love; for all desires and affections do not reach God, but only those which proceed from sincere love.

‘Through the sheepcots up the hill.’

3. The sheepcots are the heavenly hierarchies, the angelic choirs, by whose ministry, from choir to choir, our prayers and sighs ascend to God; that is, to the ‘hill,’ for He is the highest eminence, and because in Him, as on a hill, we observe and behold all things, the higher and the lower sheepcots. To Him our prayers ascend, offered by angels, as I have said; so the angel said to Tobias: ‘When thou didst pray with tears, and didst bury the dead . . . I offered thy prayer to our Lord.’\*

4. The shepherds also are the angels themselves, who not only carry our petitions to God, but also bring down the graces of God to our souls, feeding them like good shepherds with the sweet communications and inspirations of God, Who employs them in that ministry. They also protect us and defend us against the wolves, which are the evil spirits. And thus, whether we understand the affections or the angels by the shepherds, the soul calls upon both to be its messengers to the Beloved, and thus addresses them all:

‘If you shall see him.’

That is to say:

5. If, to my great happiness, you shall come into His

\* Tob. xii. 12.

presence, so that He shall see you and hear your words. God, indeed, knoweth all things, even the very thoughts of the soul, as He said unto Moses,\* but it is then He beholds our necessities when He relieves them, and hears our prayers when He grants them. God does not see all necessities and hear all petitions until the time appointed shall have come; it is then that He is said to hear and see, as we learn in the book of Exodus. When the children of Israel had been afflicted for four hundred years as serfs in Egypt, God said unto Moses ‘I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt, and I have heard their cry, and . . . I am come down to deliver them.’† And yet He had seen it always. So also St. Gabriel bade Zacharias not to fear, because God had heard his prayer, and would grant him the son, for whom he had been praying for many years;‡ yet God had always heard him. Every soul ought to consider that God, though He does not at once help us and grant our petitions, will still succour us in His own time, for He is, as David saith, ‘a helper in due time in tribulation,’§ if we do not become faint-hearted and cease to pray. This is what the soul means by saying, ‘If you shall see Him,’ that is to say, if the time is come when it shall be His good pleasure to grant my petitions.

6. ‘Whom I love the most:’ that is, whom I love more than all creatures. This is true of the soul when nothing can make it afraid to do and suffer all things in His service. And when the soul can also truly say that which follows, it is a sign that it loves Him above all things.

‘Tell Him I languish, suffer, and die.’

\* Deut. xxxi. 21.

† St. Luke i. 13.

† Exod. iii. 7, 8.

§ Ps. ix. 10.

7. Here the soul speaks of three things that distress it: namely, langour, suffering, and death; for the soul that truly loves God with a love in some degree perfect, suffers in three ways in His absence, in its three powers ordinarily—the understanding, the will, and the memory. In the understanding it languishes because it does not see God, Who is the salvation of it, as the Psalmist saith: ‘I am thy salvation.’\* In the will it suffers, because it possesses not God, Who is its comfort and delight, as David also saith: ‘Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure.’† In the memory it dies, because it remembers its privation of all the blessings of the understanding, which are the vision of God, and of the delights of the will, which are the fruition of Him, and that it is very possible also that it may lose Him for ever, because of the dangers and chances of this life. In the memory, therefore, the soul labours under a sensation like that of death, because it sees itself without the certain and perfect fruition of God, Who is the life of the soul, as Moses saith, ‘He is thy life.’‡

8. Jeremias also, in the Lamentations, speaks of these three things, praying unto God, and saying: ‘Remember my poverty . . . the wormwood and the gall.’§ Poverty relates to the understanding, to which appertain the riches of the knowledge of the Son of God,’ in Whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid.’|| The wormwood, which is a most bitter herb, relates to the will, to which appertains the sweetness of the fruition of God, deprived of which it abides in bitterness. We learn in the Apocalypse that bitterness appertains

\* Ps. xxxiv. 3.

† Ib. xxxv. 9.

‡ Deut. xxx. 20.

§ Lam. iii. 19.

|| Coloss. ii. 3.

spiritually to the will, for the angel said to St. John: 'Take the book and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter.'\* Here the belly signifies the will. The gall relates not only to the memory, but also to all the powers and faculties of the soul, for it signifies the death thereof, as we learn from Moses speaking of the damned: 'Their wine is the gall of dragons, and the venom of asps, which is incurable.'† This signifies the loss of God, which is the death of the soul.

9. These three things which distress the soul are grounded on the three theological virtues, faith, charity, and hope, which relate, in the order here assigned them, to the three faculties of the soul, understanding, will, and memory. Observe here that the soul does no more than represent its miseries and pain to the Beloved: for he who loves wisely does not care to ask for that which he wants and desires, being satisfied with hinting at his necessities, so that the beloved one may do what shall to him seem good. Thus the Blessed Virgin at the marriage feast of Cana asked not directly for wine, but only said to her beloved Son, 'They have no wine.'‡ The sisters of Lazarus sent to Him, not to ask Him to heal their brother, but only to say that he whom He loved was sick: 'Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick.'§

10. There are three reasons for this. Our Lord knows what is expedient for us better than we do ourselves. Secondly, the Beloved is more compassionate towards us when He sees our necessities and our resignation. Thirdly, we are more secured against self-love and self-seeking when we represent our necessity,

\* Apoc. x. 9.      † Deut. xxxii. 33.      ‡ St. John ii. 3.      § Ib. xi. 3.



than when we ask for that which we think we need. It is in this way that the soul represents its three necessities; as if it said: Tell my Beloved, that as I languish, and as He only is my salvation, to save me; that as I am suffering, and as He only is my joy, to give me joy; that as I am dying, and as He only is my life, to give me life.

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### STANZA III.

*In search of my Love,  
I will go over mountains and strands;  
I will gather no flowers,  
I will fear no wild beasts;  
And pass by the mighty and the frontiers.*

THE soul, observing that its sighs and prayers suffice not to find the Beloved, and that it has not been helped by the messengers it invoked in the first and second stanzas, will not, because its searching is real and its love great, leave undone anything itself can do. The soul that really loves God is not dilatory in its efforts to find the Son of God, its Beloved; and, even when it has done all it could it is still not satisfied, thinking it has done nothing. Accordingly, the soul is now, in this third stanza, actively seeking the Beloved, and saying how He is to be found; namely, in the practice of all virtue and in the spiritual exercises of the active and contemplative life; for this end it rejects all delights and all comforts; and all the power and wiles of its three enemies, the world, the devil and the flesh, are unable to delay it or hinder it on the road.

‘In search of my Love.’

2. Here the soul makes it known that to find God it is

not enough to pray with the heart and the tongue, or to have recourse to the help of others; we must also work ourselves, according to our power. God values one effort of our own more than many of others on our behalf; the soul, therefore, remembering the saying of the Beloved, 'Seek and you shall find,'\* is resolved on going forth, as I said just now, to seek Him actively, and not rest till it finds Him, as many do who will not that God should cost them 'anything but words, and even those carelessly uttered, and for His sake will do nothing that will cost them anything. Some, too, will not leave for His sake a place which is to their taste and liking, expecting to receive all the sweetness of God in their mouth and in their heart without moving a step, without mortifying themselves by the abandonment of a single pleasure or useless comfort.

3. But until they go forth out of themselves to seek Him, however loudly they may cry they will not find Him; for the bride in the Canticle sought Him in this way, but she found Him not until she went out to seek Him—'In my little bed in the nights I have sought Him whom my soul loveth: I have sought Him and have not found Him. I will rise and will go about the city: by the streets and high ways I will seek Him whom my soul loveth.'† She afterwards adds, that when she had endured certain trials she 'found Him.'‡

4. He, therefore, who seeks God, consulting his own ease and comfort, seeks Him by night, and therefore finds Him not. But he who seeks Him in the practice of virtue and of good works, casting aside the comforts of

\* S. Luke xi. 9.

† Cant. iii. 1.

‡ Ib. iii. 4.

his own bed, seeks Him by day ; such an one shall find Him, for that which is not seen by night is visible by day. The Bridegroom Himself teaches us this, saying, ‘ Wisdom is clear and never fadeth away, and is easily seen of them that love her, and is found of them that seek her. She preventeth them that covet her, that she first may shew herself unto them. He that awaketh early to seek her shall not labour ; for he shall find her sitting at his doors.’\* The soul that will go out of the house of its own will, and abandon the bed of its own satisfaction, will find the divine Wisdom, the Son of God, the Bridegroom waiting at the door without, and so the soul says ;

‘ I will go over mountains and strands.’

5. Mountains which are lofty, signify virtues, partly on account of their height, and partly on account of the toil and labour of ascending them ; the soul says it will ascend to them in the practice of the contemplative life. Strands which are low, signify mortifications, penances, and the spiritual exercises, and the soul will add to the active life that of contemplation ; for both are necessary in seeking after God and in acquiring virtue. The soul says, in effect, In searching after my Beloved I will practice great virtue, and abase myself by lowly mortifications and acts of humility ; for the way to seek God is to do good works in Him, and to mortify the evil in ourselves, as it is said in the words that follow :

‘ I will gather no flowers.’

6. He that will seek after God must have his heart detached, resolute, and free from all evils, and from all

\* Wisd. vi. 13.

goods which are not simply God; that is the meaning of these words. The words that follow describe the liberty and courage which the soul must possess in searching after God. Here it declares that it will gather no flowers by the way—the flowers are all the delights, satisfactions, and pleasures which this life offers, and which, if the soul sought or accepted, would hinder it on the road.

7. These flowers are of three kinds—temporal, sensual, and spiritual. All of them occupy the heart, and stand in the way of the spiritual detachment required in the way of Christ, if we regard them or rest in them. The soul, therefore, says, that it will not stop to gather any of them, that it may seek after God. It seems to say, I will not set my heart upon riches or the goods of this world; I will not indulge in the satisfactions and ease of the flesh, neither will I consult the taste and comforts of my spirit, in order that nothing may detain me in my search after my Love on the toilsome mountains of virtue. This means that it accepts the counsel of the prophet David to those who travel on this road: ‘If riches abound, set not your heart upon them.’\* This is applicable to sensual satisfactions, as well as to temporal goods and spiritual consolations.

8. From this we learn that not only temporal goods and bodily pleasures hinder us on the road to God, but spiritual delight and consolations also, if we attach ourselves to them or seek them; for these things are hindrances on the way of the cross of Christ, the Bridegroom. He, therefore, that will go onwards must

\* Ps. lxi. 11.

not only not stop to gather flowers, but must also have the courage and resolution to say as follows :—

‘ I will fear no wild beasts ; and I will go over the mighty and the frontiers.’

Here we have the three enemies of the soul which make war against it, and make its way full of difficulties. The wild beasts are the world ; the mighty, the devil ; and the frontiers are the flesh.

9. The world is the wild beasts, because in the beginning of the heavenly journey the imagination pictures the world to the soul as wild beasts, threatening and fierce, principally in three ways. The first is, we must forfeit the world’s favour, lose friends, credit, reputation, and property ; the second is not less cruel : we must suffer the perpetual deprivation of all the comforts and pleasures of the world ; and the third is still worse : evil tongues will rise against us, mock us, and speak of us with contempt. This strikes some persons so vividly, that it becomes most difficult for them, I do not say to persevere, but even to enter on this road at all.

10. But there are generous souls who have to encounter wild beasts of a more interior and spiritual nature—trials, temptations, tribulations, and afflictions of divers kinds, through which they must pass. This is what God sends to those whom He is raising upwards to high perfection, proving them and trying them as gold in the fire ; as David saith : ‘ Many are the tribulations of the just ; and out of all these our Lord will deliver them.’\* But the truly enamoured soul, preferring the

\* Ps. xxxiii. 20.

Beloved above all things, and relying on His love and favour, finds no difficulty in saying :

‘ I will fear no wild beasts.’

‘ And pass over the mighty and the frontiers.’

11. Evil spirits, the second enemy of the soul, are called the mighty, because they strive with all their might to seize on the passes of the spiritual road ; and because the temptations they suggest are harder to overcome, and the craft they employ more difficult to detect, than all the seductions of the world and the flesh ; and because, also, they strengthen their own position by the help of the world and the flesh in order to fight vigorously against the soul. Hence the Psalmist calls them mighty, saying : ‘ The mighty have sought after my soul.’\* The prophet Job also speaks of their might : ‘ There is no power upon the earth that may be compared with him who was made to fear no man.’†

12. There is no human power that can be compared with the power of the devil, and therefore the divine power alone can overcome him, and the divine light alone can penetrate his devices. No soul therefore can overcome his might without prayer, or detect his illusions without humility and mortification. Hence the exhortation of St. Paul to the faithful : ‘ Put you on the armour of God, that you may stand against the deceits of the devil : for our wrestling is not against flesh and blood.’‡ Blood here is the world, and the armour of God is prayer and the cross of Christ, wherein consist the humility and mortification of which I have spoken.

13. The soul says also that it will cross the frontiers :

\* Ps. liii. 5.

† Job xli. 24.

‡ Eph. vi. 11.



these are the natural resistance and rebellion of the flesh against the spirit, for, as St. Paul saith, the 'flesh lusteth against the spirit,'\* and sets itself as a frontier against the soul on its spiritual road. This frontier the soul must cross, surmounting difficulties, and trampling under foot all sensual appetites and all natural affections with great courage and resolution of spirit: for while they remain in the soul, the spirit will be by them hindered from advancing to the true life and spiritual delight. This is set clearly before us by St. Paul, saying: 'If by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.'† This, then, is the process which the soul in this stanza says it becomes it to observe on the way to seek the Beloved: which briefly is a firm resolution not to stoop to gather flowers by the way; courage not to fear the wild beasts, and strength to pass by the mighty and the frontiers; intent solely on going over the mountains and the strands of the virtues, in the way just explained.

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#### STANZA IV.

*O groves and thickets,  
Planted by the hand of the Beloved.  
O verdant meads  
Enamelled with flowers,  
Tell me, has He passed by you?*

THE disposition requisite for entering on the spiritual journey, abstinence from joys and pleasure, being now described; and the courage also with which to overcome temptations and trials, wherein consists the practice of

\* Galat. v. 17.

† Rom. viii. 13.

self-knowledge, which is the first step of the soul to the knowledge of God. Now, in this stanza the soul begins to advance through consideration and knowledge of creatures to the knowledge of the Beloved their Creator. For the consideration of the creature, after the practice of self-knowledge, is the first in order on the spiritual road to the knowledge of God, Whose grandeur and magnificence they declare, as the Apostle saith: 'For His invisible things from the creation of the world are seen, being understood by these things that are made.'\* It is as if he said, 'The invisible things of God are made known to the soul by created things, visible and invisible.'

2. The soul, then, in this stanza addresses itself to creatures inquiring after the Beloved. And we observe, as St. Augustin says, that the inquiry made of creatures is a meditation on the Creator, for which they furnish the matter. Thus, in this stanza the soul meditates on the elements and the rest of the lower creation; on the heavens, and on the rest of created and material things which God has made therein; also on the heavenly spirits, saying:

‘O groves and thickets.’

3. The groves are the elements, earth, water, air, and fire. As the most pleasant groves are studded with plants and shrubs, so the elements are thick with creatures, and here are called thickets because of the number and variety of creatures in each. The earth contains innumerable varieties of animals and plants, the water of fish, the air of birds, and fire concurs with all in animating and sustaining them. Each kind of animal lives in its proper

\* Rom. i. 20.

element, placed and planted there, as in its own grove and soil where it is born and nourished; and, in truth, God so ordered it when He made them; He commanded the earth to bring forth herbs and animals; the waters and the sea, fish; and the air He gave as an habitation to birds. The soul, therefore, considering that this is the effect of His commandment, cries out,

‘Planted by the hand of the Beloved.’

4. That which the soul considers now is this: the hand of God the Beloved only could have created and nurtured all these varieties and wonderful things. The soul says deliberately, ‘by the hand of the Beloved,’ because God doeth many things by the hands of others, as of angels and men; but the work of creation has never been, and never is, the work of any other hand than His own. Thus the soul, considering the creation, is profoundly stirred up to love God the Beloved, for it beholds all things to be the work of His hands, and goes on to say:

‘O verdant meads.’

5. These are the heavens; for the things which He hath created in the heavens are of incorruptible freshness, which neither perish nor wither with time, where the just are refreshed as in the green pastures. The present consideration includes all the varieties of the stars in their beauty, and the other works in the heavens.

6. The Church also applies the term ‘verdure’ to heavenly things; for while praying to God for the departing soul, it addresses it as follows: ‘May Christ, the Son of the living God, give thee a place in the ever

pleasant verdure of His paradise.\* The soul also says that this verdant mead is

‘Enamelled with flowers.’

7. The flowers are the angels and the holy souls who adorn and beautify that place as costly and fine enamel on a vase of pure gold.

‘Tell me, has He passed by you?’

8. This inquiry is the consideration of the creature just spoken of, and is in effect: Tell me, what perfections has He created in you?

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## STANZA V.

### ANSWER OF THE CREATURES.

*A thousand graces diffusing  
He passed through the groves in haste,  
And merely regarding them  
As He passed,  
Clothed them with His beauty.*

THIS is the answer of the creatures to the soul, which, according to St. Augustin in the same place, is the testimony which they furnish to the majesty and perfections of God, for which it asked in its meditation on created things. The meaning of this stanza is, in substance, as follows: God created all things with great ease and rapidity, and left in them some tokens of Himself, not only by creating them out of nothing, but also by endowing them with innumerable graces and qualities, making them beautiful in admirable order and unceasing mutual dependence. All this He wrought in

\* Ordo commendationis animæ.

wisdom, by which He created them, which is the Word, His only begotten Son. Then the soul says :

‘ A thousand graces diffusing.’

2. These graces are the innumerable multitude of His creatures. The term ‘thousand,’ which the soul makes use of, denotes not their number, but the impossibility of numbering them. They are called graces, because of the qualities with which He has endowed them. He is said to diffuse them because He fills the whole world with them.

‘ He passed through the groves in haste.’

3. To pass through the groves is to create the elements ; here called groves, through which He is said to pass, diffusing a thousand graces, because He adorned them with creatures which are all beautiful. Moreover, He diffused among them a thousand graces, giving the power of generation and self-conservation. He is said to pass through, because the creatures are, as it were, traces of the passage of God, revealing His majesty, power, and wisdom, and His other divine attributes. He is said to pass in haste, because the creatures are the least of the works of God : He made them, as it were, in passing. His greatest works, wherein He is most visible and at rest, are the incarnation of the Word and the mysteries of the Christian faith, in comparison with which all His other works were works wrought in passing and in haste.

‘ And thereby regarding them

As He passed,

Clothed them with His beauty.’

4. The Son of God is, in the words of St. Paul, the

‘brightness of His glory and the figure of His substance.’\* God saw all things only in the face of His Son. This was to give them their natural being, bestowing upon them many graces and natural gifts, making them perfect, as it is written in the book of Genesis, ‘God saw all the things that He had made: and they were very good.’† To see all things very good was to make them very good in the Word His Son. He not only gave them their being and their natural graces when He beheld them, but He also clothed them with beauty in the face of His Son, communicating to them a supernatural being when He made man, and exalted him to the beauty of God, and, by consequence, all creatures in him, because He united Himself to the nature of them all in man. For this cause the Son of God Himself said, ‘And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all things to Myself.’‡ And thus in this exaltation of the incarnation of His Son, and the glory of His resurrection according to the flesh, the Father not only made all things beautiful in part, but also, we may well say, clothed them wholly with beauty and dignity.

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#### NOTE.

BUT beyond all this—speaking now of contemplation as it affects the soul and makes an impression on it,—in the vivid contemplation and knowledge of created things, the soul beholds such a multiplicity of graces, powers, and beauty wherewith God has endowed them, that they seem to it to be clothed with admirable beauty, and supernatural virtue derived from the infinite supernatural

\* Heb. i. 3.

† Gen. i. 31.

‡ St. John xii. 32.



beauty of the face of God, Whose beholding of them clothed the heavens and the earth with beauty and joy ; as it is written : ‘ Thou openest Thy hand and fillest with blessing every living creature.’\* Hence the soul wounded with love of that beauty of the Beloved which it traces in created things, and anxious to behold that beauty which is the source of this visible beauty, sings as in the following stanza :—

## STANZA VI.

## THE BRIDE.

*O who can heal me ?  
Give me perfectly Thyself,  
Send me no more  
A messenger  
Who cannot tell me what I wish :*

As created things furnish to the soul traces of the Beloved, and exhibit the impress of His beauty and magnificence, the love of the soul increases, and consequently the pain of His absence : for the greater the soul’s knowledge of God the greater its desire to see Him, and its pain when it cannot : and as it sees there is no remedy for this pain except in the presence and vision of the Beloved, distrustful of every other remedy, it prays in this stanza for the fruition of His presence, saying : Entertain me no more with any knowledge or communications, or impressions of Thy grandeur, for these do but increase my longing, and the pain of Thy absence ; Thy presence alone can satisfy my will and desire. The will cannot be satisfied with anything less than the vision of God, and

\* Ps. cxliv. 16.

therefore the soul prays that He may be pleased to give Himself to it in truth, in perfect love.

‘ Ah ! who can heal me ? ’

2. That is, there is nothing in all the delights of the world, nothing in the satisfaction of the senses, nothing in the sweet taste of the spirit that can heal or content me, and therefore it adds :

‘ Give me at once Thyself.’

3. No soul that really loves can be satisfied or content short of the fruition of God. For everything else, as I have just said, not only does not satisfy the soul, but rather increases the hunger and thirst of seeing Him as He is. Thus every glimpse of the Beloved, every knowledge and impression, or communication from Him—these are the messengers suggestive of Him—increase and quicken the soul’s desire after Him, as crumbs of food in hunger stimulate the appetite. The soul, therefore, mourning over the misery of being entertained by matters of so little moment, cries out :

‘ Give me perfectly Thyself.’

4. Now all our knowledge of God in this life, how great soever it may be, is not a perfectly true knowledge of Him, because it is partial and incomplete ; but to know Him essentially is true knowledge, and that is it which the soul prays for here, not satisfied with any other kind. Hence it says :—

‘ Send me no more a messenger.’

5. That is, grant that I may no longer know Thee in this imperfect way by the messengers of knowledge and impressions, which are so distant from that which my soul desires ; for these messengers, as Thou well knowest,

O my Bridegroom, do but increase the pain of Thy absence. They renew the wound which Thou hast inflicted by the knowledge of Thee which they convey, and they seem to delay Thy coming. Henceforth do Thou send me no more of these inadequate communications, for if I have been hitherto satisfied with them, it was owing to the slightness of my knowledge and of my love: now that my love has become great, I cannot satisfy myself with them; do Thou, therefore, give me at once Thyself.

6. This, more clearly expressed, is as follows: O Lord, my Bridegroom, Who didst give me Thyself partially before, give me Thyself wholly now: Thou who didst show glimpses of Thyself before, show Thyself clearly now: Thou who didst communicate Thyself hitherto by the instrumentality of messengers—it was as if Thou didst mock me—give Thyself by Thyself now. Sometimes when Thou didst visit me Thou didst give me the pearl of Thy possession, and when I began to examine it, lo, it was gone, for Thou hadst hidden it Thyself: it was like a mockery. Give me then Thyself in truth, Thy whole self, that I may have Thee wholly to myself wholly, and send me no messengers again.

‘Who cannot tell me what I wish.’

7. I wish for Thee wholly, and Thy messengers neither know Thee wholly, nor can they speak of Thee wholly, for there is nothing in earth or heaven that can furnish that knowledge to the soul which it longs for. They cannot tell me therefore what I wish. Instead then, of these messengers, be Thou the messenger and the message.

## STANZA VII.

*All they who serve are telling me  
Of Thy unnumbered graces ;  
And all wound me more and more  
And something leaves me dying, I know not what,  
Of which they are darkly speaking.*

THE soul describes itself in the foregoing stanza as wounded, or sick with love of the Bridegroom, because of the knowledge of Him which the irrational creation supplies, and in the present, as wounded with love because of the other and higher knowledge which it derives from the rational creation, nobler than the former, that is, angels and men. This is not all, for the soul says also that it is dying of love, because of that marvellous immensity not wholly but partially revealed to it through the rational creation. This it calls 'I know not what,' because it cannot be described, and because it is such that the soul dies of it.

2. It seems from this that there are three kinds of pain in the soul's love of the Beloved corresponding to the three kinds of knowledge that can be had of Him. The first is called a wound ; not deep, but slight, like a wound which heals quickly, because it comes from its knowledge of the creatures, which are the lowest works of God. This wounding of the soul, called also sickness, is thus spoken of by the bride in the Canticle : 'I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, that you tell Him that I languish with love.'\* The daughters of Jerusalem are the creatures.

3. The second is called a sore which enters deeper

\* Cant. v. 8.

than a wound in the soul, and is, therefore, of longer continuance, because it is as a wound festering, on account of which the soul feels that it is really dying of love. This sore is the effect of the knowledge of the works of God, the incarnation of the Word, and the mysteries of the faith. These being the greatest works of God, and involving a greater love than those of creation, produce a greater effect of love in the soul. If the first kind of pain be as a wound, this must be like a festering continuous sore. Of this speaks the Bridegroom, addressing Himself to the bride, saying: 'Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my bride, thou hast wounded my heart with one of thy eyes, and with one hair of thy neck.'\* The eye signifies faith in the incarnation of the Bridegroom, and the one hair is the love of the same.

4. The third kind of pain is like dying; it is as if the whole soul were festering because of its wound. It is dying a living death until love, having slain it, shall make it live the life of love, transforming it in love. This dying of love is effected by a single touch of the knowledge of the Divinity; it is the 'I know not what,' of which the creatures, as in the stanza is said, are speaking indistinctly. This touch is not continuous nor great, for then soul and body would part, but soon over, and thus the soul is dying of love, and dying the more when it sees that it cannot die of love.† This is called impatient love, which is spoken of in the book of Genesis where the Scripture saith that Rachel's love of children was so great that she said to Jacob, her husband, 'Give me children, otherwise I

\* Cant. iv. 9.

† See Living Flame, stanza iv., line 3, § 20.

shall die.' And the prophet Job said, 'Who will grant that . . . He that hath begun the same would cut me off.'\*

5. These twofold pains of love, that is, the wound and the dying, are in the stanza said to be merely the rational creation. The wound, when it speaks of the unnumbered graces of the Beloved in the mysteries and wisdom of God taught by the faith. The dying, when it is said that the rational creations speaks indistinctly. This is a sense and knowledge of the Divinity sometimes revealed when the soul hears God spoken of. Therefore it says :

'All they who serve.'

6. That is, the rational creation, angels and men ; for these alone are they who serve God, understanding by that word intelligent service. That is to say, all they who serve God : some serve Him by contemplation and fruition in heaven ; these are the angels ; others by loving and longing for Him on earth ; these are men. And because the soul learns to know God more distinctly through the rational creation, whether by considering its superiority over the rest of creation, or by what it teaches us of God ; the angels interiorly by secret inspirations, and men exteriorly by the truths of Scripture—it says :

'Telling me of Thy unnumbered graces.'

7. That is, they speak of the wonders of Thy grace and mercy in the incarnation, and in the truths of the faith which they show forth and are ever telling more distinctly ; for the more they say, the more do they reveal Thy graces.

'And all wound me more and more.'

8. The more the angels inspire me, the more men

\* Job vi. 8, 9.



teach me, the more do I love Thee; and thus all wound me more and more with love.

‘And something leaves me dying,

I know not what, of which they are darkly speaking.’

9. It is as if it said: but beside the wound which the creatures inflict when they tell me of Thy unnumbered graces, there is yet something which remains to be told, one thing unknown to be uttered, a most clear trace of the footsteps of God revealed to the soul, which it should follow, a most profound knowledge of God, which is ineffable, and therefore spoken of as ‘I know not what.’ If that which I comprehend inflicts the wound and festering sore of love, that which I cannot comprehend but yet feel profoundly, kills me.

10. This happens occasionally to souls advanced, whom God favours in what they hear, or see, or understand—and sometimes without these or other means—with a certain profound knowledge, in which they feel or apprehend the greatness and majesty of God. In this state they think so highly of God as to see clearly that they know Him not, and in their perception of His greatness they recognise that not to comprehend Him is the highest comprehension. And thus, one of the greatest favours of God, bestowed transiently on the soul in this life, is to enable it to see so distinctly, and to feel so profoundly, that it clearly understands it cannot comprehend Him at all. These souls are herein, in some degree, like the saints in heaven, where they who know Him most perfectly perceive most clearly that He is infinitely incomprehensible, for those who have the less clear vision, do not perceive so distinctly as the others,

how greatly He transcends their vision. This is clear to none who have not had experience of it. But the experienced soul, comprehending that there is something further of which it is profoundly sensible, calls it, 'I know not what.' As that cannot be understood, so neither can it be described, though it be felt, as I have said. Hence the soul says that the creatures speak indistinctly, because they cannot distinctly utter that which they would say: it is the speech of infants, who cannot explain distinctly or speak intelligibly that which they would convey to others.

II. The other creatures also, are in some measure a revelation to the soul in this way, but not of an order so high, whenever it is the good pleasure of God to manifest to it their spiritual sense and significance; they are seemingly on the point of making us understand the perfections of God, and cannot compass it; it is as if one were about to explain a matter and the explanation is not given; and thus they stammer 'I know not what.' The soul continues to complain, and addresses its own life, saying in the stanza that follows.

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### STANZA VIII.

*But how thou perseverest, O life !  
Not living where thou livest ;  
The arrows bring death  
Which thou receivest  
From thy conceptions of the Beloved.*

THE soul, perceiving itself to be dying of love, as it has just said, and yet not dying so as to have the free enjoy-

ment of its love, complains of the continuance of its bodily life, by which the spiritual life is delayed. Here the soul addresses itself to the life it is living upon earth, magnifying the sorrows of it. The meaning of the stanza therefore is as follows:—O life of my soul, how canst thou persevere in this life of the flesh; seeing that it is thy death and the privation of the true spiritual life in God, in Whom thou livest in substance, love, and desire, more truly than in the body? And if this were not reason enough to depart, and free thyself from the body of this death, so as to live and enjoy the life of God, how canst thou still remain in a body so frail? Besides, these wounds of love made by the Beloved in the revelation of His majesty are by themselves alone sufficient to put an end to thy life, for they are very deep; and thus all thy feelings towards Him, and all thou knowest of Him, are so many touches and wounds of love that kill.

‘ But how thou perseverest, O life !  
Not living where thou livest.’

2. We must keep in mind, for the better understanding of this, that the soul lives there where it loves, rather than in the body which it animates. The soul does not live by the body, but, on the contrary, gives it life, and lives by love in that which it loves. For beside this life of love which it lives in God Who loves it, the soul has its radical and natural life in God, like all created things, according to the saying of St. Paul : ‘ In Him we live and move and are ;’\* that is, our life, motion, and being is in

\* Acts xvii. 28.

God. St. John also says that all that was made was life in God: 'that which was made, in Him was life.'\*

3. When the soul sees that its natural life is in God through the being He has given it, and its spiritual life also because of the love it bears Him, it breaks forth into lamentations, complaining that so frail a life in a mortal body should have the power to hinder it from the fruition of the true, real, and delicious life, which it lives in God by nature and by love. Earnestly, therefore, does the soul insist upon this: it tells us that it suffers between two contradictions—its natural life in the body, and its spiritual life in God; contrary the one to the other, because of their mutual repugnance. The soul living this double life is of necessity in great pain; for the painful life hinders the delicious, so that the natural life is as death, seeing that it deprives the soul of its spiritual life, wherein is its whole being and life by nature, and all its operations and feelings by love. The soul, therefore, to depict more vividly the hardship of this fragile life, says:—

‘The arrows bring death  
which thou receivest.’

4. That is to say, besides, how canst thou continue in the body, seeing that the touches of love—these are the arrows—with which the Beloved pierces thy heart, are alone sufficient to deprive thee of life? These touches of love make the soul and the heart so fruitful of the

\* The Saint adopts an old punctuation different from the usual one. He reads thus: *Omnia per Ipsum facta sunt, et sine Ipso factum est nihil: Quod factum est, in Ipso vita erat.* All things were made by Him, and without Him nothing was made: What was made in Him was life.

knowledge and love of God, that they may well be called conceptions of God, as in the words that follow :

‘From thy conceptions of the Beloved.’

5. That is, of the majesty, beauty, wisdom, grace, and power, which thou knowest to be His.

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#### NOTE.

As the hart wounded with a poisoned arrow cannot be easy and at rest, but seeks relief on all sides, plunging into the waters here and again there, whilst the poison spreads notwithstanding all attempts at relief, till it reaches the heart, and occasions death ; so the soul, pierced by the arrow of love, never ceases from seeking to alleviate its pains. Not only does it not succeed, but its pains increase, let it think, and say, and do what it may ; and knowing this, and that there is no other remedy but the resignation of itself into the hands of Him Who wounded it, that He may relieve it, and effectually slay it through the violence of its love ; it turns towards the Bridegroom, Who is the cause of all, and says :—

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#### STANZA IX.

*Why, after wounding  
This heart, hast Thou not healed it ?  
And why, after stealing it,  
Hast Thou thus abandoned it,  
And not carried away the stolen prey ?*

HERE the soul returns to the Beloved, still complaining of its pain ; for that impatient love which the soul now exhibits admits of no rest or cessation from pain ; so it

sets forth its griefs in all manner of ways until it finds relief. The soul seeing itself wounded and lonely, and as no one can heal it but the Beloved Who has wounded it, asks why He, having wounded its heart with that love which the knowledge of Him brings, does not heal it in the vision of His presence; and why He thus abandons the heart which He has stolen through the love which inflames it, after having deprived the soul of all power over it. The soul has now no power over its heart—for he who loves has none—because it is surrendered to the Beloved, and yet He has not taken it to himself in the pure and perfect transformation of love in glory.

‘Why, after wounding this heart,  
hast Thou not healed it?’

2. The enamoured soul is complaining not because it is wounded, for the deeper the wound the greater the joy, but because, being wounded, it is not healed by being wounded unto death. The wounds of love are so deliciously sweet, that if they do not kill, they cannot satisfy the soul. They are so sweet that it desires to die of them, and hence it is that it says: ‘Why, after wounding this heart, hast Thou not healed it?’ That is, why hast Thou struck it so sharply as to wound it so deeply, and yet not healed it by killing it utterly with love? As Thou art the cause of its pain in the affliction of love, be Thou also the cause of its health by a death from love; so the heart, wounded by the pain of Thy absence, shall be healed in the delight and glory of Thy sweet presence. Therefore it goes on:

‘And why, after stealing it,  
hast Thou thus abandoned it?’



3. Stealing is nothing else but the act of a robber in dispossessing the owner of his goods, and possessing them himself. Here the soul complains to the Beloved that He has robbed it of its heart lovingly, and taken it out of its power and possession, and then abandoned it, without taking it into His own power and possession as the thief does with the goods he steals, carrying them away with him. He who is in love is said to have lost his heart, or to have it stolen by the object of his love ; because it is no longer in his own possession, but in the power of the object of his love, and so his heart is not his own, but the property of the person he loves.

.4 This consideration will enable the soul to determine whether it loves God simply or not. If it loves Him it will have no heart for itself, nor for its own pleasure or profit, but for the honour, glory, and pleasure of God ; because the more the heart is occupied with self, the less is it occupied with God. Whether God has really stolen the heart, the soul may ascertain by either of these two signs :—Is it anxiously seeking after God ? and has it no pleasure in anything but in Him, as the soul here says ? The reason of this is that the heart cannot rest in peace without the possession of something ; and when its affections are once placed, it has neither the possession of itself nor of anything else ; neither does it perfectly possess what it loves. In this state its weariness is in proportion to its loss, until it shall enter into possession and be satisfied ; for until then, the soul is as an empty vessel waiting to be filled, as a hungry man eager for food, as a sick man sighing for health, and as a man suspended in the air without support to his feet. Such is the state of

the loving heart, and the soul through experience of it cries out: 'Why hast thou thus abandoned it?'—that is, empty, hungry, lonely, wounded, in the pangs of love, suspended in air.

'And not carried away the stolen prey?'

5. Why dost Thou not carry away the heart which Thy love has stolen, to fill it, to heal it, and to satiate it by giving it perfect rest in Thyself?

6. The loving soul, for the sake of greater conformity with the Beloved, cannot cease to desire the recompense and reward of its love for the sake of which it serves the Beloved, otherwise it could not be true love, for the recompense of love is nothing else, and the soul seeks nothing else, but greater love, until it reaches the perfection of love; for the sole reward of love is love, as we learn from the prophet Job, who, speaking of his own distress, which is that of the soul now referred to, says: 'As a servant longeth for the shade, as the hireling looketh for the end of his work; so I also have had empty months, and have numbered to myself wearisome nights. If I sleep, I shall say, When shall I arise? and again, I shall look for the evening, and shall be filled with sorrows even till darkness.'\*

7. Thus, then, the soul on fire with the love of God longs for the perfection and consummation of its love, that it may be completely refreshed. As the servant wearied by the heat of the day longs for the cooling shade, and as the hireling looks for the end of his work, so the soul for the end of its own. Observe, Job does

\* Job vii. 2—4.

not say that the hireling looks for the end of his labour, but only for the end of his work. He teaches us that the soul which loves looks not for the end of its labour, but for the end of its work; because its work is to love, and it is the end of this work, which is love, that it hopes for, namely, the perfect love of God. Until it attains to this, the words of Job will be always true of it—its months will be empty, and its nights wearisome and tedious. It is clear, then, that the soul which loves God seeks and looks for no other reward of its service than to love God perfectly.

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#### NOTE.

THE soul, having reached this degree of love, resembles a sick man exceedingly wearied, whose appetite is gone, and to whom his food is loathsome; and all things annoyance and trouble; amidst all things that present themselves to his thoughts, or feelings, or sight, his only wish and desire is health; and everything that does not contribute thereto is wearisome and oppressive. The soul, therefore, in pain because of its love of God, has three peculiarities:—under all circumstances, and in all affairs, the thought of its health—that is the Beloved—is ever present to it; and though it is obliged to attend to them because it cannot help it, its heart is ever with Him. The second peculiarity, namely, a loss of pleasure in everything, arises from the first. The third also, a consequence of the second, is that all things become wearisome, and all affairs full of vexation and annoyance.

2. The reason is, that the palate of the will having

touched and tasted of the food of the love of God, the will instantly, under all circumstances, regardless of every other consideration, seeks the fruition of the Beloved. It is with the soul now as it was with Mary Magdalene, when in her burning love she sought Him in the garden. She, thinking Him to be the gardener, spoke to Him without further reflection, saying: 'If thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.'\* The soul is under the influence of a like anxiety to find Him in all things, and not finding Him immediately, as it desires—but rather the very reverse—not only has no pleasure in them, but is even tormented by them, and sometimes exceedingly so: for such souls suffer greatly in their intercourse with men and in the transactions of the world, because these things hinder rather than help them in their search.

3. The bride in the Canticle shows us that she had these three peculiarities when seeking the Bridegroom. 'I sought Him and found Him not: the keepers that go about the city found me, they struck me and wounded me: the keepers of the walls took away my cloak.'† The keepers that go about the city are the affairs of this world, which, when they 'find' a soul seeking after God, inflict upon it much pain, and grief, and loathing; for the soul not only does not find in them what it seeks, but rather a hindrance. They who keep the wall of contemplation, that the soul may not enter—that is, evil spirits and worldly affairs—take away the cloak of peace and the quiet of loving contemplation. All this inflicts infinite vexation on the soul enamoured of God; and while it

\* St. John xx. 15.

† Cant. v. 6, 7.

remains on earth without the vision of God, there is no relief, great or small, from these afflictions, and the soul therefore continues to complain to the Beloved, saying:—

### STANZA X.

*Quench Thou my troubles,  
For no one else can soothe them ;  
And let mine eyes behold Thee  
For Thou art their light,  
And I will keep them for Thee alone.*

HERE the soul continues to beseech the Beloved to put an end to its anxieties and distress—none other than He can do so—and that in such a way that its eyes may behold Him ; for He alone is the light by which they see, and there is none other but He on whom it will look.

‘Quench Thou my troubles.’

2. The desire of love has this property, that everything said or done which does not become that which the will loves, wearies and annoys it, and makes it peevish when it sees itself disappointed in its desires. This and its weary longing after the vision of God is here called ‘troubles.’ These troubles nothing can remove except the possession of the Beloved ; hence the soul prays Him to quench them with His presence, to cool their feverishness, as the cooling water him who is wearied by the heat. The soul makes use of the expression ‘quench,’ to denote its sufferings from the fire of love.

‘For no one else can soothe them.’

3. The soul, in order to move and persuade the Beloved to grant its petition, says : As none other but Thou can satisfy my needs, do Thou quench my troubles.

Remember here that God is then close at hand, to comfort the soul and to satisfy its wants, when it has and seeks no satisfaction or comfort out of Him. The soul that finds no pleasure out of God cannot be long unvisited by the Beloved.

‘And let mine eyes behold Thee.’

4. Let me see Thee face to face with the eyes of the soul,

‘For Thou art their light.’

5. God is the supernatural light of the soul; without which it abides in darkness. And now, in the excess of its affection, it calls Him the light of its eyes, as an earthly lover, to express his affection, calls the object of his love the light of his eyes. The soul says in effect in the foregoing terms: Since my eyes have no other light, either of nature or of love, but Thee, let them behold Thee, Who in every way art their light. David was regretting this light when he said in his trouble: ‘The light of mine eyes, and the same is not with me;’\* and Tobias, when he said: ‘What manner of joy shall be to me who sit in darkness, and see not the light of heaven?’† He was longing for the clear vision of God; for the light of heaven is the Son of God; as St. John saith in the Apocalypse: ‘And the city needeth not sun, nor moon to shine in it; for the glory of God hath illuminated it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof.’‡

‘And I will keep them for Thee alone.’

6. The soul seeks to constrain the Bridegroom to let it see the light of its eyes, not only because it would be in darkness without it, but also because it will not look upon

\* Ps. xxxvii. 11.

† Tob. v. 12.

‡ Apoc. xxi. 23.



anything but on Him. For as that soul is justly deprived of this divine light if it fixes the eyes of the will on any other light, proceeding from anything that is not God, for then its vision is confined to that object; so also the soul, by a certain fitness, deserves the divine light, if it shuts its eyes against all objects whatever, to open them only for the vision of God.

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### NOTE.

BUT the loving Bridegroom of souls cannot bear to see them suffer long in the isolation of which I am speaking, for, as He saith by the mouth of Zacharias, ‘he that shall touch you, toucheth the apple of Mine eye;’\* especially when their sufferings, as those of this soul, proceed from their love for Him. Therefore doth He speak through Isaias, ‘it shall be before they call, I will hear; as they are yet speaking, I will hear.’† And the wise man saith that the soul that seeketh Him as treasure shall find Him.‡ God grants a certain spiritual presence of Himself to the fervent prayers of the loving soul which seeks Him more earnestly than treasure, seeing that it has abandoned all things, and even itself, for His sake.

2. In that presence He shows certain profound glimpses of His divinity and beauty, whereby He still increases the soul’s anxious desire to behold Him. For as men throw water on the coals of the forge to cause intenser heat, so our Lord in His dealings with certain souls, in the intermission of their love, makes some revelations of His majesty, to quicken their fervour, and

\* Zach. ii. 8.

† Is. lxxv. 24.

‡ Prov. ii. 4, 5.

to prepare them more and more for those graces which He will give them afterwards. Thus the soul, in that obscure presence of God, beholding and feeling the supreme good and beauty hidden there, is dying in desire of the vision, saying in the stanza that follows.

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### STANZA XI.

*Reveal Thy presence,  
And let the vision and Thy beauty kill me.  
Behold, the malady  
Of love is incurable  
Except in Thy presence and before Thy face.*

THE soul, anxious to be possessed by God, Who is so great, Whose love has wounded and stolen its heart, and unable to suffer more, beseeches Him directly, in this stanza, to reveal His beauty—that is, the divine essence—and to slay it in that vision, separating it from the body, in which it can neither see nor possess Him as it desires. And further, setting before Him the distress and sorrow of heart, in which it continues, suffering it because of its love, and unable to find any other remedy than the glorious vision of the divine essence, cries out :

‘Reveal Thy presence.’

2. To understand this clearly we must remember that there are three ways in which God is present in the soul. The first is His presence in essence, not in holy souls only, but in wretched and sinful souls as well, and also in all created things ; for it is by this presence that He gives life and being, and were it once withdrawn all things would return to nothing.\* This presence never fails in the soul.

\* See Ascent of Mount Carmel, bk. ii. ch. v. § 2.

3. The second is His presence by grace, whereby He dwells in the soul, pleased and satisfied with it. This presence is not in all souls; for those who fall into mortal sin lose it, and no soul can know in a natural way whether it has it or not. The third is His presence by spiritual affection. God is wont to show His presence in many devout souls in divers ways, in refreshment, joy, and gladness; yet this, like the others, is all secret, for He does not show Himself as He is, because the condition of our mortal life does not admit of it. Thus this prayer of the soul may be understood of any one of them.

‘Reveal Thy presence.’

4. Inasmuch as it is certain that God is ever present in the soul, at least in the first way, the soul does not say: Be Thou present; but, Reveal and manifest Thy hidden presence, whether natural, spiritual, or affective, in such a way that I may behold Thee in Thy divine essence and beauty. The soul prays Him that as He by His essential presence gives it its natural being, and perfects it by His presence of grace, so also He would glorify it by the manifestation of His glory. But as the soul is now loving God with fervent affections, the presence, for the revelation of which it prays the Beloved to manifest, is to be understood chiefly of the affective presence of the Beloved. Such is the nature of this presence that the soul felt there was an infinite being hidden there, out of which God communicated to it certain obscure visions of His own divine beauty. Such was the effect of these visions that the soul longed and fainted away with the desire of that which is hidden in that presence.

5. This is in harmony with the experience of David, when he said: 'My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of our Lord.'\* The soul now faints with desire of being absorbed in the Sovereign Good which it feels to be present and hidden; for though it be hidden, the soul is most profoundly conscious of the good and delight which are there. The soul is therefore attracted to this good with more violence than matter is to its centre, and is unable to contain itself, by reason of the force of this attraction, from saying:

'Reveal Thy presence.'

6. Moses, on mount Sinai in the presence of God, saw such glimpses of the majesty and beauty of His hidden Divinity, that, unable to endure it, he prayed twice for the vision of His glory, saying: 'Whereas Thou hast said: I know thee by name, and thou hast found grace in my sight. If, therefore, I have found grace in Thy sight, shew me Thy face, that I may know Thee and may find grace before Thine eyes;'+ that is the grace which he longed for,—to attain to the perfect love of the glory of God. The answer of our Lord was: 'Thou canst not see My face, for man shall not see Me and live.'‡ It is as if God had said: Moses, thy prayer is difficult to grant; the beauty of My face, and the joy in seeing Me is so great, as to be more than thy soul can bear in a mortal body that is so weak. The soul, accordingly, conscious of this truth, either because of the answer made to Moses or also because of that which I spoke of before,§ namely, the feeling that there is something still in the presence of God here which it could not see in its beauty in the life it

\* Ps. lxxxiii. 1.    † Exod. xxxiii. 12, 13.    ‡ Exod. xxxiii. 20.    § §2.

is now living, because, as I said before,\* it faints when it sees but a glimpse of it. Hence it comes that it anticipates the answer that may be given to it, as it was to Moses, and says :

‘ Let the vision and Thy beauty kill me.’

7. That is, since the vision of Thee and Thy beauty is so full of delight that I cannot endure, but must die in the act of beholding them, let the vision and Thy beauty kill me.

8. Two visions are said to be fatal to man, because he cannot bear them and live. One, that of the basilisk, at the sight of which men are said to die at once. The other is the vision of God ; but there is a great difference between them. The former kills by poison, the other with infinite health and bliss. It is, therefore, nothing strange for the soul to desire to die by beholding the beauty of God in order to enjoy Him for ever. If the soul had but one single glimpse of the majesty and beauty of God, not only would it desire to die once in order to see Him for ever, as it desires now, but would most joyfully undergo a thousand most bitter deaths to see Him even for a moment, and having seen Him would suffer as many deaths again to see Him for another moment.

9. It is necessary to observe for the better explanation of this line, that the soul is now speaking conditionally, when it prays that the vision and beauty may slay it ; it assumes that the vision must be preceded by death, for if it were possible before death, the soul would not pray for death, because the desire of death is a natural imperfection. The soul, therefore, takes it for granted, that this

\* § 2.

corruptible life cannot coexist with the incorruptible life of God, and says :

‘ Let the vision and Thy beauty kill me.’

10. St. Paul teaches this doctrine to the Corinthians when he says : ‘ We would not be spoiled, but over-clothed, that that which is mortal may be swallowed up of life.’\* That is, we would not be divested of the flesh, but invested with glory. But reflecting that he could not live in glory and in a mortal body at the same time, he says to the Philippians : ‘ having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ.’†

11. Here arises this question, Why did the people of Israel of old dread and avoid the vision of God, that they might not die, as it appears they did from the words of Manue to his wife, ‘ We shall die because we have seen God,’‡ when the soul desires to die of that vision? To this question two answers may be given.

12. In those days men could not see God, though dying in the state of grace, because Christ had not come. It was therefore more profitable for them to live in the flesh, increasing in merit, and enjoying their natural life, than to be in Limbus, incapable of meriting, suffering in the darkness and in the spiritual absence of God. They therefore considered it a great grace and blessing to live long upon earth.

13. The second answer is founded on considerations drawn from the love of God. They in those days, not being so confirmed in love, nor so near to God by love were afraid of the vision : but now, under the law of grace, when, on the death of the body, the soul may behold God,

\* 2 Cor. v. 4.      † Phil. i. 23.      ‡ Judg. xiii. 22.



it is more profitable to live but a short time, and then to die in order to see Him. And even if the vision were withheld, the soul that really loves God will not be afraid to die at the sight of Him; for true love accepts with perfect resignation, and in the same spirit, and even with joy, whatever comes to it from the hands of the Beloved, whether prosperity or adversity—yea, and even chastisements such as He shall be pleased to send, for, as St. John saith, ‘perfect charity casteth out fear.’\*

14. Thus, then, there is no bitterness in death to the soul that loves, when it brings with it all the sweetness and delights of love; there is no sadness in the remembrance of it when it opens the door to all joy; nor can it be painful and oppressive, when it is the end of all unhappiness and sorrow, and the beginning of all good. Yea, the soul looks upon it as a friend and its bride, and exults in the recollection of it as the day of espousals; it yearns for the day and hour of death more than the kings of the earth for principalities and kingdoms.

15. It was of this kind of death that the wise man said: ‘O death, thy judgment is good to the needy man.’† If it be good to the needy man, though it does not supply his wants, but on the contrary deprives him even of what he hath, how much more good will it be to the soul in need of love and which is crying for more, when it will not only not rob it of the love it hath already, but will be the occasion of that fulness of love which it yearns for, and is the supply of all its necessities. It is not without reason then, that the soul ventures to say:

‘Let the vision and Thy beauty kill me;’

\* 1 St. John iv. 18.

† Eccclus. xli. 3.

16. The soul knows well that in the instant of that vision it will be itself absorbed and transformed into that beauty, and be made beautiful like it, enriched, and abounding in beauty as that beauty itself. This is why David said, ‘Precious in the sight of our Lord is the death of His saints,’\* but that could not be if they did not become partakers of His glory, for there is nothing precious in the eyes of God except that which He is Himself, and therefore the soul, when it loves, fears not death, but rather desires it. But the sinner is always afraid to die, because he suspects that death will deprive him of all good, and inflict upon him all evil; for in the words of David, ‘the death of the wicked is very evil,’† and therefore, as the wise man saith, the very thought of it is bitter: ‘O death, how bitter is thy memory to a man that hath peace in his riches!’‡ The wicked love this life greatly, and the next but little, and are therefore afraid of death; but the soul that loves God lives more in the next life than in this, because it lives rather where it loves than where it dwells, and therefore esteeming but lightly its present bodily life, cries out: ‘Let the vision and Thy beauty kill me.’

‘Behold the malady of love is incurable,  
except in Thy presence and before Thy face.’

17. The reason why the malady of love admits of no other remedy than the presence and countenance of the the Beloved is, that the malady of love differs from every other sickness, and therefore requires a different remedy. In other diseases, according to sound philosophy, contraries are cured by contraries; but love is not cured but

\* Ps. cxv. 15.

† Ps. xxxiii. 22.

‡ Eccclus. xli. 1.

by that which is in harmony with itself. The reason is, that the health of the soul consists in the love of God, and so when that love is not perfect, its health is not perfect, and the soul is therefore sick, for sickness is nothing else but a failure of health. Thus, that soul which loves not at all is dead; but when it loves a little, how little soever that may be, it is then alive, though exceedingly weak and sick because it loves God so little. But the more its love increases, the greater will be its health, and when its love is perfect, then, too, its health also is perfect. Love is not perfect until the lovers become so on an equality as to be mutually transformed into one another; then love is wholly perfect.

18. And because the soul is now conscious of a certain adumbration of love, which is the malady of which it here speaks, yearning to be made like to Him of whom it is a shadow, that is the Bridegroom, the Word, the Son of God, Who, as St. Paul saith, is the 'splendour of His glory, and the figure of His substance;' \* and because it is into this figure it desires to be transformed by love, cries out: 'Behold the malady of love is incurable except in Thy presence, and in the light of Thy countenance.' The love that is imperfect is rightly called a malady, because as a sick man is enfeebled and cannot work, so the soul that is weak in love is also enfeebled and cannot practise heroic virtue.

19. Another explanation of these words is this: he who feels this malady of love, that is, a failure of it, has an evidence in himself that he has some love, because he ascertains what is deficient in him by that which he

\* Heb. i. 3.

possesses. But he who is not conscious of this malady has evidence therein that he has no love at all, or that he has already attained to perfect love.

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### NOTE.

THE soul now conscious of a vehement longing after God, like a stone rushing to its centre, and like wax which has begun to receive the impression of the seal which it cannot perfectly represent, and knowing, moreover, that it is like a picture lightly sketched, crying for the artist to finish his work, and having its faith so clear as to trace most distinctly certain divine glimpses of the majesty of God, knows not what else to do but to turn inward to that faith—as involving and veiling the face and beauty of the Beloved—from which it hath received those impressions and pledges of love, and which it thus addresses :—

### STANZA XII.

*O crystal well!  
O that on thy silvered surface  
Thou wouldest mirror forth at once  
Those desired eyes  
Which are outlined in my heart.*

THE soul vehemently desiring to be united to the Bridegroom, and seeing that there is no help or succour in created things, turns towards the faith, as to that which gives it the most vivid vision of the Beloved, and adopts it as the means to that end. And, indeed, there is no other way of attaining to true union, to the spiritual

betrothal of God, according to the words of Oseas: 'I will betrothe thee to Me in faith.'\* In this fervent desire it cries out in the words of this stanza, which are in effect this: O faith of Christ, my Bridegroom! O that thou wouldest manifest clearly those truths concerning the Beloved, secretly and obscurely infused—for faith is, as theologians say, an obscure habit—so that thy informal and obscure communications may be in a moment clear; O that thou wouldest withdraw Thyself formally and completely from these truths—for faith is a veil over the truths of God—and reveal them perfectly in glory. Accordingly it says:

‘O crystal well!’

2. Faith is called crystal for two reasons: because it is of Christ the Bridegroom; because it has the property of crystal, pure in its truths, a limpid well clear of error, and of natural forms. It is a well because the waters of all spiritual goodness flow from it into the soul. Christ our Lord, speaking to the woman of Samaria, calls faith a well, saying: ‘the water that I will give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into life everlasting.’† This water is the Spirit, which they who believe shall receive by faith in Him. ‘Now this He said of the Spirit which they who believed in Him should receive.’‡

‘O that on thy silvered surface.’

3. The articles and definitions of the faith are called silvered surfaces. In order to understand these words and those that follow, we must know that faith is compared to silver because of the propositions it teaches

\* Os. ii. 20.

† S. John iv. 14.

‡ John vii. 39.

us, the truth and substance it involves, being compared to gold. This very substance which we now believe, hidden behind the silver veil of faith, we shall clearly behold and enjoy hereafter; the gold of faith made manifest. Hence the Psalmist, speaking of this, saith: 'If ye sleep amidst the lots, the wings of the dove are laid over with silver, and the hinder parts of the back in the paleness of gold.'\* That means, if we shall keep the eyes of the understanding from regarding the things of heaven and of earth—this the Psalmist calls sleeping in the midst—we shall be firm in the faith, here called dove, the wings of which are the truths laid over with silver, because in this life the faith puts these truths before us obscurely beneath a veil. This is the reason why the soul calls them silvered surface. But when faith shall have been consummated in the clear vision of God, then the substance of faith, the silver veil removed, will shine as gold.

4. As the faith gives and communicates to us God Himself, but hidden beneath the silver of faith, yet it reveals Him none the less. So if a man gives us a vessel made of gold, but covered with silver, he gives us in reality a vessel of gold, though the gold be covered over. Thus, when the bride in the Canticle was longing for the fruition of God, He promised it to her so far as the state of this life admitted of it, saying: 'We will make thee chains of gold inlaid with silver.'† He thus promised to give Himself to her under the veil of faith. Hence the soul addresses the faith, saying: 'O that on thy silvered surface'—the definitions of faith—in which thou hidest

\* Ps. lxxvii. 14.

† Cant. i. 10.



the gold of the divine rays which are the desired eyes,—instantly adding :

‘Thou wouldest mirror forth at once those desired eyes!’

5. By the eyes are understood, as I have said, the rays and truths of God, which are set before us hidden and informal in the definitions of the faith. Thus the words say in substance: O that thou wouldest formally and explicitly reveal to me those hidden truths which Thou teachest implicitly and obscurely in the definitions of the faith; according to my earnest desire. Those truths are called eyes, because of the special presence of the Beloved, of which the soul is conscious, believing Him to be perpetually regarding it; and so it says:

‘Which are outlined in my heart.’

6. The soul here says that these truths are outlined in the heart, that is, in the understanding and the will. It is through the understanding that these truths are infused into the soul by faith. They are said to be outlined because the knowledge of them is not perfect. As a sketch is not a perfect picture, so the knowledge that comes by faith is not a perfect understanding. The truths, therefore, infused into the soul by faith, are as it were in outline, and when the clear vision shall be granted, then they will be as a perfect and finished picture, according to the words of the Apostle: ‘When that shall come which is perfect, that shall be made void which is in part.’\* ‘That which is perfect’ is the clear vision, and ‘that which is in part’ is the knowledge that comes by faith.

7. Besides this outline which comes by faith, there is

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

another by love in the soul that loves, that is, in the will, in which the face of the Beloved is so deeply and vividly pictured, when the union of love occurs, that it may be truly said, the Beloved lives in the loving soul, and the loving soul in the Beloved. Love produces such a resemblance by the transformation of those who love that one may be said to be the other, and both but one. The reason is, that in the union and transformation of love, one gives himself up to the other as his possession, and each resigns, abandons, and exchanges himself for the other, and both become but one in the transformation wrought by love.

8. This is the meaning of St. Paul when he said: 'I live, now, not I, but Christ liveth in me.'\* In that He saith: 'I live, now, not I,' his meaning is, that though he lived, yet the life he lived was not his own, because he was transformed in Christ: that his life was divine rather than human; and for that reason, he said: it was not he that lived, but Christ Who lived in him. We may therefore say, according to this likeness of transformation, that his life and the life of Christ were one by the union of love. This will be perfect in heaven in the divine life of all those who shall merit the beatific vision; for, transformed in God, they will live the life of God and not their own, since the life of God will be theirs. Then they will say in truth: We live, but not we ourselves, for God liveth in us.

9. Now this may take place in this life, as in the case of St. Paul, but not perfectly and completely, though the soul should attain to such a transformation of love as

\* Galat. ii. 20.

shall be spiritual marriage, which is the highest state it can reach in this life; because all this is but an outline of love compared with the perfect image of transformation in glory. Yet, when this outline of transformation is attained in this life, it is a grand blessing, because the Beloved is so greatly pleased therewith. He desires, therefore, that the bride should have Him thus delineated in her soul, and saith unto her: 'Put Me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm.'\* The heart here signifies the soul, wherein God in this life dwells as an impression of the seal of faith, and the arm is the resolute will, where He is as the impressed token of love.

10. Such is the state of the soul at that time. I speak but little of it, not willing to leave it altogether untouched, though no language can describe it.

11. The very substance of soul and body seems to be dried up by thirst after this living well of God, for the thirst resembles that of David when he cried out, 'As the hart longeth for the fountains of waters, so my soul longeth for Thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?'† So oppressive is this thirst to the soul, that it counts it as nothing to break through the camp of the Philistines, like the valiant men of David, to fill its pitcher with 'water out of the cisterns of Bethlehem,'‡ which is Christ. The trials of this world, the rage of the devil, and the pains of hell, are nothing to pass through, in order to plunge into this fathomless fountain of love.

12. To this we may apply those words in the Canticle:

\* Cant. viii. 6.

† Ps. xli. 1, 2.

‡ 1 Paral. xi. 18.

‘Love is strong as death, jealousy is hard as hell.’\* It is incredible how vehement are the longings and sufferings of the soul when it sees itself on the point of tasting this good, and at the same time sees it withheld; for the nearer the object desired, the greater the pangs of its denial: ‘Before I eat,’ saith Job, ‘I sigh, and as it were overflowing waters so my roaring’† and hunger for food. God is meant here by food; for in proportion to the soul’s longing for food, and its knowledge of God, is the pain it suffers now.

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#### NOTE.

THE source of the grievous sufferings of the soul at this time, is the consciousness of its own emptiness of God—while it is drawing nearer and nearer to Him—and also the thick darkness with the spiritual fire, which dry and purify it, that, its purification ended, it may be united with God. For when God sends not forth a ray of supernatural light into the soul, He is to it intolerable darkness when He is even near to it in spirit, for the supernatural light by its very brightness obscures the mere natural light. David referred to this when he said: ‘Cloud and mist round about Him . . . a fire shall go before Him.’‡ And again: ‘He put darkness His covert; His tabernacle is round about Him, darksome waters in the clouds of the air. Because of the brightness in His sight the clouds passed, hail and coals of fire.’§ The soul that approaches God feels Him to be all this more and more the further it advances, until He shall

\* Cant. viii. 6.    † Job iii. 24.    ‡ Ps. xcvi. 2, 3.    § Ps. xvii. 12, 13.

cause it to enter within His divine brightness through the transformation of love. But the comfort and consolations of God are, by His infinite goodness, proportional to the darkness and emptiness of the soul, as it is written, ‘As the darkness thereof, so also the light thereof.’\* And because He humbles souls and wearies them, while He is exalting them and making them glorious, He sends into the soul, in the midst of its weariness, certain divine rays from Himself, in such gloriousness and strength of love as to stir it up from its very depths, and to change its whole natural condition. Thus the soul, in great fear and natural awe, addresses the Beloved in the first words of the following stanza, the remainder of which is His answer :

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### STANZA XIII.

*Turn them away, O my Beloved !  
I am on the wing.*

THE BRIDEGROOM.

*Return, My Dove !  
The wounded hart  
Looms on the hill  
In the air of thy flight and is refreshed.*

### EXPLANATION.

AMID those fervent affections of love, such as the soul has shown in the preceding stanzas, the Beloved is wont to visit His bride, tenderly, lovingly, and with great strength of love ; for ordinarily the graces and visits of God are great in proportion to the greatness of those

\* Ps. cxxxviii. 12.

fervours and longings of love which have gone before. And, as the soul has so anxiously longed for the divine eyes—as in the foregoing stanza—the Beloved reveals to it some glimpses of His majesty and Godhead, according to its desires. These divine rays strike the soul so profoundly and so vividly, that it is rapt into an ecstasy which in the beginning is attended with great suffering and natural fear. Hence the soul, unable to bear the ecstasies in a body so frail, cries out, Turn away thine eyes from me.

‘ Turn them away, O my Beloved ! ’

2. That is, Thy divine eyes, for they make me fly away out of myself to the heights of contemplation, and my natural force cannot bear it. This the soul says because it thinks it has escaped from the burden of the flesh, which was the object of its desires ; it therefore prays the Beloved to turn away His eyes ; that is, not to show them in the body, where it cannot bear and enjoy them as it would, but to show them to it in its flight from the body. The Bridegroom at once denies the request and hinders the flight, saying : ‘ Return, my dove ! ’ for the communications I make to thee now are not those of the state of glory wherein thou desirest to be ; but return to me, for I am He whom thou, wounded with love, art seeking, and I, too, as the hart, wounded with thy love, begin to show Myself to thee on the heights of contemplation, and am refreshed and delighted by the love which thy contemplation involves. The soul then says to the Bridegroom :

‘ Turn them away, O my Beloved ! ’

3. The soul, because of its intense longing after the



divine eyes, that is, the Godhead, receives interiorly from the Beloved such communications and knowledge of God as compel it to cry out, 'Turn them away, O my Beloved!' For such is the wretchedness of our mortal nature, that we cannot bear—even when it is offered to us—but at the cost of our life, that which is the very life of the soul, and the object of its earnest desires, namely, the knowledge of the Beloved. Thus the soul is compelled to say, with regard to the eyes so earnestly, so anxiously sought for, and in so many ways—when they become visible—'Turn them away.'

4. So great, at times, is the suffering of the soul during these ecstatic visitations—and there is no other pain which so wrenches the very bones, and which so oppresses our natural forces—that, were it not for the special interference of God, death would ensue. And, in truth, such is it to the soul, the subject of these visitations, for it feels as if it were released from the body and a stranger to the flesh. Such graces cannot be perfectly received in the body, because the spirit of man is lifted up to the communion of the Spirit of God, Who visits the soul, and must therefore of necessity be in some measure, a stranger to the body. Hence it is that the flesh has to suffer, and consequently the soul in it, by reason of their union in one person. The great agony of the soul, therefore, in these visitations, and the great fear that overwhelms it when God deals with it in the supernatural way,\* force it to cry out, 'Turn them away, O my Beloved!'

5. But it is not to be supposed, however, that the

\* See St. Teresa. Life, ch. xx. §7, or Las Moradas, vi. ch. xi.

soul really wishes Him to turn away His eyes; for this is nothing else but the expression of natural awe, as I said before.\* Yea, rather, cost they what they may, the soul would not willingly miss these visitations and favours of the Beloved; for though nature may suffer, the spirit flies to this supernatural recollection, in order to enjoy the spirit of the Beloved, the object of its prayers and desires. The soul is unwilling to receive these visitations in the body, when it cannot have the perfect fruition of them, and only in a slight degree and in pain; but it covets them in the flight of the disembodied spirit when it can enjoy them freely. Hence it says, Turn them away my Beloved, that is, do not visit me in the flesh.

‘I am on the wing.’

6. It is as if it said, I am taking my flight out of the body, that Thou mayest show them when I shall have left it; they being the cause of my flight out of the body. For the better understanding of the nature of this flight we should consider that which I said just now.† In this visitation of the divine Spirit the spirit of the soul is with great violence borne upwards into communion with the divine, the body is abandoned, all its acts and senses are suspended, because they are absorbed in God. Thus the Apostle, St. Paul, speaking of his own ecstasy, saith: ‘Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell.’‡ But we are not to suppose that the soul abandons the body, and that the natural life is destroyed, but only that its actions have then ceased.

7. This is the reason why the body remains insensible in raptures and ecstasies, and unconcious of the most

\* §1 Supr.

† §4 Supr

‡ 2 Cor. xii. 3.

painful inflictions. These are not like the swoons and faintings of the natural life, which cease when pain begins. They who have not arrived at perfection are liable to these visitations, for they happen to those who are walking in the way of proficients. They who are already perfect receive these visitations in peace and in the sweetness of love: ecstasies cease, for they were only graces to prepare them for this greater grace.

8. This is a fitting place for discussing the difference between raptures, ecstasies, other elevations and subtile flights of the spirit, to which spiritual persons are liable; but, as I intend to do nothing more than explain briefly this canticle, as I undertook in the prologue, I leave the subject for those who are better qualified than I am. I do this the more readily, because our mother, the blessed Teresa of Jesus, has written admirably on this matter,\* whose writings I hope in God to see published soon. The flight of the soul in this place, then, is to be understood of ecstasy, and elevation of spirit in God. The Beloved immediately says:

‘Return, My Dove.’

9. The soul was joyfully quitting the body in its spiritual flight, thinking that its natural life was over, and that it was about to enter into the everlasting fruition of the Bridegroom, and remain with Him without a veil between them. He, however, restrains it in its flight, saying,

‘Return, My Dove.’

10. It is as if He said, O My Dove, in thy high and rapid flight of contemplation, in the love wherewith thou

\* See Relation viii.

art inflamed, in the simplicity of thy regard—these are three characteristics of the dove—return from that flight in which thou aimest at the true fruition of Myself—the time is not yet come for knowledge so high—return, and submit thyself to that lower degree of it which I communicate in this thy rapture.

‘The wounded hart.’

11. The Bridegroom likens Himself to a hart, for by the hart here He means Himself. The hart by nature climbs up to high places, and when wounded hastens to seek relief in the cooling waters. If he hears his consort moan and sees that she is wounded, he runs to her at once, comforts, and caresses her. So the Bridegroom now; for, seeing the bride wounded with His love, He, too, hearing her moaning, is wounded Himself with her love; for with lovers the wound of one is the wound of the other, and they have the same feelings in common. The Bridegroom, therefore, saith in effect: Return, my bride, to Me; for as thou art wounded with the love of Me, I too, like the hart, am wounded by love for thee. I am like the hart, looming on the top of the hill. Therefore He says:

‘Looms on the hill;’

12. That is, on the heights of contemplation, to which thou hast ascended in thy flight. Contemplation is a lofty eminence where God, in this life, begins to communicate Himself to the soul, and to show Himself, but not distinctly. Hence it is said, ‘Looms on the hill,’ because he does not appear clearly. However profound the knowledge of Himself which God may grant to the soul in this life, it is, after all, but an indistinct vision. We

now come to the third property of the hart, the subject of the line that follows:—

‘In the air of thy flight and is refreshed.’

13. The flight is contemplation in the ecstasy spoken of before,\* and the air is the spirit of love produced in the soul by this flight of contemplation, and this love produced by the flight is here with great propriety called “air,” for the Holy Ghost also is likened to air in the sacred writings, because He is the breath of the Father and the Son. And so as He is there the air of the flight, that is, that He proceeds by the will from the contemplation and wisdom of the Father and the Son, and is breathed, so here the love of the soul is called air by the Bridegroom, because it proceeds from the contemplation of God and the knowledge of Him which at this time is possessed by the soul.

14. We must observe here that the Bridegroom does not say that He cometh at the flight, but at the air of the flight, because properly speaking, God does not communicate Himself to the soul because of that flight, which is, as I have said, the knowledge it has of God, but because of the love which is the fruit of that knowledge. For as love is the union of the Father and the Son, so is it also of God and the soul.

15. Hence it is that notwithstanding the most profound knowledge of God, and contemplation itself, together with the knowledge of all mysteries, the soul without love is nothing worth, and can do nothing, as the Apostle saith, towards its union with God.† In another place he saith: ‘Have charity, which is the bond of

\* § 1.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

perfection.\* This charity then and love of the soul make the Bridegroom run to drink of the fountain of the Bride's love, as the cooling waters attract the thirsty and the wounded hart, to be refreshed therein.

‘And is refreshed.’

16. As the air cools and refreshes him who is wearied with the heat, so the air of love refreshes and comforts him who burns with the fire of love. The fire of love hath this property, the air which cools and refreshes it is an increase of the fire itself. To him who loves, love is a flame that burns with the desire of burning more and more, like the flame of material fire. The consummation of this desire of burning more and more, with the love of the bride, which is the air of her flight, is here called refreshment. The Bridegroom says in substance: I burn more and more because of the ardour of thy flight, for love kindles love.

17. God does not establish His grace and love in the soul but in proportion to the good will of that soul's love. He, therefore, that truly loves God must strive, that his love fail not; for so, if we may thus speak, will he move God to show him greater love, and to take greater delight in his soul. In order to attain to such a degree of love, he must practise those things of which the Apostle speaks, saying: ‘Charity is patient, is benign: charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh not evil, rejoiceth not upon iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, beareth all things.’†

\*Coloss. iii. 14.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 4—7.



## NOTE.

‘WHEN the dove soul was flying on the gale of love over the waters of the deluge of the weariness and longing of its love, ‘not finding where her foot might rest,’\* the compassionate father Noe, in this last flight, put forth the hand of his mercy, caught her, and brought her into the ark of his charity and love. That took place when the Bridegroom, as in the stanza now explained, said, return, my dove. In the shelter within the ark, the soul finding all it desired, and more than it can ever express, begins to sing the praises of the Beloved, celebrating the magnificence which it feels and enjoys in that union, saying :

## STANZAS XIV., XV.

## THE BRIDE.

*My Beloved is the mountains,  
The solitary wooded valleys,  
The strange islands,  
The roaring torrents,  
The whisper of the amorous gales ;  
The tranquil night  
At the approaches of the dawn,  
The silent music,  
The murmuring solitude,  
The supper which revives, and enkindles love.*

BEFORE I begin to explain these stanzas, I must observe, in order that they and those which follow may be better understood, that this spiritual flight signifies a certain high estate and union of love, whereunto, after many spiritual exercises, God is wont to elevate the soul : it is called the spiritual betrothal of the Word, the Son of God. In the beginning, when this occurs the first time, God reveals to it great things of Himself, makes it

\* Genes. viii. 9.

beautiful in majesty and grandeur, adorns it with graces and gifts, and endows it with honour, and with the knowledge of Himself, as a bride is adorned on the day of her betrothal. On this happy day the soul not only ceases from its anxieties and loving complaints, but is, moreover, adorned with all grace, entering into a state of peace and delight, and of the sweetness of love, as it appears from these stanzas, in which it does nothing else but recount and praise the magnificence of the Beloved, which it recognises in Him, and enjoys in the union of the betrothal.

2. In the stanzas that follow, the soul speaks no more of its anxieties and sufferings, as before, but of the sweet and peaceful intercourse of love with the Beloved; for now all its troubles are over. These two stanzas, which I am about to explain, contain all that God is wont at this time to bestow upon the soul; but we are not to suppose that all souls, thus far advanced, receive all that is here described, either in the same way or in the same degree of knowledge and of consciousness. Some souls receive more, others less; some in one way, some in another; and yet all may be in the state of spiritual betrothal. But in this stanza the highest possible is spoken of, because that embraces all.

### EXPLANATION.

3. As in the ark of Noe there were many chambers for the different kinds of animals, as the Sacred writings tell us, and 'all food that may be eaten,'\* so the soul, in its

\* Genes. vi. 21.

flight to the divine ark of the bosom of God, sees therein not only the many mansions of which our Lord speaks, but also all the food, that is, all the magnificence in which the soul may rejoice, and which are here referred to by the common terms of these stanzas. These are substantially as follows :

4. In this divine union the soul has a vision and foretaste of abundant and inestimable riches, and finds there all the repose and refreshment it desired ; it attains to the secrets of God, and to a strange knowledge of Him, which is the food of those who know Him most ; it is conscious of the awful power of God beyond all other power and might, tastes of the wonderful sweetness and delight of the spirit, finds its true rest and divine light, drinks deeply of the wisdom of God, which shines forth in the harmony of the creatures and works of God ; it feels itself filled with all good, emptied, and delivered from all evil, and, above all, rejoices consciously in the inestimable banquet of love which confirms it in love. This is the substance of these two stanzas.

5. The bride here says that her Beloved in Himself and to her is all the objects she enumerates ; for in the ecstatic communications of God, the soul feels and understands the truth of the saying of St. Francis : ‘ God is mine and all things are mine.’ And because God is all, and the soul, and the good of all, the communication in this ecstasy is explained by the consideration that the goodness of the creatures referred to in these stanzas is a reflection of His goodness, as will appear from every line thereof. All that is here set forth is in God eminently in an infinite way, or rather, every one of these grandeurs is

God, and all of them together are God. Inasmuch as the soul is one with God, it feels all things to be God according to the words of St. John, 'What was made, in Him was life.'\*

6. But we are not to understand this consciousness of the soul as if it saw the creatures in God as we see material objects in the light, but that it feels all things to be God in this fruition of Him; neither are we to imagine that the soul sees God essentially and clearly because it has so deep a sense of Him; for this is only a strong and abundant communication from Him, a glimmering light of what He is in Himself, by which the soul discerns this goodness of all things, as I proceed to explain.

'My Beloved is the mountains.'

7. Mountains are high, fertile, extensive, beautiful, lovely, flowery, and odorous. These mountains my Beloved is to me.

'The solitary wooded valleys.'

8. Solitary valleys are tranquil, pleasant, cooling, shady, abounding in sweet waters, and by the variety of trees growing in them, and by the melody of the birds that frequent them, enliven and delight the senses; their solitude and silence procure us a refreshing rest. These valleys my Beloved is to me.

'The strange islands.'

9. Strange islands are girt by the sea; they are also, because of the sea, distant and unknown to the commerce of men. They produce things very different from those with which we are conversant, in strange ways, and with qualities hitherto unknown, so as to surprise those who

\* St. John i. 3, 4. See Stanza viii. p. 209.

behold them, and fill them with wonder. Thus, then, by reason of the great and marvellous wonders, and the strange things that come to our knowledge, far beyond the common notions of men, which the soul beholds in God, it calls Him the strange islands. We say of a man that he is strange for one of two reasons: either because he withdraws himself from the society of his fellows, or because he is singular or distinguished in his life and conduct. For these two reasons together God is called strange by the soul. He is not only all that is strange in undiscovered islands, but His ways, judgments, and works are also strange, new, and marvellous to men.

10. It is nothing wonderful that God should be strange to men who have never seen Him, seeing that He is also strange to the holy angels and the souls who see Him; for they neither can nor shall ever see Him perfectly. Yea, even to the day of the last judgment they will see in Him so much that is new in His deep judgments, in His acts of mercy and justice, as to excite their wonder more and more. Thus God is the strange islands not to men only but to the angels also; only to Himself is He neither strange nor new.

‘The roaring torrents.’

11. Torrents have three properties. 1. They overflow all that is in their course. 2. They fill all hollows. 3. They overpower all other sounds by their own. And hence the soul, feeling most sweetly that these three properties belong to God, says: ‘My Beloved is the roaring torrents.’

12. As to the first property of which the soul is conscious, it feels itself to be so overwhelmed with the

torrent of the Spirit of God, and so violently overpowered by it, that all the waters in the world seem to it to have surrounded it, and to have drowned all its former actions and passions. Though all this be violent, yet there is nothing painful in it, for these rivers are rivers of peace, as it is written, God speaking through Isaias, saying: 'I will decline upon her, as it were, a flood of peace, and as a torrent overflowing glory.'\* That is, I will bring upon the soul, as it were, a river of peace, and a torrent overflowing with glory. Thus this divine overflowing, like roaring torrents, fills the soul with peace and glory. The second property the soul feels is that this divine water is now filling the vessels of its humility and the emptiness of its desires, as it is written: 'He hath exalted the humble, and filled the hungry with good.† The third property of which the soul is now conscious in the roaring torrents of the Beloved, is a spiritual sound and voice overpowering all other sounds and voices in the world. The explanation of this will take a little time.

13. This voice, or this murmuring sound of the waters, is an overflowing so abundant as to fill the soul with good, and a power so mighty, seizing upon it as to seem not only the sound of many waters, but a most loud roaring of thunder. But the voice is a spiritual voice, unattended by material sounds or the pain and torment of them, but rather with majesty, power, might, delight, and glory: it is, as it were, a voice, an infinite interior sound, which endows the soul with power and might. The Apostles heard in spirit this voice when the Holy Ghost descended upon them in the sound 'as of a mighty wind,'‡ as we

\* Is. lxvi. 12.

† S. Luke i. 52.

‡ Acts ii. 2.



read in the Acts of the Apostles. In order to manifest this spiritual voice, interiorly spoken, the sound was heard exteriorly, as of a rushing wind, by all those who were in Jerusalem. This exterior manifestation reveals what the Apostles interiorly received, namely, fulness of power and might.

14. So also when our Lord Jesus prayed to the Father because of His distress and the rage of His enemies, He heard an interior voice from heaven, comforting Him in His Sacred Humanity. The sound, solemn and grave, was heard exteriorly by the Jews, some of whom, 'said that it thundered, others said an angel hath spoken to Him.'\* The voice outwardly heard was the outward sign and expression of that strength and power which Christ then inwardly received in His human nature. We are not to suppose that the soul does not hear in spirit the spiritual voice because it is also outwardly heard. The spiritual voice is the effect on the soul of the audible voice, as material sounds strike the ear, and impress the meaning of it on the mind. This we learn from David when he said, 'He will give to His voice the voice of strength;'† this strength is the interior voice. He will give to His voice, that is the outward voice, audibly heard, the voice of strength which is felt within. God is an infinite voice, and communicating Himself thus to the soul produces the effect of an infinite voice.

15. This voice was heard by St. John, saying in the Apocalypse: 'I heard a voice from heaven as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder.' And, lest it should be supposed that a voice so strong was

\* St. John xii. 28, 29.

† Ps. lxxvii. 34.

distressing and harsh, he adds immediately, 'The voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers harping on their harps.'\* Ezechiel says that this sound as of many waters was 'as it were the sound of the High God,'† profoundly and sweetly communicated in it. This voice is infinite, because, as I have said, it is God who communicates Himself, speaking in the soul; but He adapts Himself to each soul, uttering the voice of strength according to its capacity, in majesty and joy. And so the bride sings in the Canticle: 'Let Thy voice sound in my ears, for Thy voice is sweet.'‡

'The whisper of the amorous gales.'

16. Two things are to be considered here—gales and whisper. The amorous gales are the virtues and graces of the Beloved, which, because of its union with the Bridegroom, play around the soul, and most lovingly sent forth, touch it in their own substance. The whisper of the gales is a most sublime, and sweet knowledge of God and of His attributes, which overflows into the understanding from the contact of the attributes of God with the substance of the soul. This is the highest delight of which the soul is capable in this life.

17. That we may understand this the better, we must keep in mind, that as in a gale two things are observable—the touch of it, and the whisper or sound—so there are two things observable also in the communications of the Bridegroom—the sense of delight, and the understanding of it. As the touch of the air is felt in the sense of touch, and the whisper of it heard in the ear, so also the contact of the perfections of the Beloved is felt and

\* Apoc. xiv. 2.

† Ezech. i. 24.

‡ Cant. ii. 14.

enjoyed in the touch of the soul, that is, in the substance thereof, through the instrumentality of the will, and the knowledge of the attributes of God felt in the hearing of the soul, that is, in the understanding.

18. The gale is said to blow amorously when it strikes deliciously, satisfying his desire who is longing for the refreshing which it ministers; for it then revives and soothes the sense of touch, and while the sense of touch is thus soothed, that of hearing also rejoices and delights in the sound and whisper of the gale more than the touch in the contact of the air, because the sense of hearing is more spiritual, or, to speak with greater correctness, is more nearly connected with the spiritual than is that of touch, and the delight thereof is more spiritual than is that of the touch. So also, inasmuch as this touch of God greatly satisfies and comforts the substance of the soul, sweetly fulfilling its longing to be received into union; this union, or touch, is called amorous gales, because, as I said before, the perfections of the Beloved are by it communicated to the soul lovingly and sweetly, and through it the whisper of knowledge to the understanding. It is called whisper, because, as the whisper of the air penetrates subtilely into the organ of hearing, so this most subtile and delicate knowledge enters with marvellous sweetness and delight into the inmost substance of the soul, which is the highest of all delights.

20. The reason is that substantial knowledge is now communicated intelligibly and stripped of all accidents and images, to the understanding, which philosophers call passive or passible, because inactive without any natural efforts of its own during this communication.

This is the highest delight of the soul, because it is in the understanding, which is the seat of fruition, as theologians teach, and fruition is the vision of God. Some theologians think, inasmuch as this whisper signifies the substantial intelligence, that our father Elias had a vision of God in the delicate whisper of the air, which he heard on the mount at the mouth of the cave. The Holy Scripture calls it 'the whistling of a gentle wind,'\* because knowledge is begotten in the understanding by the subtile and delicate communication of the Spirit. The soul calls it here the whisper of the amorous gales, because it flows into the understanding from the loving communication of the perfections of the Beloved. This is why it is called the whisper of the amorous gales.

21. This divine whisper which enters in by the ear of the soul is not only substantial knowledge, but a manifestation also of the truths of the Divinity, and a revelation of the secret mysteries thereof. For in general, in the Holy Scriptures, every communication of God said to enter in by the ear is a manifestation of pure truths to the understanding, or a revelation of the secrets of God. These are revelations or purely spiritual visions, and are communicated directly to the soul without the intervention of the senses, and thus, what God communicates through the spiritual ear is most profound and most certain. When St. Paul would express the greatness of the revelations made to him, he did not say, I saw or I perceived secret words: but, 'I heard secret words which it is not granted to man to utter.'† It is thought that St. Paul also saw God, as our father Elias, in the whisper of a

\* 3 Kings xix. 12.

† 2 Cor. xii. 4.

gentle air. For as 'faith cometh by hearing,'—so the Apostle teaches—that is by the hearing of the material ear, so also that which the faith teaches, the intelligible truth, cometh by spiritual hearing.

22. The prophet Job, speaking to God, when He revealed Himself unto him, teaches the same doctrine, saying: 'With the hearing of the ear I have heard Thee, but now my eye seeth Thee.'\* It is clear from this that to hear with the ear of the soul, is to see with the eye of the passive understanding. He does not say I heard with the hearing of my ears, but with the hearing of my ear; nor, with the seeing of my eyes, but with the eye of my understanding; the hearing of the soul is, therefore, the vision of the understanding.

23. Still we are not to think that what the soul perceives, though pure truth, can be the perfect and clear fruition of Heaven. For though it be free from accidents, as I said before, † it is dim and not clear, because it is contemplation, which in this life, as St. Dionysius saith, 'is a ray of darkness,' ‡ and thus we may say that it is a ray and an image of fruition, because it is in the understanding, which is the seat of fruition. This substantial truth, called here a whisper, is the "eyes desired" which the Beloved showed to the bride, who unable to bear the vision cried, 'Turn them away, O my Beloved.'§

24. There is a passage in the book of Job which greatly confirms what I have said of rapture and betrothal, and because I consider it to be much to the purpose, I

\* Job xlii. 5.

† § 20.

[‡ De Mystica Theologia, cap. 1, πρὸς τὴν ὑπερούσιον τοῦ θείου σκοτούς ἀκτῖνα.]

§ Cant. vi. 4.

will give it here, though it may delay us a little, and explain those portions of it which belong to my subject. The explanation shall be short, and when I shall have made it, I shall go on to explain the other stanza. The passage is as follows: "To me there was spoken a secret word," saith Eliphaz the Themanite, "and as it were my ear by stealth received the veins of its whisper. In the horror of a vision by night, when deep sleep is wont to hold men, fear held me and trembling, and all my bones were made sore afraid: and when the spirit passed before me the hair of my flesh stood upright. There stood one whose countenance I knew not, an image before mine eyes, and I heard the voice as it were of a gentle wind."\*

25. This passage contains almost all I said about rapture in the thirteenth stanza, where the bride says: "Turn them away, O my Beloved." The 'word spoken in secret' to Eliphaz, is that secret communication which by reason of its greatness the soul was not able to endure, and, therefore, cried out: "Turn them away, O my Beloved." Eliphaz says that his 'ear as it were by stealth received the veins of its whisper.' By that is meant the pure substance which the understanding receives, for the 'veins' here denote the interior substance. The whisper is that communication and touch of the virtues whereby the said substance is communicated to the understanding. It is called a whisper because of its great gentleness. And the soul calls it the amorous gales because it is lovingly communicated. It is said to be received as it were by stealth, for as that which is

\* Job iv. 12—16.



stolen is alienated, so this secret is alien to man, speaking in the order of nature, because that which he received does not appertain to him naturally, and thus it was not lawful for him to receive it; neither was it lawful for St. Paul to repeat what he heard. For this reason the prophet saith twice: 'My secret to myself, my secret to myself.'\*

26. When Eliphaz speaks of the horror of the vision by night, and of the fear and trembling that seized upon him, he refers to the awe and dread that comes upon the soul naturally in rapture, because in its natural strength it is unable, as I said before,† to endure the communication of the Spirit of God. The prophet gives us to understand that as when sleep is about to fall upon men, a certain vision which they call a nightmare is wont to oppress and terrify them in the interval between sleeping and waking, which is the moment of the approach of sleep, so in the spiritual passage between the sleep of natural ignorance and the waking of the supernatural understanding, which is the beginning of an ecstasy or rapture, the spiritual vision then revealed, makes the soul fear and tremble.

27. 'All my bones were affrighted,' that is, were shaken and disturbed; by this he meant a certain dislocation of the bones which takes place when the soul falls into an ecstasy. This is clearly expressed by Daniel when he saw the angel, saying: 'O my lord, at the sight of thee my joints are loosed.'‡ 'When the spirit passed before me,' that is when my spirit was made to transcend the ways and limitations of nature in ecstasies and raptures.

\* Is. xxiv. 16.

† Stan. xiii. § 1.

‡ Dan. x. 16.

‘The hair of my flesh stood upright, that is, my body was chilled, and the flesh contracted like that of a dead man.

28. ‘There stood One,’ that is God, Who reveals Himself after this manner. ‘Whose countenance I knew not;’ in these communications or visions, however high they may be, the soul neither knows nor beholds the face and being of God. ‘An image before my eyes;’ that is, the knowledge of the secret words was most deep, as it were the image and face of God; but still this is not the essential vision of God. ‘I heard the voice as it were of a gentle wind,’ this is the whisper of the amorous gales—that is, of the Beloved of the soul.

29. But it is not to be supposed that these visits of God are always attended by such terrors and distress of nature; that happens to them only who are entering the state of illumination and perfection, and in this kind of communications; for in others they come with great sweetness.

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## STANZA XV.

‘THE tranquil night.’ In this spiritual sleep in the bosom of the Beloved the soul is in possession and fruition of all the calm, repose, and quiet of a peaceful night, and receives at the same time in God a certain dim unfathomable divine intelligence. This is the reason why it says that the Beloved is to it the tranquil night.

2. ‘At the approaches of the dawn.’ This tranquil night is not like a night of darkness, but rather like the

night when the sunrise is drawing nigh. This tranquillity and repose in God is not all darkness to the soul, as the dark night is, but rather tranquillity and repose in the divine light and in a new knowledge of God, whereby the mind, most sweetly tranquil, is raised to a divine light.

3. This divine light is here very appropriately called the approaches of the dawn, that is, the twilight; for as the twilight of the morn disperses the darkness of the night and reveals the light of day, so the mind, tranquil and reposing in God, is raised up from the darkness of natural knowledge to the morning light of the supernatural knowledge of God, not clear, indeed, as I have said, but dim, like the night at the approaches of the dawn. For as it is then neither wholly night nor wholly day, but as they say twilight, so this solitude and divine repose is neither perfectly illumined by the divine light, nor yet perfectly alien from it.

4. In this tranquillity the understanding is lifted up in a strange way above its natural comprehension to the divine light: it is like a man who, after a profound sleep, opens his eyes to unexpected light. This knowledge is referred to by David when he says: 'I have watched, and am become as the lonely sparrow on the housetop: '\* that is, I opened the eyes of my understanding, and was raised up above all natural comprehension, lonely, without them, on the housetop, lifted up above all earthly considerations. He says that he was 'become as the lonely sparrow,' because in this kind of contemplation the spirit has the properties of the sparrow. These are five in number:

\* Ps. ci. 8.

1. It frequents in general high places, and the spirit in this state rises to the highest contemplation.

2. It is ever turning its face in the direction of the wind, and the spirit turns its affections thither whence the spirit of love, which is God.

3. It is in general solitary, abstaining from the companionship of others, and flying away when any approach it: so the spirit in contemplation is far away from all worldly thoughts, lonely in its avoidance of them; neither does it consent to anything except to this solitude in God.

4. It sings most sweetly, and so also does the spirit at this time sing unto God; for the praises which it offers up proceed from the sweetest love, most pleasing to itself, and most precious in the sight of God.

5. It is of no definite colour; so also is the perfect spirit, which in this ecstasy is not only without any tinge of sensual affection or self-love, but also without any particular consideration of the things of heaven or earth; neither can it give any account whatever of them, because it has entered into the abyss of the knowledge of God.

‘The silent music.’

5. In this silence and tranquillity of the night, and in this knowledge of the divine light, the soul discerns a marvellous arrangement and disposition of God’s wisdom in the diversities of His creatures and operations. All these, and each one of them, have a certain correspondence with God, whereby each, by a voice peculiar to itself, proclaims what there is in itself of God, so as to form a concert of sublimest melody, transcending all the harmonies of the world. This is the silent music, because

it is knowledge tranquil and calm, without audible voice ; and thus the sweetness of music and the repose of silence are enjoyed in it. The soul says that the Beloved is silent music, because this harmony of spiritual music is in Him understood and felt. He is not this only, He is also—

‘ The murmuring solitude.’

6. This is almost the same as the silent music. For though the music is inaudible to the senses and the natural powers, it is a solitude most full of sound to the spiritual powers. These powers being in solitude, emptied of all forms and natural apprehensions, may well receive in spirit, like a resounding voice, the spiritual impression of the majesty of God in Himself and in His creatures ; as it happened to St. John, who heard in spirit as it were ‘ the voice of harpers harping on their harps.’\* St. John heard this in spirit : it was not material harps that he heard, but a certain knowledge that he had of the praises of the blessed, which every one of them, each in his own degree of glory, is continually singing before God. It is as it were music. For as every one of the saints had the gifts of God in a different way, so every one of them sings His praises in a different way, and yet all harmonise in one concert of love, as in music.

7. In the same way, in this tranquil contemplation, the soul beholds all creatures, not only the highest, but the lowest also, each one according to the gift of God to it, sending forth the voice of its witness to what God is. It beholds each one magnifying Him in its own way, and possessing Him according to its particular capacity ; and thus all these voices together unite in one strain in praise

\* Apoc. xiv. 2.

of God's greatness, wisdom, and marvellous knowledge. This is the meaning of those words of the Holy Ghost in the book of Wisdom: 'The Spirit of our Lord hath replenished the whole world, and that which containeth all things hath the knowledge of the voice.'\* 'The voice' is the murmuring solitude, which the soul is said to know, namely, the witness which all things bear to God. Inasmuch as the soul hears this music only in solitude and in estrangement from all outward things, it calls it silent music and murmuring solitude. These are the Beloved.

'The supper which revives, and enkindles love.'

8. Lovers find recreation, satisfaction, and love in feasts. And because the Beloved in this sweet communication produces these three effects in the soul, He is here said to be the supper that revives, and enkindles love. In Holy Scripture supper signifies the divine vision, for as supper is the conclusion of the day's labours, and the beginning of the night's repose, so the soul in this tranquil knowledge is made to feel that its trials are over, the possession of good begun, and its love of God increased. Hence, then, the Beloved is to the soul the supper that revives, in being the end of its trials, and that enkindles love, in being the beginning of the fruition of all good.

9. That we may see more clearly how the Bridegroom is the supper of the soul, we must refer to those words of the Beloved in the Apocalypse: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the gate, I will enter in to him, and will sup

\* Wisd. i. 7.



with him, and he with Me.'\* It is evident from these words, that He brings the supper with Him, which is nothing else but His own sweetness and delights, wherein He rejoiceth Himself, and which He, uniting Himself to the soul, communicates to it, making it a partaker of His joy: for this is the meaning of 'I will sup with him, and he with Me.' These words describe the effect of the divine union of the soul with God, wherein it shares the very goods of God Himself, Who communicates them graciously and abundantly to it. Thus the Beloved is Himself the supper which revives, and enkindles love, refreshing the soul with His abundance, and enkindling its love in His graciousness.

10. But before I proceed to explain the stanzas which follow, I must observe that, in the state of betrothal, wherein the soul enjoys this tranquillity, and wherein it receives all that it can receive in this life, we are not to suppose its tranquillity to be perfect, but that the higher part of it is tranquil; for the sensual part, except in the state of spiritual marriage, never loses all its imperfect habits, and its powers are never wholly subdued, as I shall show hereafter.† What the soul receives now, is all that it can receive in the state of betrothal, for in that of the marriage the blessings are greater. Though the bride-soul has great joy in these visits of the Beloved in the state of betrothal, still it has to suffer from His absence, to endure trouble and afflictions in the lower part, and at the hands of the devil. But all this ceases in the state of spiritual marriage.

\* Apoc. iii, 20.

† Stanza xxvi.

## . NOTE.

THE bride now in possession of the virtues in their perfection whereby she is ordinarily rejoicing in peace when the Beloved visits her, is now and then in the fruition of the fragrance and sweetness of those virtues in the highest degree, because the Beloved touches them within her, just as the sweetness and beauty of the lilies and other flowers when in their bloom are perceived when we handle them. For in many of these visits the soul discerns within itself all its virtues which God has given it; He shedding light upon them. The soul now, with marvellous joy and sweetness of love, binds them together and presents them to the Beloved as a nosegay of beautiful flowers, and the Beloved in accepting them—for He truly accepts them then—and accepts thereby a great service. All this takes place within the soul, feeling that the Beloved is within it as on His own couch, for the soul presents itself with the virtues which is the greatest service it can render Him, and thus this is one of the greatest joys which in its interior converse with God, the soul is wont to receive in presents of this kind made to the Beloved.

2. The devil, beholding this prosperity of the soul, and in his great malice envying all the good he sees in it, now uses all his power, and has recourse to all his devices, in order to thwart it if possible, even in the slightest degree. He thinks it of more consequence to keep back the soul, even for an instant, from this abundance, bliss, and delight, than to make others fall into many and mortal sins. Other souls have little or nothing to lose, while

this soul has much, having gained many and great treasures; for the loss of one grain of refined gold is greater than the loss of many of the baser metals.

3. The devil here has recourse to the sensual appetites, though now they can give him generally but little or no help because they are mortified, and because he cannot turn them to any great account in distracting the imagination. Sometimes he stirs up many movements in the sensitive part of the soul, and causes other vexations, spiritual as well as sensual, from which the soul is unable to deliver itself until our Lord shall send His angel, as it is written, ‘The angel of our Lord shall put in himself about them that fear Him, and shall deliver them;’\* and so establish peace, both in the spiritual and sensitive parts of the soul. With a view to show forth this truth, and to ask this favour, the soul, apprehensive by experience of the craft which the devil makes use of to thwart this good, addressing itself to the angels, whose function it is to succour it at this time by putting the evil spirits to flight, speaks as in the following stanza:—

#### STANZA XVI.

*Catch us the foxes,  
For our vineyard hath flourished;  
While of roses  
We make a nosegay,  
And let no one appear on the hill.*

THE soul, anxious that this interior delight of love, which is the flowers of the vineyard, should not be interrupted, either by envious and malicious devils, or the raging desires of sensuality, or the various comings and goings of

\* Ps. xxxiii. 8.

the imagination, or any other consciousness or presence of created things, calls upon the angels to seize and hinder all these from interrupting its practice of interior love, in the joy and sweetness of which the soul and the Son of God communicate and delight in the virtues and graces.

‘Catch us the foxes, for our vineyard hath flourished.’

2. The vineyard is the plantation in this holy soul of all the virtues which minister to it the wine of sweet taste. The vineyard of the soul is then flourishing when it is united in will to the Bridegroom, and delights itself in Him in all the virtues. Sometimes, as I have just said, the memory and the fancy are assailed by various forms and imaginings, and divers motions and desires trouble the sensual part. The great variety and diversity of these made David say, when he felt the inconvenience and the trouble of them as he was drinking of the sweet wine of the spirit, thirsting greatly after God: ‘For Thee my soul hath thirsted, for Thee my flesh, O how many ways.’\*

3. Here the soul calls the whole troop of desires and stirrings of sense, foxes, because of the great resemblance between them at this time. As foxes pretend to be asleep that they may pounce upon their prey when it comes in their way, so all the desires and powers of sense in the soul are asleep until the flowers of virtue grow, flourish, and bloom. Then the desires and powers of sense awake to resist the Spirit and domineer. ‘The flesh lusteth against the spirit,’† and as the inclination of it is towards the sensual desires, it is disgusted as soon as it tastes of

\* Ps. lxxii. 2.

† Gal. v. 17.

the Spirit, and herein the desires prove extremely troublesome to spiritual sweetness.

‘Catch us the foxes.’

4. The evil spirits now molest the soul in two ways. They vehemently excite the desires, and employ them with other imaginations to assail the peaceful and flourishing kingdom of the soul. Then, and this is much worse, when they do not succeed in stirring up the desires, they assail the soul with bodily pains and noises in order to distract it. And, what is still more serious, they fight with spiritual horror and dread, and sometimes with fearful torments, which, at this time, if God permits them, they can most effectually bring about, for inasmuch as the soul is now spiritually detached, so as to perform its spiritual exercises, the devil being himself a spirit presents himself before it with great ease.

5. At other times the evil spirit assails the soul with other horrors, before it begins to have the fruition of the sweet flowers, when God is beginning to draw it forth out of the house of sense that it may enter on the interior exercises in the garden of the Bridegroom, for he knows well that once entered into this state of recollection it is there so protected that, notwithstanding all he can do, he cannot hurt it. Very often, too, when the devil goes forth to meet the soul, the soul becomes quickly recollected in the secret depths of its interior, where it finds great sweetness and protection; then those terrors of satan are so far off that they not only produce no fear, but are even the occasion of peace and joy. The bride, in the canticle, speaks of these terrors saying: ‘My soul

troubled me for the chariots of Aminadab.’\* Aminadab is the evil spirit, and his chariots are his assaults upon the soul, which he makes with great violence, noise, and confusion.

6. The bride also says what the soul says here, namely: ‘Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vineyards; for our vineyard hath flourished.’† She does not say, catch me, but catch us, because she is speaking of herself and the Beloved; for they are one, and enjoy the flourishing of the vineyard together.

• 7. The reason why the vineyard is said to be flourishing and not bearing fruit is this: the soul in this life has the fruition of virtues, however perfect they may be, only in their flower, because the fruit of them is reserved for the life to come.

‘While of roses we make a nosegay.’

8. Now, at this time, while the soul is rejoicing in the flourishing of the vineyard, and delighting itself in the bosom of the Beloved, all its virtues are perfect, exhibiting themselves to the soul, and sending forth great sweetness and delight. The soul feels them to be in itself and in God so as to seem to be one vineyard most flourishing and pleasing belonging to both, wherein they feed and delight. Then the soul binds all its virtues together, makes acts of love in each of them separately, and in all together, and then offers them all to the Beloved, with great tenderness of love and sweetness, and in this the Beloved helps it, for without His help and favour, it cannot make this union and oblation of virtue to the

\* Cant. vi. 11.

† Cant. ii. 15.



Beloved. Hence it says : ' we make a nosegay,' that is the Beloved and myself.

9. This union of the virtues is called a nosegay ; for as a nosegay is cone-like in form, and a cone is strong, containing and embracing many pieces firmly joined together, so this cone-like nosegay of the virtues which the soul makes for the Beloved, is the uniform perfection of the soul which firmly and solidly contains and embraces many perfections, great virtues, and rich endowments ; for all the perfections and virtues of the soul unite together to form but one. And while this perfection is being accomplished, and when accomplished, offered to the Beloved on the part of the soul, it becomes necessary to catch the foxes that they may not hinder this mutual interior communication. The soul prays not only that this nosegay may be carefully made, but also adds : ' And let no one appear on the hill.'

10. This divine interior exercise requires solitude and detachment from all things, whether in the lower part of the soul, which is that of sense, or in the higher, which is the rational. These two divisions comprise all the faculties and senses of man, and are here called the hill ; because all our natural notions and desires being in them, as quarry on a hill, the devil lays in wait among these notions and desires, in order that he may injure the soul.

' And let no one appear on the hill.'

11. That is, let no representation or image of any object whatever, appertaining to any of these faculties or senses, appear in the presence of the soul and the Bridegroom : in other words, let the spiritual powers of the soul, memory, understanding, and will, be divested of all

notions, particular inclinations or considerations whatsoever ; and let all the senses and faculties of the body, interior as well as exterior, the imagination, the fancy, the sight and hearing, and the rest, be divested of all occasions of distractions, of all forms, images, and representations, and of all other natural operations.

12. The soul speaks in this way because it is necessary for the perfect fruition of this communication of God, that all the senses and powers, both interior and exterior, should be disencumbered and emptied of their proper objects and operations ; for the more active they are, the greater will be the hindrance which they will occasion. The soul, having attained to a certain interior union of love, the spiritual faculties of it are no longer active, and still less those of the body ; for now that the union of love is actually wrought in love, the faculties of the soul cease from their exertions, because now that the goal is reached, all employment of means is at an end. What the soul at this time has to do is to wait lovingly upon God, and this waiting is love in a continuation of unitive love. Let no one, therefore, appear on the hill, but the will only waiting on the Beloved in the offering up of self and of all the virtues in the way described.

#### NOTE.

FOR the clearer understanding of the following stanza, we must keep in mind that the absence of the Beloved, from which the soul suffers in the state of spiritual betrothal, is an exceedingly great affliction, and at times greater than all other trials whatever. The reason is this : the love of

the soul for God is now so vehement and deep, that the pain of His absence is vehement and deep also. This pain is increased also by the annoyance which comes from intercourse with creatures, which is very great; for the soul, under the pressure of its quickened desire of union with God, finds all other conversation most painful and difficult to endure. It is like a stone in its flight to the place whither it is rapidly tending; every obstacle it meets with occasions a violent shock. And as the soul has tasted of the sweetness of the Beloved's visits, which are more desirable than gold and all that is beautiful, it therefore dreads even a momentary absence, and addresses itself as follows to aridities, and to the Spirit of the Bridegroom :—

### STANZA XVII.

*Killing north wind cease,  
Come, south wind, that awakenest love !  
Blow through my garden,  
And let its odours flow,  
And the Beloved shall feed among the flowers.*

BESIDE the causes mentioned in the foregoing stanza, spiritual dryness also hinders the fruition of this interior sweetness of which I have been speaking, and afraid of it the soul has recourse to two expedients, to which it refers in the present stanza. The first is to shut the door against it by unceasing prayer and devotion. The second, to invoke the Holy Ghost; it is He Who drives away dryness from the soul, maintains and increases its love of the Bridegroom—that He may establish in it the practice

of virtue, and all this to the end that the Son of God, its Bridegroom, may rejoice and delight in it more and more, for its only aim is to please the Beloved.

‘Killing north wind cease.’

2. The north wind is exceedingly cold; it dries up and parches flowers and plants, and at the least, when it blows, causes them to draw in and shrink. So, dryness of spirit and the sensible absence of the Beloved, because they produce the same effect on the soul, exhausting the sweetness and fragrance of virtue, are here called the killing north wind; for all the virtues and affective devotions of the soul are then dead. Hence the soul addresses itself to it, saying: ‘Killing north wind cease.’ These words mean that the soul applies itself to spiritual exercises, in order to escape aridity. But the communications of God are now so interior that by no exertion of its faculties can the soul attain to them if the Spirit of the Bridegroom do not cause these movements of love. The soul, therefore, addresses Him, saying:

‘Come, south wind, that awakenest love.’

3. The south wind is another wind commonly called the south-west wind. It is soft, and brings rain; it makes the grass and plants grow, flowers to blossom and scatter their perfume abroad; in short, it is the very opposite in its effects of the north wind. By it is meant here the Holy Ghost, Who awakeneth love; for when this divine Breath breathes on the soul, it so inflames and refreshes it, so quickens the will, and stirs up the desires, which were before low and asleep as to the love of God, that we may well say of it that it quickens the love

between Him and the soul. The prayer of the soul to the Holy Ghost is thus expressed, 'Blow through my garden.'

4. This garden is the soul itself. For as the soul said of itself before, that it was a flourishing vineyard, because the flowers of virtue which are in it give forth the wine of sweetness, so here it says of itself that it is a garden, because the flowers of perfection and the virtues are planted in it, flourish, and grow.

5. Observe, too, that the expression is 'blow through my garden,' not blow in it. There is a great difference between God's breathing into the soul, and through it. To breathe into the soul is to infuse into it graces, gifts, and virtues; to breathe through it is, on the part of God, to touch and move its virtues and perfections now possessed, renewing them and stirring them in such a way that they send forth their marvellous fragrance and sweetness. Thus aromatic spices, when shaken or touched, give forth the abundant odours which are not otherwise so distinctly perceived. The soul is not always in the conscious fruition of its acquired and infused virtues, because, in this life, they are like flowers in seed, or in bud, or like aromatic spices covered over, the perfume of which is not perceived till they are exposed and shaken.

6. But God sometimes is so merciful to the bride-soul, as—the Holy Ghost breathing meanwhile through the flourishing garden—to open these buds of virtue and expose the aromatic herbs of the soul's gifts, perfections, and riches, to manifest to it its interior treasures and to reveal to it all its beauty. It is then marvellous to behold,

and sweet to feel, the abundance of the gifts now revealed in the soul, and the beauty of the flowers of virtue now flourishing in it. No language can describe the fragrance which every one of them diffuses, each according to its kind. This state of the soul is referred to in the words, 'Let its odours flow.'

7. So abundant are these odours at times, that the soul seems enveloped in delight and bathed in inestimable bliss. Not only is it conscious itself of them, but they even overflow it, so that those who know how to discern these things can perceive them. The soul in this state seems to them as a delectable garden, full of the joys and riches of God. This is observable in holy souls, not only when the flowers open, but almost always; for they have a certain air of grandeur and dignity which inspires the beholders with awe and reverence, because of the supernatural effects of their close and familiar converse with God. We have an illustration of this in the life of Moses, the sight of whose face the people could not bear, by reason of the glory that rested upon it—the effect of his speaking to God face to face.\*

8. While the Holy Ghost is breathing through the garden—this is His visitation of the soul—the Bridegroom Son of God communicates Himself to it in a profound way, enamoured of it. It is for this that He sends the Holy Spirit before Him—as He sent the apostles†—to make ready the chamber of the soul His bride, comforting it with delight, setting its garden in order, opening its flowers, revealing its gifts, and adorning it with the tapestry of graces. The bride-soul longs for this with all

\* Exod. xxxiv. 30.

† St. Luke xxii. 8.



its might, and therefore bids the north wind not to blow, and invokes the south wind to blow through the garden, because she gains much here at once.

9. The bride now gains the fruition of all her virtues in their sweetest exercise. She gains the fruition of her Beloved in them, because it is through them that He converses with her in most intimate love, and grants her favours greater than any of the past. She gains, too, that her Beloved delights more in her because of the actual exercise of virtue, which is what pleases her most, namely, that her Beloved should be pleased with her. She gains also the permanent continuance of the sweet fragrance which remains in the soul while the Bridegroom is present, and the bride entertains Him with the sweetness of her virtues, as it is written: 'While the king was at His repose,' that is, in the soul, 'my spikenard sent forth its odour.'\* The spikenard is the soul, which from the flowers of its virtues sends forth sweet odours to the Beloved, Who dwells within it in the union of love.

10. It is therefore very much to be desired that every soul should pray the Holy Ghost to blow through its garden, that the divine odours of God may flow. And as this is so necessary, so blissful and profitable to the soul, the bride desires it, and prays for it, in the words of the canticle, saying: 'Arise, north wind, and come, south wind; blow through my garden, and let the aromatical spices thereof flow.'† The soul prays for this, not because of the delight and bliss consequent upon it, but because of the delight it ministers to the Beloved, and because it

\* Cant. i. 11.

† Cant. iv. 16.

prepares the way and announces the presence of the Son of God, Who cometh to rejoice in it. Hence the soul adds :—

‘ And my Beloved shall feed among the flowers.’

11. The delight which the Son of God finds now in the soul is described as pasture. This word expresses most forcibly the truth, because pasture not only gladdeneth, but also sustaineth. Thus the Son of God delights in the soul, in the delights thereof, and is sustained in them, that is, He abides within it as in a place which pleases Him exceedingly, because the place itself really delights in Him. This, I believe, is the meaning of those words recorded in the proverbs of Solomon : ‘ My delights were to be with the children of men ;’\* that is, when they delight to be with Me, Who am the Son of God.

12. Observe, here, that it is not said that the Beloved shall feed on the flowers, but that He shall feed among the flowers. For, as the communications of the Beloved are in the soul itself, through the adornment of the virtues, it follows that what He feeds on is the soul which He transformed into Himself, now that it is prepared and adorned with these flowers of virtues, graces, and perfections, which are the things whereby, and among which, He feeds. These, by the power of the Holy Ghost, are sending forth in the soul the odours of sweetness to the Son of God, that He may feed there the more in the love thereof; for this is the love of the Bridegroom, to be united to the soul amid the fragrance of the flowers.

13. The bride in the Canticle has observed this, for

\* Prov. viii. 31.

she had experience of it, saying: 'My Beloved is gone down into His garden, to the bed of aromatical spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies. I to my Beloved, and my Beloved to me, Who feedeth among the lilies,'\* that is, Who feedeth and delighteth in my soul, which is His garden, among the lilies of my virtues, perfections, and graces.

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#### NOTE.

IN the state of spiritual espousals, the soul contemplating its great riches and excellence, but unable to enter into the possession and fruition of them as it desires, because it is still in the flesh, often suffers exceedingly, and then more particularly when its knowledge of them becomes more profound. It then sees itself in the body, like a prince in prison, subject to all misery, whose authority is disregarded, whose territories and wealth are confiscated, and who, of his former substance receives but a miserable dole. How greatly he suffers any one may see, especially when his household is no longer obedient, and his slaves and servants, forgetting all respect, plunder him of the scanty provisions of his table. Thus is it with the soul in the body, for when God mercifully admits it to a foretaste of the good things which He has prepared for it, the wicked servants of desire in the sensual part, now a slave of disorderly motions, now other rebellious movements, rise up against it in order to rob it of its good.

2. The soul feels itself as if it were in the land of

\* Cant. vi. 1, 2.

enemies, tyrannised over by the stranger, like the dead among the dead. Its feelings are those which the prophet Baruch gave vent to when he described the misery of Jacob's captivity: 'How happeneth it, O Israel, that thou art in thy enemies' land; thou art grown old in a strange country, thou art defiled with the dead: thou art counted with them that go down into hell.\* This misery of the soul, in the captivity of the body is thus spoken of by Jeremias, saying: 'Is Israel a bondman or a home-born slave? Why then is he become a prey? The lions have roared upon him, and have made a noise.† The lions are the desires and the rebellious motions of the tyrant king of sensuality. In order to express the trouble which this tyrant occasions, and the desire of the soul to see this kingdom of sensuality with all its hosts destroyed, or wholly subject to the spirit, the soul lifting up its eyes to the Bridegroom, as to one who can effect it, speaks against those rebellious motions in the words of the next stanza.

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### STANZA XVIII.

*O nymphs of Judea !  
While amid the flowers and the rose-trees  
The amber sends forth its perfume,  
Tarry in the suburbs,  
And touch not our thresholds.*

It is the bride that speaks; for seeing herself, as to the higher part of the soul, adorned with the rich endowments of her Beloved, and seeing Him delighting in her, she

\* Baruch iii. 10, 11.

† Jerem. ii. 14, 15.

desires to preserve herself in security, and in the continued fruition of them. Seeing also that hindrances will arise, as, in fact, they do, from the sensual part of the soul, which will disturb so great a good, she bids the operations and motions of the soul's lower nature to cease, in the senses and faculties of it, and sensuality not to overstep its boundaries to trouble and disquiet the higher and spiritual portion of the soul: not to hinder even for a moment the sweetness she enjoys. The motions of the lower part, and their powers, if they show themselves during the enjoyment of the spirit, are so much more troublesome and disturbing, the more active they are.

‘O nymphs of Judea.’

2. The lower, that is the sensual part of the soul, is called Judea. It is called Judea because it is weak, and carnal, and blind, like the Jewish people. All the imaginations, fancies, motions, and inclinations of the lower part of the soul are called nymphs; for as nymphs with their beauty and attractions entice men to love them, so the operations and motions of sensuality softly and earnestly strive to entice the will from the rational part, in order to withdraw it from that which is interior, and to fix it on that which is exterior, to which they are prone themselves. They also strive to influence the understanding to join with them in their low views, and to bring down reason to the level of sense by the attractions of the latter. The soul, therefore, says in effect: O sensual operations and motions.

‘While amid the flowers and the rose-trees.’

3. The flowers, as I have said, are the virtues of the

soul, and the rose-trees are its powers, memory, understanding, and will, which produce and nurture the flowers of divine conceptions, acts of love and the virtues, while the amber sends forth its perfume in the virtues and powers of the soul.

‘The amber sends forth its perfume.’

4. The amber is the divine spirit of the Bridegroom Who dwells in the soul. To send forth the perfume among the flowers and the rose-trees, is to diffuse and communicate Himself most sweetly in the powers and virtues of the soul, thereby filling it with the perfume of divine sweetness. Meanwhile, then, when the Divine Spirit is filling my soul with spiritual sweetness,

‘Tarry in the suburbs.’

5. In the suburbs of Judea, which is the inferior or sensual part of the soul. The suburbs are the interior senses, namely, memory, fancy, and imagination, where forms and images of things collect, by the help of which sensuality stirs up concupiscence and desires. These forms are the nymphs, and while they are quiet and tranquil the desires are also asleep. They enter into the suburbs of the interior senses by the gates of the outward senses, of sight, hearing, smell, &c. We can thus give the name of suburbs to all the powers and interior or exterior senses of the sensual part of the soul, because they are outside the walls of the city.

6. That part of the soul which may be called the city is that which is most interior, the rational part, which is capable of converse with God, the operations of which are contrary to those of sensuality. But there is a natural intercourse between those who dwell in the suburbs of



the sensual part—that is the nymphs—and those who dwell in the higher part, which is the city itself; and, therefore, what takes place in the lower part is ordinarily felt in the higher, and consequently compels attention to itself and disturbs the spiritual operation which is conversant with God. Hence the soul bids the nymphs tarry in the suburbs, that is, to remain at rest in the exterior and interior senses of the sensual part,

‘And touch not our thresholds.’

7. Let not even your first movements touch the higher part, for the first movements of the soul are the entrance and thresholds of it. When the first movements have passed into the reason, they have crossed the threshold, but when they remain as first movements only they are then said merely to touch the threshold, or to cry at the gate, which is the case when reason and sense contend over an unreasonable act. The soul here not only bids these not to touch it, but also charges all considerations whatever which do not minister to its repose and the good it enjoys to keep far away.

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#### NOTE.

THE soul in this state is become so great an enemy of the lower part, and its operations, that it would have God communicate nothing to it when He communicates with the higher. If He will communicate with the lower, it must be in a slight degree, or the soul, because of its natural weakness, will be unable to endure it without fainting, and consequently the spirit cannot rejoice in

peace, because it is then troubled. ‘For,’ as the wise man says, ‘the body that is corrupted burdeneth the soul.’\* And as the soul longs for the highest and noblest converse with God, which is impossible in the company of the sensual part, it begs of God to deal with it without the intervention of the senses. That sublime vision of St. Paul in the third heaven, wherein, he says, he saw God, but yet knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body, must have been, be it what it may, independent of the body: for if the body had any share in it, he must have known it, and the vision could not have been what it was, seeing that he ‘heard secret words which it is not lawful for a man to speak.’† The soul, therefore, knowing well that graces so great cannot be received in a vessel so mean, and longing to receive them out of the body, or at least without it, addresses the Bridegroom in the words that follow:—

### STANZA XIX.

*Hide Thyself, O my Beloved !  
Turn Thy face to the mountains.  
Do not speak,  
But regard the companions  
Of her who is travelling amidst strange islands.*

HERE the bride presents four petitions to the Bridegroom: She prays that He would be pleased to converse with her most interiorly in the secret chamber of the soul. The second, that He would invest and inform her faculties with the glory and excellence of His Divinity. The third, that He would converse with her so profoundly as to surpass all knowledge and expression, and in such a

\* Wisd. ix. 15.

† 2 Cor. xii. 2—4.

way that the exterior and sensual part may not perceive it. The fourth, that He would love the many virtues and graces which He has implanted in her, adorned with which she is ascending upwards to God in the highest knowledge of the Divinity, and in transports of love most strange and singular, surpassing those of ordinary experience.

‘Hide Thyself, O my Beloved!’

2. O my Bridegroom, most beloved, hide Thyself in the inmost depths of my soul, communicating Thyself to it in secret, and manifesting Thy hidden wonders which no mortal eyes may see.

‘Turn Thy face to the mountains.’

3. The face of God is His Divinity. The mountains are the powers of the soul, memory, understanding, and will. Thus the meaning of these words is: Enlighten my understanding with Thy Divinity, and give it the divine intelligence, fill my will with divine love, and my memory with divine possession of glory. The bride here prays for all that may be prayed for; for she is not content with that knowledge of God once granted to Moses\*—the knowledge of Him by His works—for she prays to see the face of God, which is the essential communication of His Divinity to the soul, without any intervening medium, by a certain knowledge thereof in the Divinity. This is something beyond sense, and divested of accidents, inasmuch as it is the contact of pure substances, that is, of the soul and the Divinity.

‘Do not speak.’

4. That is, do not speak as before, when Thy converse

\* Exod. xxxiii. 23.

with me was known to the outward senses, for it was once such as to be comprehended by them ; it was not so profound but they could fathom it. Now let Thy converse with me be so deep and so substantial, and so interior, as to be above the reach of the senses ; for the substance of the spirit is incommunicable to sense, and the communication made through the senses, especially in this life, cannot be purely spiritual, because the senses are not capable of it. The soul, therefore, longing for that substantial and essential communication of God, of which sense cannot be cognizant, prays the Bridegroom not to speak : that is to say, let the deep secret of the spiritual union be such as to escape the notice of the senses, like the secret which St. Paul heard, and which it is not lawful for a man to speak.\*

‘ But regard the companions.’

5. The regard of God is love and grace. The companions here are the many virtues of the soul, its gifts, perfections, and other spiritual graces with which God has endowed it ; pledges, tokens, and presents of its betrothal. Thus the meaning of the words seems to be this : Turn Thou Thy face to the interior of my soul, O my Beloved, be enamoured of the treasures which Thou hast laid up there, so that, enamoured of them, Thou mayest hide Thyself among them and there dwell ; for in truth, though they are Thine, they are mine also, because Thou hast given them.

‘ Of her who travels amidst strange islands.’

6. That is, of my soul tending towards Thee through strange knowledge of Thee, by strange ways—strange to

\* 2 Cor. xii. 4.

sense and to the ordinary perceptions of nature. It is as if the bride said, by way of constraining Him to yield : Seeing that my soul is tending towards Thee through knowledge which is spiritual, strange, unknown to sense, do Thou also communicate Thyself to it so interiorly and so profoundly that the senses may not observe it.

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#### NOTE.

IN order to the attainment of a state of perfection so high as this of the spiritual marriage, the soul that aims at it must not only be purified and cleansed from all the imperfections, rebellions, and imperfect habits of the inferior part, which is now—the old man being put away—subject and obedient to the higher, but it must also have great courage and most exalted love for so strong and close an embrace of God. For in this state the soul not only attains to exceeding pureness and beauty, but also acquires a terrible strength by reason of that strict and close bond which in this union binds it to God. The soul, therefore, in order to reach this state, must have purity, strength and adequate love. The Holy Ghost, the author of this spiritual union, desirous that the soul should attain thus far in order to merit it, addresses Himself to the Father and the Son, saying : ‘ Our sister is little, and hath no breasts. What shall we do to our sister in the day when she is to be spoken to ? If she be a wall, let us build upon it bulwarks of silver ; if she be a door, let us join it together with boards of cedar.’\*

\* Cant. viii. 8.

2. The 'bulwarks of silver' are the strong heroic virtues comprised in the faith, which is signified by silver, and these heroic virtues are those of the spiritual marriage, which are built upon the soul, signified by the wall, relying on the strength of which, the peaceful Bridegroom reposes undisturbed by any infirmities. The 'boards of cedar' are the affections and accessories of this deep love which is signified by the cedar-tree, and this is the love of the spiritual marriage. In order 'to join it together,' that is, to adorn the bride, it is necessary she should be the door for the Bridegroom to enter through, keeping the door of the will open in a perfect and true consent of love, which is the consent of the betrothal given previous to the spiritual marriage. The breasts of the bride are also this perfect love which she must have in order to appear in the presence of Christ her Bridegroom for the perfection of such a state.

3. It is written in the Canticle that the bride in her longing for this presence, immediately replied, saying: 'I am a wall: and my breasts are as a tower.' That is, my soul is strong and my love most deep; that He may not fail her on that ground. The bride, too, had expressed as much in the preceding stanzas, out of the fulness of her longing for the perfect union and transformation, and particularly in the last, wherein she set before the Bridegroom all the virtues, graces, and good dispositions with which she was adorned by Him, and that with the object of making Him the prisoner of her love.

4. Now the Bridegroom, to bring this matter to a close, replies in the two stanzas that follow, which



describe Him as perfectly purifying the soul, strengthening and disposing it, both as to its sensual and spiritual part for this state and charging all resistance and rebellion, both of the flesh and of the devil, to cease, saying :—

## STANZAS XX., XXI.

### THE BRIDEGROOM.

*Light-winged birds,  
Lions, fawns, bounding does,  
Mountains, valleys, strands,  
Waters, winds, heat,  
And the terrors that keep watch by night ;*

*By the soft lyres  
And siren strains, I adjure you,  
Let your fury cease,  
And touch not the wall,  
That the bride may sleep in greater security.*

HERE the Son of God, the Bridegroom, leads the bride into the enjoyment of peace, and tranquillity in the conformity of her lower to her higher nature, purging away all her imperfections, subjecting the natural powers of the soul to reason, and mortifying all her desires, as it is expressed in these two stanzas, the meaning of which is as follows. In the first place the Bridegroom adjures and commands all vain distractions of the fancy and imagination from henceforth to cease, and controls the irascible and concupiscible faculties which were hitherto the sources of so much affliction. He brings, so far as it is possible in this life, the three powers of memory, understanding, and will, to the perfection of their objects, and

then adjures and commands the four passions of the soul, joy, hope, grief, and fear, to be still, and bids them from henceforth be moderate and calm.

2. All these passions and faculties are comprehended under the expressions employed in the first stanza, the operations of which, full of trouble, the Bridegroom subdues by that great sweetness, joy, and courage, which the bride enjoys in the spiritual surrender of Himself to her which God makes at this time; under the influence of which, because God transforms the soul effectually in Himself, all the faculties, desires and movements of the soul lose their natural imperfection and become divine.

‘Light-winged birds.’

3. These are the distractions of the imagination, light and rapid in their flight from one subject to another. When the will is tranquilly enjoying the sweet converse of the Beloved, these distractions produce weariness, and in their swift flight quench its joy. The Bridegroom adjures them by the soft lyres. That is, now that the sweetness of the soul is so abundant and so continuous that they cannot interfere with it, as they did before when it had not reached this state, He adjures them, and bids them cease from their disquieting violence. The same explanation is to be given of the rest of the stanza.

‘Lions, fawns, bounding does.’

4. By the lions is meant the raging violence of the irascible faculty, which in its acts is bold and daring as a lion. The ‘fawns and bounding does’ are the concupiscible faculty, that is, the power of desire, the qualities of which are two, timidity and rashness. Timidity

betrays itself when things do not turn out according to our wishes, for then the mind retires within itself discouraged, and in this respect the soul resembles the fawns. For as fawns have the concupiscible faculty stronger than many other animals, so are they more retiring and more timid. Rashness betrays itself when we have our own way, for the mind is then neither retiring nor timid, but desires boldly, and gratifies all its inclinations. This quality of rashness is compared to the does, who so eagerly seek what they desire that they not only run but even leap after it ; hence they are described as bounding does.

5. Thus the Bridegroom, in adjuring the lions, restrains the violence and controls the fury of rage ; in adjuring the fawns, He strengthens the concupiscible faculty against timidity and irresolution ; and in adjuring the does, He satisfies and subdues the desires which were restless before, leaping, like deer, from one object to another, to satisfy that concupiscence which is now satisfied by the soft lyres, the sweetness of which it enjoys, and by the siren strains, in the delight of which it revels.

6. But the Bridegroom does not adjure anger and concupiscence themselves, because these passions never cease from the soul—but their vexatious and disorderly acts, signified by the ‘lions, fawns, and bounding does,’ for it is necessary that these disorderly acts should cease in this state.

‘Mountains, valleys, strands.’

7. These are the vicious and disorderly actions of the three faculties of the soul—memory, understanding, and

will. These actions are disorderly and vicious when they are in extremes, or, if not in extreme, tending to one extreme or other. Thus the mountains signify those actions which are vicious in excess, mountains being high ; the valleys, being low, signify those which are vicious in the extreme of defect. Strands, which are neither high nor low, but inasmuch as they are not perfectly level, tend to one extreme or other, signify those acts of the three powers of the soul which depart slightly in either direction from the true mean and equality of justice. These actions, though not disorderly in the extreme, as they would be if they amounted to mortal sin, are nevertheless disorderly in part, tending towards venial sin or imperfection, however slight that tendency may be, in the understanding, memory, and will. He adjures also all these actions which depart from the true mean, and bids them cease before the soft lyres and the siren strains, which so effectually charm the powers of the soul as to occupy them completely in their true and proper functions, so that they avoid not only all extremes, but also the slightest tendency to them.

‘ Waters, winds, heat, and the terrors  
that keep watch by night.’

8. These are the affections of the four passions, grief, hope, joy, and fear. The waters are the affections of grief which afflict the soul, for they rush into it like water. ‘ Save me, O God,’ saith the Psalmist, ‘ for the waters are come in even unto my soul.’\* The winds are the affections of hope, for they rush forth like wind, desiring that which is not present but hoped for, as the Psalmist saith :

\* Ps. lxxviii, 2.

‘I opened my mouth and drew breath : because I longed for Thy commandments.’\* That is, I opened the mouth of my hope, and drew in the wind of desire, because I hoped and longed for Thy commandments. Heat is the affections of joy which, like fire, inflame the heart, as it is written : ‘My heart waxed hot within me ; and in my meditation a fire shall burn ;’† that is, while I meditate I shall have joy.

9. The ‘terrors that keep watch by night’ are the affections of fear, which in spiritual persons who have not attained to the state of spiritual marriage are usually exceedingly strong. They come sometimes from God when He is going to bestow certain great graces upon souls, as I said before ;‡ He is wont then to fill the mind with dread, to make the flesh tremble and the senses numb, because nature is not made strong and perfect and prepared for these graces. They come also at times from the evil spirit, who, out of envy and malignity, when he sees a soul sweetly recollected in God, labours to disturb its tranquillity by exciting horror and dread, in order to destroy so great a blessing, and sometimes utters his threats, as it were in the interior of the soul. But when he finds that he cannot penetrate within the soul, because it is so recollected, and so united with God, he strives at least in the province of sense, to produce exterior distractions and inconstancy, sensible pains and horrors, if perchance he may in this way disturb the soul in the bridal chamber.

10. These are called terrors of the night, because they are the work of evil spirits, and because satan labours, by the help thereof, to involve the soul in darkness, and to

\* Ps. cxviii. 131.

† Ps. xxxviii. 4.

‡ Stanza xiii. § 4.

obscure the divine light wherein it rejoiceth. These terrors are called watchers, because they awaken the soul and rouse it from its sweet interior slumber, and also because satan, their author, is ever on the watch to produce them. These terrors strike the soul of persons who are already spiritual, passively, and come either from God or the evil spirit. I do not refer to temporal or natural terrors, because spiritual men are not subject to these, as they are to those of which I am speaking.

II. The Beloved adjures the affections of these four passions, compels them to cease and to be at rest, because He supplies the bride now with force, and courage, and satisfaction, by the soft lyres of His sweetness and the siren strains of His delight, so that not only they shall not domineer over the soul, but shall not occasion it any distaste whatever. Such is the grandeur and stability of the soul in this state, that, although formerly the waters of grief overwhelmed it, because of its own or other men's sins—which is what spiritual persons most feel—the consideration of them now excites neither pain nor annoyance; even the sensible feeling of compassion exists not now, though the effects of it continue in perfection. The weaknesses of its virtues are no longer in the soul, for they are now constant, strong, and perfect. As the angels perfectly appreciate all sorrowful things without the sense of pain, and perform acts of mercy without the sentiment of pity, so the soul in this transformation of love. God, however, dispenses sometimes, on certain occasions, with the soul in this matter, allowing it to feel and suffer, that it may become more fervent in love, and grow in merit, or for some other



reasons, as He dispensed with His Virgin Mother, St. Paul, and others. This, however, is not the ordinary condition of this state.

12. Neither do the desires of hope afflict the soul now, because, satisfied in its union with God, so far as it is possible in this life, it has nothing of this world to hope for, and nothing spiritual to desire, seeing that it feels itself to be full of the riches of God, though it may grow in charity, and thus, whether living or dying, it is conformed to the will of God, saying with the sense and spirit, 'Thy will be done,' free from the violence of inclination and desires; and accordingly even its longing for the beatific vision is without pain.

13. The affections of joy, also, which were wont to move the soul with more or less vehemence, are not sensibly diminished; neither does their abundance occasion any surprise. The joy of the soul is now so abundant, that it is like the sea, which is not diminished by the rivers that flow out of it, nor increased by those that empty themselves into it; for the soul is now that fountain of which our Lord said, that it is 'springing up into life everlasting.'\*

14. I have said that the soul receives nothing new or unusual in this state of transformation; it seems to lose all accidental joy, which is not withheld even from the glorified. That is, accidental joys and sweetness are indeed no strangers to this soul; yea, rather, those which it ordinarily has cannot be numbered; yet, for all this, as to the substantial communication of the spirit, there is no increase of joy, for that which may occur anew the

\* St. John iv. 14.

soul possesses already, and thus what the soul has already within itself is greater than anything that comes anew. Hence, then, whenever any subject of joy and gladness, whether exterior or spiritually interior, presents itself to the soul, the soul betakes itself forthwith to rejoicing in the riches it possesses already within itself, and the joy it has in them is far greater than any which these new accessions minister, because, in a certain sense, God is become its possession, Who, though He delights in all things, yet in nothing so much as in Himself, seeing that He has all good eminently in Himself. Thus all accessions of joy serve to remind the soul that its real joy is in its interior possessions, rather than in these accidental causes, because, as I have said, the former are greater than the latter.

15. It is very natural for the soul, even when a particular matter gives it pleasure, that, possessing another of greater worth and gladness, it should remember it at once and take its pleasure in it. The accidental character of these spiritual accessions, and the new impressions they make on the soul, may be said to be as nothing in comparison with that substantial source which it has within itself; for the soul which has attained to the perfect transformation, and is fullgrown, grows no more in this state by means of these spiritual accessions, as those souls do who have not yet advanced so far. It is a marvellous thing that the soul, while it receives no accessions of delight, should still seem to do so and also to have been in possession of them. The reason is that it is always tasting them anew, because they are ever renewed; and thus it seems to be continually the recipient

of new accessions, while it has no need of them whatever.

16. But if we speak of that light of glory which in this, the soul's embrace, God sometimes produces within it, and which is a certain spiritual communion wherein He causes it to behold and enjoy at the same time the abyss of delight and riches which He has laid up within it, there is no language to express any degree of it. As the sun when it shines upon the sea illumines its great depths, and reveals the pearls, and gold, and precious stones therein, so the divine sun of the Bridegroom, turning towards the bride, reveals in a way the riches of her soul, so that even the angels behold her with amazement and say: 'Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as the army of a camp set in array.'\* This illumination adds nothing to the grandeur of the soul, notwithstanding its greatness, because it merely reveals that which the soul already possessed in order that it might rejoice in it.

17. Finally, the terrors that keep watch by night do not come nigh unto her, because of her pureness, courage, and confident trust in God; the evil spirits cannot shroud her in darkness, nor alarm her with terrors, nor disturb her with their violent assaults. Thus nothing can approach her, nothing can molest her, for she has escaped from all created things and entered in to God, to the fruition of perfect peace, sweetness, and delight, so far as that is possible in this life. It is to this state that the words of Solomon are applicable: 'A secure mind is as it were a continual feast.'† As in a feast we have the

\* Cant. vi. 9.

† Prov. xv. 15.

savour of all meat, and the sweetness of all music, so in this feast, which the bride keeps in the bosom of her Beloved, the soul rejoices in all delight, and has the taste of all sweetness. All that I have said, and all that may be said, on this subject, will always fall short of that which passeth in the soul which has attained to this blessed state. For when it shall have attained to the peace of God, 'which,' in the words of the Apostle, 'surpasseth all understanding,'\* no description of its state is possible.

· 'By the soft lyres and the siren strains I adjure you.'

18. The soft lyres are the sweetness which the Bridegroom communicates to the soul in this state, and by which He makes all its troubles to cease. As the music of lyres fills the soul with sweetness and delight, carries it rapturously out of itself, so that it forgets all its weariness and grief, so in like manner this sweetness so absorbs the soul that nothing painful can reach it. The Bridegroom says, in substance: By that sweetness which I give thee, let all thy bitterness cease. The siren strains are the ordinary joys of the soul. These are called siren strains because, as it is said, the music of the sirens is so sweet and delicious, that he who hears it is so rapt and so carried out of himself, that he forgets everything. In the same way the soul is so absorbed in, and refreshed by, the delight of this union, that it becomes, as it were, charmed against all the vexations and troubles that may assail it; it is to these the next words of the stanza refer:

· Let your fury cease.'

19. This is the troubles and anxieties which flow from unruly acts and affections. As anger is a certain violence

\* Philipp. iv. 7.

which disturbs peace, overleaping its bounds, so also all these affections in their motions transgress the bounds of the peace and tranquillity of the soul, disturbing it whenever they touch it. Hence the Bridegroom says :

‘ And touch not the wall.’

20. The wall is the territory of peace and the fortress of virtue and perfections, which are the defences and protection of the soul. The soul is the garden wherein the Beloved feeds among the flowers, defended and guarded for Him alone. Hence it is called in the Canticle ‘ a garden enclosed.’\* The Bridegroom bids all disorderly emotions not to touch the territory and wall of His garden.

21. ‘ That the bride may sleep in greater security.’ That is, that she is delighting herself with more sweetness in the tranquillity and sweetness she has in the Beloved. That is to say, that now no door is shut against the soul, and that it is in its power to abandon itself whenever it wills to this sweet sleep of love, according to the words of the Bridegroom in the Canticle, ‘ I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and the harts of the fields, that you raise not up nor make the beloved to awake till herself will.’†

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#### NOTE.

THE Bridegroom was so anxious to rescue His bride from the power of the flesh and the devil and to set her free, that, having done so, He rejoices over her like the good

\* Cant. iv. 12.

† Cant. iii. 5.

shepherd, who, having found the sheep that was lost, laid it upon his shoulders rejoicing; like the woman who, having found the money she had lost, after lighting a candle and sweeping the house, called ‘together her friends and neighbours, saying: Rejoice with me.’\* So this loving Shepherd and Bridegroom of souls shows a marvellous joy and delight when He beholds a soul gained to perfection lying on His shoulders, and by His hands held fast in the longed-for embrace and union. He is not alone in His joy, for He makes the angels and the souls of the blessed partakers of His glory, saying, as in the Canticle, ‘Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see king Solomon in the diadem wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of this betrothal, and in the day of the joy of his heart.’† He calls the soul His crown, His bride, and the joy of His heart: He carries it in His arms, and as a bridegroom leads it into His bridal chamber, as we shall see in the following stanza:—

### STANZA XXII.

*The bride has entered  
The pleasant and desirable garden,  
And there reposes to her heart's content;  
Her neck reclining  
On the sweet arms of the Beloved.*

THE bride having done what she could in order that the foxes may be caught, the north wind cease, the nymphs, hindrances to the desired joy of the state of spiritual marriage, forego their troublesome importunities, and having also invoked and obtained the favourable wind of

\* St. Luke xv. 5, 8, 9.

† Cant. iii. 11.



the Holy Ghost, which is the right disposition and means for the perfection of this state, it remains for me now to speak of it in the stanza in which the Bridegroom calls the soul His bride, and speaks of two things:—1. He says that the soul having gone forth victoriously, has entered the delectable state of spiritual marriage, which they had both so earnestly desired. 2. He enumerates the properties of that state, into the fruition of which the soul has entered, namely, perfect repose, and the resting of the neck on the arms of the Beloved.

‘The bride has entered.’

2. For the better understanding of the arrangement of these stanzas, and of the way by which the soul advances till it reaches the state of spiritual marriage, which is the very highest, and of which, by the grace of God, I am now about to treat, we must keep in mind that the soul, before it enters it, must be tried in tribulations, in sharp mortifications, and in meditation on spiritual things. This is the subject of this canticle till we come to the fifth stanza, beginning with the words: ‘A thousand graces diffusing.’ Then the soul enters on the contemplative life, passing through those ways and straits of love which are described in the course of the canticle, till we come to the thirteenth, beginning with ‘Turn them away, O my Beloved!’ This is the moment of the spiritual betrothal; and then the soul advances by the unitive way, the recipient of many and very great communications, jewels and gifts from the Bridegroom as to one betrothed, and grows into perfect love, as appears from the stanzas which follow that beginning with ‘Turn them away, O my

Beloved!' the moment of betrothal, to the present, beginning with the words :

‘ The bride has entered.’

3. The spiritual marriage of the soul and the Son of God now remains to be accomplished. This is, beyond all comparison, a far higher state than that of betrothal, because it is a complete transformation into the Beloved ; whereby they surrender each to the other the entire possession of themselves in the perfect union of love, wherein the soul becomes divine, and, by participation, God, so far as it is possible in this life. I believe that no soul ever attains to this state without being confirmed in grace, for the faithfulness of both is confirmed ; that of God being confirmed in the soul. Hence it follows, that this is the very highest state possible in this life. As by natural marriage there are ‘ two in one flesh,’\* so also in the spiritual marriage between God and the soul there are two natures in one spirit and love, as we learn from St. Paul, who made use of the same metaphor, saying : ‘ He that cleaveth to our Lord is one spirit.’† So, when the light of a star, or of a candle, is united to that of the sun, the light is not that of the star, nor of the candle, but of the sun itself, which absorbs all other light in its own.

4. It is of this state that the Bridegroom is now speaking, saying : ‘ The bride has entered ;’ that is, out of all temporal and natural things, out of all spiritual affections, ways, and methods, having left on one side, and forgotten, all temptations, trials, sorrows, anxieties, and cares, transformed in this embrace.

\* Genes. ii. 24.

† 1 Cor. vi. 17.

‘ The pleasant and desirable garden.’

5. That is, the soul is transformed in God, Who is here called the pleasant garden because of the delicious and sweet repose which the soul finds in Him. But the soul does not enter the garden of perfect transformation, the glory and the joy of the spiritual marriage, without passing first through the spiritual betrothal, the mutual faithful love of the betrothed. When the soul has lived for some time as the bride of the Son, in perfect and sweet love, God calls it and leads it into His flourishing garden for the celebration of the spiritual marriage. Then the two natures are so united, what is divine is so communicated to what is human, that, without undergoing any essential change, each seems to be God—yet not perfectly so in this life, though still in a manner which can neither be described nor conceived.

6. We learn this truth very clearly from the Bridegroom Himself in the Canticle, where He invites the soul, now His bride, to enter this state, saying: ‘ I am come into my garden, O my sister, my bride: I have gathered my myrrh with my aromatical spices.’\* He calls the soul His sister, His bride, for it is such in love by that surrender which it has made of itself before He had called it to the state of spiritual marriage, when, as He says, He gathered His myrrh with His aromatical spices; that is, the fruits of flowers now ripe and made ready for the soul, which are the delights and grandeurs communicated to it by Himself in this state, that is Himself, and for which He is the pleasant and desirable garden.

7. The whole aim and desire of the soul and of God,

\* Cant. v. I.

in all this, is the accomplishment and perfection of this state, and the soul is therefore never weary till it reaches it; because it finds there a much greater abundance and fulness in God, a more secure and lasting peace, and a sweetness incomparably more perfect than in the spiritual betrothal, seeing that it reposes between the arms of such a Bridegroom, whose spiritual embraces are so real that it, through them, lives the life of God. Now is fulfilled what St. Paul referred to when he said: 'I live; now not I, but Christ liveth in me.'\* And now that the soul lives a life so happy and so glorious, as it is the life of God, consider what a sweet life it must be—a life where God sees nothing displeasing, and where the soul finds nothing irksome, but rather the glory and delight of God in the very substance of itself, now transformed in Him.

'And there reposes to her heart's content;

her neck reclining on the sweet arms of the Beloved.'

8. The neck is the soul's strength, by means of which its union with the Beloved is wrought; for the soul could not endure so close an embrace if it had not been very strong. And as the soul has laboured in this strength, practised virtue, evercome vice, it is fitting that it should rest there from its labours, 'her neck reclining on the sweet arms of the Beloved.'

9. This reclining of the neck on the arms of God is the union of the soul's strength, or, rather, of the soul's weakness, with the strength of God, in Whom our weakness, resting and transformed, puts on the strength of God Himself. The state of spiritual matrimony is therefore most fitly designated by the reclining of the

\* Galat. ii. 20.

neck on the sweet arms of the Beloved ; seeing that God is the strength and sweetness of the soul, Who guards and defends it from all evil, and gives it to taste of all good.

10. Hence the bride in the Canticle, longing for this state, saith to the Bridegroom : ‘ Who shall give to me Thee my brother, sucking the breast of my mother, that I may find Thee without, and kiss Thee, and now no man despise me.’\* By addressing Him as her Brother she shows the equality between them in the betrothal of love, before she entered the state of spiritual marriage. ‘ Sucking the breast of my mother ’ signifies the drying up of the passions and desires, which are the breasts and milk of our mother Eve in our flesh, which are a bar to this state. The ‘ finding Him without ’ is to find Him in detachment from all things and from self when the bride is in solitude, spiritually detached, which takes place when all the desires are quenched. ‘ And kiss Thee,’ that is, be united with the Bridegroom, alone with Him alone.

11. This is the union of the nature of the soul, in solitude, cleansed from all impurity, natural, temporal, and spiritual, with the Bridegroom alone, with His nature, by love only—of that love which is the only love of the spiritual marriage, wherein the soul, as it were, kisses God when none despises it nor makes it afraid. For in this state the soul is no longer molested, either by the devil, or the flesh, or the world, or the desires, seeing that here is fulfilled what is written in the Canticle : ‘ Winter is now past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land.’†

\* Cant. viii. 1.

† Cant. ii. 11, 12.

## NOTE.

WHEN the soul has been raised to the high state of spiritual marriage, the Bridegroom reveals to it, as His faithful consort, His own marvellous secrets most readily and most frequently, for he who truly and sincerely loves hides nothing from the object of his affections. The chief matter of His communications are the sweet mysteries of His incarnation, the ways and means of redemption, which is one of the highest works of God, and so is to the soul one of the sweetest. Though He communicates many other mysteries, He speaks in the following stanza of His incarnation only, as being the chief; and thus addresses the soul in the words that follow :

## STANZA XXIII.

*Beneath the apple-tree,  
There wert thou betrothed,  
There I gave thee My hand,  
And thou wert redeemed  
Where thy mother was corrupted.*

THE Bridegroom tells the soul of the wondrous way of its redemption and betrothal to Himself, by referring to the way in which the human race was lost. As it was by the forbidden tree of paradise that our nature was corrupted in Adam and lost, so it was by the tree of the Cross that it was redeemed and restored. The Bridegroom there stretched forth the hand of His grace and mercy, in His death and passion, 'making void the law of



commandments'\* which original sin had placed between us and God.

‘Beneath the apple-tree.’

2. That is the wood of the Cross, where the Son of God was conqueror, and where He betrothed our human nature to Himself, and, by consequence, every soul of man. There, on the Cross, He gave us grace and pledges of His love.

‘There wert thou betrothed,  
there I gave thee My hand;’

3. Help and grace, lifting thee up out of thy base and miserable condition to be My companion and My bride.

‘And thou wert redeemed  
where thy mother was corrupted.’

4. Thy mother, human nature, was corrupted in her first parents beneath the forbidden tree, and thou wert redeemed beneath the tree of the Cross. If thy mother at that tree sentenced thee to die, I from the Cross have given thee life. It is thus that God reveals the order and dispositions of His wisdom: eliciting good from evil, and turning that which has its origin in evil to be an instrument of greater good. This stanza is nearly word for word what the Bridegroom in the Canticle saith to the bride: ‘Under the apple-tree I raised thee up: there thy mother was corrupted; there she was deflowered that bare thee.’†

5. It is not the betrothal of the Cross that I am speaking of now—that takes place, once for all, when

\* Ephes. ii. 15.

† Cant. viii. 5.

God gives the first grace to the soul in baptism. I am speaking of the betrothal in the way of perfection, which is a progressive work. And though both are but one, yet there is a difference between them. The latter is effected in the way of the soul, and therefore slowly; the former in the way of God, and therefore at once.

6. The betrothal of which I am speaking is that of which God speaks Himself by the mouth of the prophet Ezechiel, saying: 'Thou wert cast out upon the face of the earth in the abjection of thy soul, in the day that thou wert born. And passing by thee, I saw that thou wert trodden under foot in thy blood; and I said to thee when thou wert in thy blood: Live: I said to thee, I say; in thy blood live. Multiplied as the spring of the field have I made thee; and thou wert multiplied and made great, and thou wentest in, and camest to the ornaments of women; thy breasts swelled and thy hair budded: and thou wert naked and full of confusion. And I passed by thee and saw thee, and behold thy time, the time of lovers; and I spread My garment over thee, and covered thy ignominy. And I swore to thee; and I entered a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God; and thou wert made Mine. And I washed thee with water, and made clean thy blood from off thee: and I anointed thee with oil. And I clothed thee with divers colours, and shod thee with hyscynth, and I girded thee with silk and clothed thee with fine garments. And I adorned thee with ornaments, and put bracelets on thy hands, and a chain about thy neck. And I put a jewel upon thy forehead and rings in thy ears, and a crown of beauty on thy head. And thou wert adorned with gold and silver, and wert

clothed with silk, and embroidered work, and many colours: thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil, and wert made beautiful exceedingly, and advanced to be a queen. And thy name went forth among the nations because of thy beauty.’\* These are the words of Ezechiel, and this is the state of that soul of which I am now speaking.

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## NOTE.

AFTER the mutual surrender to each other of the bride and the Beloved, comes their bed. Thereon the bride enters into the joy of Christ. Thus the present stanza refers to the bed, which is pure and chaste, and divine, and in which the bride is pure, divine, and chaste. The bed is nothing else but the Bridegroom Himself, the Word, the Son of God, in Whom, through the union of love, the bride reposes. This bed is said to be of flowers, for the Bridegroom is not only that, but, as He says Himself of Himself, ‘I am the flower of the field and the lily of the valleys.’† The soul reposes not only on the bed of flowers, but on that very flower which is the Son of God, and which contains in itself the divine odour, fragrance, grace, and beauty, as He saith by the mouth of David: ‘With me is the beauty of the field.’‡ The soul, therefore, in the stanza that follows, celebrates the properties and beauties of its bed, saying:—

\* Ezech. xvi. 5-14.

† Cant. ii. 1.

‡ Ps. xlix. 11.

## STANZA XXIV.

## THE BRIDE.

*Our bed is of flowers  
 By dens of lions encompassed,  
 Hung with purple,  
 Made in peace,  
 And crowned with a thousand shields of gold.*

IN two of the foregoing stanzas—the fourteenth and the fifteenth—the bride-soul celebrated the grace and magnificence of the Beloved, the Son of God. In the present stanza she not only pursues the same subject, but also sings of her high and blessed state, and her own security in it. She then proceeds to the virtues and rich gifts with which she is endowed and adorned in the chamber of the Bridegroom; for she says that she is in union with Him, and is strong in virtue. Next she says that she has attained to the perfection of love, and then that she enjoys perfect spiritual peace, endowed and adorned with gifts and graces, so far as it is possible to have them in this life. The first subject of the stanza is the joy which the bride feels in her union with the Beloved, saying:—

‘Our bed is of flowers.’

2. I have already said that this bed of the soul is the bosom and love of the Son of God, full of flowers to the soul, which now united to God and reposing in Him, as His bride, shares the bosom and love of the Beloved. That is, the soul is admitted to a knowledge of the wisdom, secrets and graces, and gifts and powers of God, whereby it is made so beautiful, so rich, so abounding in delights, that it seems

to be lying on a bed of many-coloured divine flowers, the touch of which makes it thrill with joy, and the odours of which refresh it.

3. This union of love with God is therefore most appropriately called a bed of flowers, and is so called by the bride in the Canticle, saying to the Beloved: 'Our bed is of flowers.'\* She speaks of it as ours, because the virtues and the love, one and the same, of the Beloved are common to both together, and the delight of both is one and the same; as it is written: 'My delights were to be with the children of men.'† The bed is said to be of flowers, because in this state the virtues in the soul are perfect and heroic, which they could not be until the bed had flowered in perfect union with God.

'By dens of lions encompassed.'

4. The dens of lions signify the virtues with which the soul is endowed in the state of union. The dens of lions are safe retreats, protected from all other animals, who, afraid of the boldness and strength of the lion within, are afraid not only to enter, but even to appear in sight. So each virtue of the soul in the state of perfection is like a den of lions where Christ dwells united to the soul in that virtue; and in every one of them as a strong lion. The soul also, united to Him in those very virtues, is as a strong lion, because it then partakes of the perfections of God.

5. Thus, then, the perfect soul is so defended, so strong in virtue, and in all virtues together, reposing on the flowery bed of its union with God, that the evil spirits are not only afraid to assault it, but even dare not appear before it; such is their dread of it, when they behold it

\* Cant. i. 15.

† Prov. viii. 31.

strong, courageous, and mature in its perfect virtues, on the bed of the Beloved. The evil spirits fear a soul transformed in the union of love as much as they fear the Beloved Himself, and they dare not look upon it, for satan is in great fear of that soul which has attained to perfection.

6. The soul's bed is encompassed by virtues: they are the dens, for when the soul has advanced to perfection, its virtues are so perfectly ordered, and so joined together and bound up one with another, each supporting the other, that no part of it is weak or exposed; not only is satan unable to penetrate within it, but even worldly things, whether great or little, fail to disturb or annoy it, or even move it; for being now free from all molestation of natural affections, and a stranger to the worry of temporal anxieties, enjoys in security and peace the participation of God.

7. This is that for which the bride longed when she said: 'Who shall give to me Thee my brother, sucking the breast of my mother, that I may find Thee without, and kiss Thee, and now no man despise me?''\* The 'kiss' here is the union of which I am speaking, whereby the soul, by love, becomes in a sense the equal of God. This is the object it desires when it says: 'Who shall give to me Thee my brother?' That means and makes equality. 'Sucking the breast of my mother;' that is, destroying all the imperfections and desires of nature which the soul inherits from its mother Eve. 'That I may find Thee without;' that is, be united to Thee alone, away from all things, in detachment of the will and

\* Cant. viii. 1.



desires. 'And now no man despise me;' that is, the world, the devil, and the flesh will not venture to assail it, for being free and purified, and also united to God, none of these can molest it. Thus, then, the soul is in the enjoyment now of habitual sweetness and tranquillity that never fail it.

8. But beside this habitual contentment and peace, the flowers of the virtues of this garden so open in the soul and diffuse their odours, that it seems to be, and is, full of the delights of God. I say that the flowers open; because the soul, though filled with the virtues in perfection, is not always in the actual fruition of them, notwithstanding its habitual perception of the peace and tranquillity which they produce. We may say of these virtues that they are in this life like the budding flowers of a garden; they offer a most beautiful sight—opening under the inspirations of the Holy Ghost—and diffuse most marvellous perfumes in great variety.

9. Sometimes the soul will discern in itself the mountain flowers—the fulness, grandeur, and beauty of God—intermingled with the lilies of the valley—rest, refreshment, and defence; and again among them, the fragrant roses of the strange islands—the strange knowledge of God; and further, the perfume of the water lilies of the roaring torrents—the majesty of God filling the whole soul. And amid all this, it enjoys the exquisite fragrance of the jasmine, and the whisper of the amorous gales, the fruition of which is granted to the soul in the estate of union, and in the same way all the other virtues and graces, the calm knowledge, silent music, murmuring solitude, and the sweet supper of love; and the joy of all

this is such as to make the soul say in truth, 'Our bed is of flowers, by dens of lions encompassed.' Blessed is that soul which in this life deserves at times to enjoy the perfume of these divine flowers.

'Hung with purple.'

10. 'Purple in Holy Scripture means charity, and kings are clad in it, and for that reason the soul says that the bed of flowers is hung with purple, because all the virtues, riches, and blessings of it are sustained, flourish, and are delighted only in charity and love of the King of heaven; without that love the soul can never delight in the bed nor in the flowers thereof. All these virtues, therefore, are, in the soul, as if hung on the love of God, as on that which preserves them, and they are, as it were, bathed in love; for all and each of them always make the soul love God, and on all occasions, and in all actions, they advance in love to a greater love of God. That is what is meant by saying that the bed is hung with purple.

11. This is well expressed in the sacred Canticle: 'King Solomon hath made himself a litter of the wood of Libanus: the pillars thereof he hath made of silver, the seat of gold, the going up of purple; the midst he hath paved with charity.'\* The virtues and graces which God lays in the bed of the soul are signified by the wood of Libanus: the pillars of silver and the seat of gold are love; for, as I have said, the virtues are maintained by love, and by the love of God and of the soul are ordered and bring forth fruit.

'Made in peace.'

12. This is the fourth excellence of the bed, and depends on the third, of which I have just spoken.

\* Cant. iii. 9, 10.

For the third is perfect charity, the property of which is, as the Apostle saith, to cast out fear;\* hence the perfect peace of the soul, which is the fourth excellence of this bed. For the clearer understanding of this we must keep in mind that each virtue is in itself peaceful gentle, and strong, and consequently, in the soul which possesses them, produces peace, gentleness, and fortitude. Now, as the bed is of flowers, formed of the flowers of virtues, all of which are peaceful, gentle, and strong, it follows that the bed is wrought in peace, and the soul is peaceful, gentle, and strong, which are three qualities unassailable by the world, satan, and the flesh. The virtues preserve the soul in such peace and security that it seems to be wholly built up in peace. The fifth property of this bed of flowers is explained in the following words.

‘Crowned with a thousand shields of gold.’

13. The shields are the virtues and graces of the soul, which, though they are also the flowers, serve for its crown, and the reward of the toil by which they are acquired. They serve also, like strong shields, as a protection against the vices, which it overcame by the practice of them; and the bridal bed of flowers therefore, that is the virtues, the crown and defence, is adorned with them by way of reward, and protected by them as with a shield. The shields are said to be of gold, to show the great worth of the virtues. The bride in the Canticle sets forth the same truth, saying: ‘Three score valiant men of the most valiant of Israel surround the little bed of Solomon, all holding swords; . . . every man’s sword upon his thigh, because of fears in the night.’†

\* 1 St. John iv. 18.

† Cant. iii. 7, 8.

14. Thus in this stanza the bride speaks of a thousand shields, to express the variety of the virtues, gifts, and graces wherewith God has endowed the soul in this state. The Bridegroom also in the Canticle has employed the same expression, in order to show forth the innumerable virtues of the soul, saying: ‘Thy neck is as the tower of David, which is built with bulwarks; a thousand shields hang upon it, all the armour of valiant men.’\*

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NOTE.

THE soul, having attained to perfection, is not satisfied with magnifying and extolling the excellences of the Beloved, the Son of God, nor with recounting and giving thanks for the graces received at His hands and the joy into which it has entered, but recounts also the graces conferred on other souls. In this blessed union of love the soul is able to contemplate both its own and others’ graces; thus praising Him and giving Him thanks for the many graces bestowed upon others, it sings as in the following stanza:—

STANZA XXV.

*In Thy footsteps,  
The young ones run Thy way;  
At the touch of the fire,  
And by the spiced wine,  
The divine balsam flows.*

HERE the bride gives thanks to her Beloved for three graces which devout souls receive from Him, by which they encourage and excite themselves to love God more

\* Cant. iv. 4.

and more. She speaks of them here, because she has had experience of them herself in this state of union. The first is sweetness, which He gives them, and which is so efficacious that it makes them run swiftly on the road of perfection. The second is a visit of love, by which they are suddenly set on fire with love. The third is overflowing charity infused into them, with which He so inebriates them, that they are as much excited by it as by the visit of love, to utter the praises of God, and to love Him with all sweetness.

‘In Thy footsteps.’

2. These are the marks on the ground by which we trace the course of one we seek. The sweetness and knowledge of Himself which God communicates to the soul that seeks Him, are the footsteps by which it traces and recognises Him. Thus the soul says to the Word, the Bridegroom, ‘In Thy footsteps;’ in the traces of Thy sweetness which Thou diffuseth, and the odours which Thou scatterest.

‘The young ones run Thy way.’

3. Devout souls run with youthful vigour in the sweetness which Thy footsteps communicate. They run in many ways and in various directions—each according to the spirit which God bestows, and the vocation He has given—in the diversified forms of spiritual service on the road of everlasting life, which is evangelical perfection, where they meet the Beloved in the union of love, in spiritual detachment from all things.

4. This sweetness and impression of Himself which God leaves in the soul, render it light and active, in running after Him; for the soul then does little or

nothing in its own strength towards running along this road, being rather attracted by the divine footsteps, so that it not only advances, but even runs, as I said before, in many ways. The bride in the Cantic, therefore, prays for the divine attraction, saying: 'Draw me, we will run after Thee to the odour of Thy ointments;'\* and David saith: 'I have run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst dilate my heart.†

'At the touch of the fire, and by the spiced wine,  
the divine balsam flows.'

5. I said, while explaining the previous lines, that souls run in His footsteps in the way of exterior works. But the three lines I have just quoted refer to the interior acts of the will, when souls are under the influence of the other two graces and interior visits of the Beloved. These are the touch of fire, and spiced wine; and the interior act of the will, which is the result of these visits, is the flowing of the divine balsam. The contact of the fire is that most delicate touch of the Beloved which the soul feels at times even when least expecting it, and which sets the heart on fire with love, as if a spark of fire had fallen upon it and made it burn. Then the will, in an instant, like one roused from sleep, burns with the fire of love, longs for God, praises Him and gives Him thanks, worships and honours Him, and prays to Him in the sweetness of love.

6. This is the flowing of the divine balsam, which obeys the touch of the fire that issues forth from the consuming love of God which that fire kindled; the divine

\* Cant. i. 3. . . . . † Ps. cxviii. 32.



balsam which comforts the soul and heals it with its odour and its substance.

7. The bride in the Canticle speaks of this divine touch, saying: My Beloved put His hand through the opening, and my belly trembled at His touch.\* The touch of the Beloved is the touch of love, and His hand is the grace He bestows upon the soul, and the opening through which He put His hand is the vocation and the perfection, at least the degree of perfection of the soul; for according thereto will His touch be heavier or lighter, in proportion to its spiritual state. The belly that troubled is the will, in which the touch is effected, and the trembling is the stirring up of the desires and affections to love, long for, and praise God, which is the flowing of the balsam from this touch.

8. 'The spiced wine' is that exceeding great grace which God sometimes bestows upon advanced souls, when the Holy Spirit inebriates them with the sweet, luscious, and strong wine of love. Hence it is here called spiced wine, for as such wine is prepared by fermentation with many and divers aromatic and strengthening herbs; so this love, the gift of God to the perfect, is in the soul prepared and seasoned with the virtues already acquired. This love, seasoned with the precious spices, communicates to the soul such a strong abundant inebriation when God visits it, that it pours forth with great effect and force those acts of rapturous praise, love, and worship, which I referred to before, and that with a marvellous longing to labour and to suffer for Him.

9. This sweet inebriation and grace, however, do not

\* Cant. v. 4.

pass quickly away, like the touch of the fire, for they are of longer continuance. The fire touches and passes, but the effects abide often; and sometimes the spiced wine continues for a considerable time, and its effects also; this is the sweet love of the soul, and continues occasionally a day or two, sometimes even many days together, though not always in the same degree of intensity, because it is not in the power of the soul to control it. Sometimes the soul, without any effort of its own, is conscious of a most sweet interior inebriation, and of the divine love burning within, as David saith, ‘My heart waxed hot within me, and in my meditation a fire shall burn.’\*

10. The outpourings of this inebriation last sometimes as long as the inebriation itself. At other times there are no outpourings; and they are more or less intense when they occur, in proportion to the greater or less intensity of the inebriation itself. But the outpourings, or effects of the fire, generally last longer than the fire which caused them; yea, rather the fire leaves them behind in the soul, and they are more vehement than those which proceed from the inebriation, for sometimes this divine fire burns up and consumes the soul in love.

11. As I have mentioned fermented wine, it will be well to touch briefly upon the difference between it, when it is old, and new wine; the difference between old wine and new wine is the same, and will furnish a little instruction for spiritual men. New wine has not settled on the lees, and is therefore fermenting; we cannot ascertain its quality or worth before it has settled, and the fermentation has ceased, for until then there is great risk of its corrup-

\* Ps. xxxviii. 4.

tion. The taste of it is rough and sharp, and an immoderate draught of it intoxicates. Old wine has settled on the lees, and ferments no more like new wine; the quality of it is easily ascertained, and it is now very safe from corruption, for all fermentation which might have proved pernicious has entirely ceased. Well fermented wine is very rarely spoiled, the taste of it is pleasant, and its strength is in its own substance, not in the taste, and the drinking thereof produces health and a sound constitution.

12. New lovers are compared to new wine; these are beginners in the service of God, because the fervour of their love manifests itself outwardly in the senses; because they have not settled on the lees of sense, frail and imperfect; and because they measure the strength of love by the sweetness of it, for it is sensible sweetness that ordinarily gives them their strength for good works, and it is by this they are influenced; we must, therefore, place no confidence in this love till the fermentation has subsided, with the coarse satisfaction of sense.

13. For as these fervours and sensible warmth may incline men to good and perfect love, and serve as an excellent means thereto, when the lees of imperfections are cleared; so also is it very easy at first, when sensible sweetness is fresh, for the wine of love to fail, and the sweetness of the new to vanish. New lovers are always anxious, sensibly tormented by their love; it is necessary for them to put some restraint upon themselves, for if they are very active in the strength of this wine, their natural powers will be ruined with these anxieties and fatigues of the new wine, which is rough and sharp, and

not made sweet in the perfect fermentation, which then takes place when the anxieties of love are over, as I shall show immediately.

14. The Wise Man employs the same illustration; saying, 'A new friend is as new wine; it shall grow old, and thou shalt drink it with pleasure.'\* Old lovers, therefore, who have been tried and proved in the service of the Bridegroom, are like old wine settled on the lees; they have no sensible emotions, nor outbursts of exterior zeal, but they taste the sweetness of the wine of love, now thoroughly fermented, not sweet to the senses as was that of the love of beginners, but rather settled within the soul in the substance and sweetness of the spirit, and in perfect good works. Such souls as these do not seek after sensible sweetness and fervours, neither do they wish for them, lest they should suffer from loathing and weariness; for he who gives the reins to his desires in matters of sense, must of necessity suffer pain and loathing, both in mind and body.

15. Old lovers, therefore, free from that spiritual sweetness which has its roots in the senses, suffer neither in sense nor spirit from the anxieties of love, and thus scarcely ever prove faithless to God, because they have risen above that which might be an occasion of falling, namely, the flesh. These now drink of the wine of love, which is not only fermented and free from the lees, but spiced also with the aromatic herbs of perfect virtues, which will not allow it to corrupt, as may happen to new wine.

16. For this cause an old friend is of great price in the

\* Ecclus. ix. 15.

eyes of God, ‘Forsake not an old friend, for the new will not be like to him.’” It is through this wine of love, tried and spiced, that the divine Beloved produces in the soul that divine inebriation, under the influence of which it sends forth to God the sweet and delicious outpourings. The meaning of these three lines, therefore, is as follows : ‘At the touch of the fire’ by which Thou stirrest up the soul, and by the spiced wine with which Thou dost so lovingly inebriate it, the soul pours forth the acts and movements of love which are Thy work within it.

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NOTE.

SUCH, then, is the state of the blessed soul in the bed of flowers, where all these blessings, and many more, are granted it. The seat of that bed is the Son of God, and the hangings of it are the charity and love of the Bridegroom Himself. The soul now may say, with the bride : ‘His left hand is under my head,’† and we may therefore say, in truth, that such a soul is clothed in God, and bathed in the Divinity, and that, not as it were on the surface, but in the interior spirit, and filled with the divine delights in the abundance of the spiritual waters of life; for it experiences that which David says of those who have drawn near unto God, ‘They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them drink in the torrent of Thy pleasure, for with Thee is the fountain of life.’‡

2. This fulness will be in the very being of the soul,

\* Eccclus. ix. 14.

† Cant. ii. 6.

‡ Ps. xxxv. 9.

seeing that its drink is nothing else but the torrent of delights, and that torrent the Holy Spirit, as it is written: 'And he showed me a river of living water, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb.'\* This water being the very love itself of God, flows into the soul, so that it drinks of the torrent of love, which is the spirit of the Bridegroom infused into the soul in union. Thence the soul in the overflowing of its love sings the following stanza:

## STANZA XXVI.

*In the inner cellar  
Of my Beloved have I drunk; and when I went forth  
Over all the plain  
I knew nothing,  
And lost the flock I followed before.*

HERE the soul speaks of that sovereign grace of God in taking it to Himself into the house of His love, which is the union, or transformation of love in God. It describes two effects proceeding therefrom: forgetfulness of, and detachment from, all the things of this world, and the mortification of its tastes and desires.

'In the inner cellar.'

2. In order to explain in any degree the meaning of this, I have need of the special help of the Holy Ghost, to direct my hand and guide my pen. The cellar is the highest degree of love to which the soul may attain in this life, and is therefore said to be the inner. It follows from this that there are other cellars not so interior; that is, the degrees

\* Apoc. xxii. 1.



of love by which souls reach this, the last. These cellars are seven in number, and the soul has entered into them all when it has in perfection the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, so far as it is possible for it. When the soul has the spirit of fear in perfection, it has in perfection also the spirit of love, inasmuch as this fear, the last of the seven gifts, is filial fear, and the perfect fear of a son proceeds from his perfect love of his father. Thus when the Holy Scriptures speaks of one as having perfect charity, it says of him that he fears God. So the prophet Isaias, announcing the perfections of Christ, saith of Him: 'The spirit of the fear of the Lord shall replenish him.'\* Holy Simeon also is spoken of by the Evangelist as a 'just man full of fear,'† and the same applies to many others.

3. Many souls reach and enter the first cellar, each according to the perfection of its love, but the last and inmost cellar is entered by few in this world, because therein is wrought the perfect union with God, the union of the spiritual marriage, of which the soul is now speaking. What God communicates to the soul in this intimate union is utterly ineffable, beyond the reach of all possible words—just as it is impossible to speak of God Himself, so as to convey any idea of what He is—because it is God Himself who communicates Himself to the soul now in the marvellous bliss of its transformation. In this state God and the soul are united, as the window is with the light, or coal with the fire, or the light of the stars with that of the sun, yet, however, not so essentially and completely as it will be in the life to come. The soul, therefore, to show what it received from the hands

\* Is. xi. 3.

† St. Luke ii. 25. *Justus et timoratus*.

of God in the cellar of wine, says nothing else, and I do not believe that anything could be said but the words which follow :

‘Of my Beloved have I drunk.’

4. As a draught diffuses itself through all the members and veins of the body, so this communication of God diffuses itself substantially in the whole soul, or rather, the soul is transformed in God. In this transformation the soul drinks of God in its very substance and its spiritual powers. In the understanding it drinks wisdom and knowledge, in the will the sweetest love, in the memory refreshment and delight in the thought and sense of its bliss. That the soul receives and drinks delight in its very substance, appears from the words of the bride in the Canticle: ‘My soul melted as He spoke;’\* that is, when the Bridegroom communicated Himself to the soul.

5. That the understanding drinks wisdom is evident from the words of the bride longing and praying for the kiss of union: ‘There Thou shalt teach me, and I will give thee a cup of spiced wine.’† Thou shalt teach me wisdom and knowledge in love, and I will give Thee a cup of spiced wine, that is, my love mingled with Thine. The bride says that the will also drinks of love, saying: ‘He brought me into the cellar of wine, He hath ordered in me charity,’‡ that is, He gave me His love, embracing me, to drink of love; or, to speak more clearly, He ordered in me His charity, tempering His charity and to the purpose making it mine. This is to give the soul to drink of the very love of its Beloved, which the Beloved infuses into it.

\* Cant. v. 6.

† Cant. viii. 2.

‡ Cant. ii. 4.

6. There is a common saying that the will cannot love that of which the understanding has no knowledge. This, however, is to be understood in the order of nature, it being impossible, in a natural way, to love anything unless we first know what it is we love. But in a supernatural way God can certainly infuse love and increase it without infusing and increasing distinct knowledge, as is evident from the texts already quoted. Yea, many spiritual persons have experience of this; their love of God burns more and more, while their knowledge does not grow. Men may know little and love much, and on the other hand, know much and love but little.

7. In general, those spiritual persons whose knowledge of God is not very great, are usually very rich in all that belongs to the will, and infused faith suffices them for this knowledge, by means of which God infuses and increases charity in them and the acts thereof, which are to love Him more and more though knowledge is not increased. Thus the will may drink of love while the understanding drinks in no fresh knowledge. In the present instance, however, all the powers of the soul together, because of the union in the inner cellar, drink of the Beloved.

8. As to the memory, it is clear that the soul drinks of the Beloved in it, because it is enlightened with the light of the understanding in remembering the blessings it possesses and enjoys in union with the Beloved.

‘And when I went forth,’

9. That is after this grace; the divine draught having so deified the soul, exalted it, and inebriated it in God. Though the soul be always in the high

estate of marriage ever since God has placed it there, nevertheless actual union in all its powers is not continuous, though the substantial union is. In this substantial union the powers of the soul are most frequently in union, and drink of His cellar, the understanding by knowledge, the will by love, &c. We are not, therefore, to suppose that the soul, when saying that it went out, has ceased from its substantial or essential union with God, but only from the union of its faculties, which is not, and cannot be, permanent in this life; it is from this union then it went forth when it wandered over all the plain, that is, through the whole breadth of the world.

‘I knew nothing.’

10. This draught of God’s most deep wisdom makes the soul forget all the things of this world, and consider all its previous knowledge, and the knowledge of the whole world besides, as pure ignorance in comparison with this knowledge.

11. For a clearer understanding of this, we must remember that the most regular cause of the soul’s ignoring the things of the world, when it has ascended to this high state, is, that it is informed by a supernatural knowledge, in the presence of which all natural and worldly knowledge is ignorance rather than knowledge. For the soul in possession of this knowledge, which is most profound, learns from it that all other knowledge not included in this knowledge is not knowledge, but ignorance, and worthless. We have this truth in the words of the Apostle when he said that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.\*

\* 1 Cor. iii. 19.

12. This is the reason why the soul says it knows nothing, now that it has drunk of the divine wisdom. The truth is that the wisdom of men and of the whole world is mere ignorance, and not deserving any attention, but it is a truth that can be learned only in that truth of the presence of God in the soul communicating to it His wisdom and making it strong by this draught of love that it may see it distinctly. This is taught us by Solomon, saying: 'The vision that the man spake, with whom God is, and who being strengthened by God abiding with him, said: I am the most foolish of men, and the wisdom of men is not with me.'\*

13. When the soul is raised to this high wisdom of God, the wisdom of man is in its eyes the lowest ignorance: all natural science and the works of God, if accompanied by ignorance of Him, are as ignorance; for where He is not known, there nothing is known. 'The deep things of God are foolishness to men.'† Thus the divinely wise and the worldly wise are fools in the estimation of each other; for the latter cannot understand the wisdom and science of God, nor the former those of the world, for the wisdom of the world is ignorance in comparison with the wisdom of God; and the wisdom of God is ignorance with respect to that of the world.

14. Moreover, this deification and elevation of the spirit in God, whereby the soul is, as it were, rapt and absorbed in love, one with God, suffer it not to dwell upon any worldly matter. The soul is now detached, not only from all outward things, but even from itself: it is, as it were, undone, assumed by, and dissolved in, love;

\* Prov. xxx. 1, 2,

† 1 Cor. ii. 14.

that is, it passes out of itself into the Beloved. Thus the bride, in the Canticle, after speaking of her own transformation by love into the Beloved, expresses her state of ignorance by the words 'I knew not.'\* The soul is now, in a certain sense, like Adam in paradise, who knew no evil. It is so innocent that it sees no evil; neither does it consider anything to be amiss. It will hear much that is evil, and will see it with its eyes, and yet it shall not be able to understand it, because it has no evil habits whereby to judge of it. God has rooted out of it those imperfect habits and that ignorance resulting from the evil of sin, by the perfect habit of true wisdom. Thus, also, the soul knows nothing on this subject.

15. Such a soul will scarcely intermeddle with the affairs of others, because it forgets even its own; for the work of the Spirit of God in the soul in which He dwells is to incline it to ignore those things which do not concern it, especially such as do not minister to edification. The Spirit of God abides within the soul to withdraw it from outward things rather than to lead it among them; and thus the soul knows nothing as it knew it formerly. We are not, however, to suppose that it loses the habits of knowledge previously acquired, for those habits are improved by the more perfect habit of supernatural knowledge infused, though these habits be not so powerful as to necessitate knowledge through them, and yet there is no reason why they should not do so occasionally.

16. In this union of the divine wisdom these habits are united with the higher wisdom of other knowledge, as

\* Cant. vi. 11.



a little light with another which is great ; it is the great light that shines overwhelming the less, yet the latter is not therefore lost, but rather perfected, though it be not the light which shines pre-eminently. Thus, I imagine, will it be in heaven ; the acquired habits of knowledge in the just will not be destroyed, though they will be of no great importance there, seeing that the just will know more in the divine wisdom than by the habits acquired on earth.

17. But the particular notions and forms of things, acts of the imagination and every other apprehension having form and figure, are all lost and ignored in this absorbing love, and this for two reasons. First, the soul cannot actually attend to any thing of the kind, because it is actually absorbed by this draught of love. Secondly, and this is the principal reason, its transformation in God so conforms it to His purity and simplicity—for there is no form or imaginary figure in Him—as to render it pure, cleansed and empty of all the forms and figures it entertained before, being now purified and enlightened in simple contemplation. All spots and stains in the glass become invisible when the sun shines upon it, but they appear again as soon as the light of the sun is withheld.

18. So is it with the soul ; while the effects of this act of love continue, this ignorance continues also, so that it cannot observe anything in particular until these effects have ceased. Love has set the soul on fire and transmuted it into love, has annihilated it and destroyed it as to all that is not love, according to the words of David : ‘ My heart hath been inflamed, and my reins have been changed ; and I am brought to nothing, and I knew not.’\*

\* Ps. lxxii. 21, 22.

The changing of the reins, because the heart is inflamed, is the changing of the soul, in all its desires and actions, in God, into a new manner of life, the utter undoing and annihilation of the old man, and therefore the prophet said that he was brought to nothing and knew not.

18. These are the two effects of drinking the wine of the cellar of God; not only is all previous knowledge brought to nothing, and made to vanish, but the old life also with its imperfections is destroyed, and into the new man renewed; this is the second of the two effects described in the words that follow :

‘And lost the flock I followed before.’

19. Until the soul reaches the state of perfection, however spiritual it may be, there always remains a troop of desires, likings and other imperfections, sometimes natural, sometimes spiritual, after which it runs, and which it tries to feed while following and satisfying them. With regard to the understanding, there are certain imperfections of the desire of knowledge. With regard to the will, certain likings and peculiar desires, at times in temporal things, as the wish to possess certain trifles, and attachment to some things more than to others, certain prejudices, considerations, and punctilios, with other vanities, still savouring of the world: and again in natural things, such as eating and drinking, the preference of one kind of food over another, and the choice of the best: at another time, in spiritual things, such as seeking for sweetness, and other follies of spiritual persons not yet perfect, too numerous to recount here. As to the memory, there are there many inconsistencies, anxieties,

unseemly reminiscences, which drag the soul captive after them.

20. The four passions of the soul also involve it in many useless hopes, joys, griefs and fears, after which it runs. As to this flock, some men are more influenced by it than others ; they run after and follow it, until they enter the inner cellar, where they lose it altogether, being then transformed in love. In that cellar the flock of imperfections is easily destroyed, as rust and mould on metal in the fire. Then the soul feels itself free from the pettiness of self-likings and the vanities after which it ran before, and may well say, I have lost the flock which I followed before.

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#### NOTE.

GOD communicates Himself to the soul in this interior union with a love so intense that the love of a mother, who so tenderly caresses her child, the love of a brother, or the affection of a friend, bear no likeness to it, for so great is the tenderness, and so deep is the love with which the Infinite Father comforts and exalts the humble and loving soul. O wonders worthy of all awe and reverence ! He humbles Himself in reality before that soul that He may exalt it, as if He were its servant, and the soul His lord. He is as anxious to comfort it, as if He were a slave, and the soul God. So great is the humility and tenderness of God. In this communion of love He renders in a certain way those services to the soul

which He says in the Gospel, He will perform for the elect in heaven. ‘Amen, I say to you, that He will gird Himself and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister unto them.’\*

2. This very service He renders now to the soul, comforting and cherishing it, as a mother her child whom she nurtures in her bosom. And the soul recognises herein the truth of the words of Isaias, ‘You shall be carried at the breasts, and upon the knees they shall caress you.’† What must the feelings of the soul be amid these sovereign graces? How it will melt away in love, beholding the bosom of God opened for it with such overflowing love. When the soul perceives itself in the midst of these delights, it surrenders itself wholly to God, gives to Him the breasts of its own will and love, and under the influence thereof addresses the Beloved in the words of the bride in the Canticle, saying, ‘I to my Beloved, and His turning is towards me. Come my Beloved, let us go forth into the field, let us abide in the villages. Let us rise early to the vineyards, let us see if the vineyard flourish, if the flowers be ready to bring forth fruits, if the pomegranates flourish; there will I give Thee my breasts,’‡ that is, I will employ all the joy and strength of my will in the service of Thy love. This mutual surrender in this union of the soul and God is the subject of the stanza which follows:—

\* St. Luke xii. 37.

† Is. lxvi. 12.

‡ Cant. vii. 10—12.

## STANZA XXVII.

*There He gave me His breasts,  
 There He taught me the science full of sweetness.  
 And there I gave to Him  
 Myself without reserve ;  
 There I promised to be His bride.*

HERE the soul speaks of the two contracting parties in this spiritual betrothal, itself and God. In the inner cellar of love they both met together, God giving to the soul the breasts of His love freely, whereby He instructs it in His mysteries and wisdom, and the soul also actually surrendering itself, making no reservation whatever either in its own favour or in that of others, promising to be His for ever.

‘ There He gave me His breasts.’

2. To give the breast to another is to love and cherish him and communicate one’s secrets to him as a friend. The soul says here that God gave it His breasts, that is, He gave it His love and communicated His secrets to it. It is thus that God deals with the soul in this state, and more, too, as it appears from the words that follow :—

‘ There He taught me the science full of sweetness.’

3. This science is mystical theology, which is the secret science of God and which spiritual men call contemplation. It is most full of sweetness because it is knowledge by love, love is the master of it, and it is love that renders it all so sweet. Inasmuch as this science and knowledge are communicated to the soul in that love with which God communicates Himself, it is sweet to the

understanding, because knowledge belongs to it, and sweet to the will, because it comes by love which belongs to the will.

‘There I gave to Him myself without reserve.’

4. The soul, in this sweet draught of God, surrenders itself wholly to Him most willingly and with great sweetness; it desires to be wholly His, and never to retain anything which is unbecoming His Majesty. God is the author of this union, and of the purity and perfection requisite for it; and as the transformation of the soul in Himself makes it His, He empties it of all that is alien to Himself. Thus it comes to pass that, not in will only, but in act as well, the whole soul is entirely given to God without any reserve whatever, as God has given Himself freely unto it. The will of God and of the soul are both satisfied, each given up to the other, in mutual delight, so that neither fails the other in the faith and constancy of the betrothal; therefore the soul says:

‘There I promised to be His bride.’

5. As a bride does not give her love to another, and as all her thoughts and actions are directed to her bridegroom only, so the soul now has no affections of the will, no acts of the understanding, neither object nor occupation of any kind which it does not wholly refer unto God, together with all its desires. The soul, is as it were, absorbed in God, and even its first movements have nothing in them—so far as it can comprehend them—which is at variance with the will of God. The first movements of an imperfect soul in general are, at least, inclined to evil, in the understanding, the memory, the will, the desires and imperfections; but those of the soul,



which has attained to the spiritual state of which I am speaking, are ordinarily directed to God, because of the great help and courage it derives from Him, and its perfect conversion to goodness. This is set forth with great clearness by David, when he saith : ‘ Shall not my soul be subject to God ? For from Him is my salvation. For He is my God and my Saviour ; He is my protector, I shall be moved no more.’\* ‘ He is my protector ’ means, that the soul being now received under the protection of God and united to Him, is no longer subject to any movements contrary to God.

6. It is quite clear from this that the soul, which has attained the spiritual betrothal, knows nothing else but the love of the Bridegroom and the delights thereof, because it has arrived at perfection, the form and substance of which is love, according to St. Paul.† The more a soul loves, the more perfect it is in its love, and hence it follows, that the soul, which is already perfect, is, if we may say so, all love, all its actions are love, all its energies and strength are occupied in love. It gives up all it has, like the wise merchant,‡ for this treasure of love which it finds hidden in God, and which is so precious in His sight, and the Beloved cares for nothing else but love ; the soul, therefore, anxious to please Him perfectly, occupies itself wholly in pure love for God, not only because love does so occupy it, but also because the love wherein it is united, influences it towards love of God in and through all things. As the bee draws honey from all plants, and makes use of them only for that end, so the soul most easily draws the sweetness of love from all that

\* Ps. lxi. 2, 3.

† Coloss. iii. 14.

‡ St. Matth. xiii. 44.

happens to it: makes all things subserve it towards loving God, whether they be sweet or bitter; and being animated and protected by love, has no sense, feeling, or knowledge, because, as I have said, it knows nothing but love, and in all its occupations, its joy is its love of God. This is explained by the following stanza.

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NOTE.

I HAVE said that God is pleased with nothing but love; but before I explain this, it will be as well to set forth the grounds on which the assertion rests. All our works, and all our labours, how grand soever they may be, are nothing in the sight of God; for we can give Him nothing, neither can we by them fulfil His desire, which is the growth of our soul; as to Himself He desires nothing of this, for He has need of nothing, and so, if He is pleased with anything it is with the growth of the soul; and as there is no way in which the soul can grow; but in becoming in a manner equal to Him, for this reason only is He pleased with our love. It is the property of love to place him who loves on an equality with the object of his love. Hence the soul, because of its perfect love, is called the bride of the Son of God, which signifies equality with Him. In this equality and friendship all things are common, as the Bridegroom Himself said to His disciples: 'I have called you friends, because all things, whatsoever I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you.'\*

\* St. John xv. 15.

## STANZA XXVIII.

*My soul is occupied,  
And all my substance in His service;  
Now I guard no flock,  
Nor have I any other employment:  
My sole occupation is love.*

THE soul, or rather the bride, having given herself wholly to the Bridegroom without any reserve whatever, now recounts to the Beloved how she fulfils her task. My soul and body she says, all my abilities and all my capacities, are occupied not with other matters, but with those pertaining to the service of the Bridegroom. She is therefore not seeking her own proper satisfaction, nor the gratification of her own inclinations, neither does she occupy herself in anything whatever which is alien to God; yea, even her communion with God Himself is nothing else but acts of love, inasmuch as she has changed her former mode of conversing with Him into loving.

‘My soul is occupied.’

2. This refers to the soul’s surrender of itself to the Beloved in this union of love, wherein it devotes itself, with all its faculties, understanding, will, and memory, to His service. The understanding is occupied in considering what most tends to His service, in order that it might be accomplished; the will, in loving all that is pleasing to God, and in desiring Him in all things; the memory, in recalling what ministers to Him, and what may be more pleasing unto Him.

‘And all my substance in His service.’

3. By substance here is meant all that relates to the

sensual part of the soul, which includes the body, with all its powers, interior and exterior, together with all its natural capacities, that is, the four passions, the natural desires, and the whole substance of the soul, all of which is employed in the service of the Beloved, as well as the rational and spiritual part, as I explained in the previous section. As to the body, that is now ordered according to God in all its interior and exterior senses, all the acts of which are directed to God; the four passions of the soul are also under control in Him; for the soul's joy, hope, fear, and grief are conversant with God only; all its appetites, and all its anxieties also, are directed unto Him only.

4. The whole substance of the soul is now so occupied with God, so intent upon Him, that its very first movements, even inadvertently, have God for their object and their end. The understanding, memory, and will tend directly to God; the affections, senses, desires, and longings, hope and joy, the whole substance of the soul, rise instantly towards God, though the soul is making no conscious efforts in that direction. Such a soul is very often doing the work of God, intent upon Him and the things of God, without thinking or reflecting on what it is doing for Him. The constant and habitual practice of this has deprived it of all conscious reflection, and even of that fervour which it usually had when it began to act. The whole substance of the soul being thus occupied, what follows cannot be but true also.

‘Now I guard no flock.’

5. I do not now go after my likings and desires, for having fixed them upon God, I no longer feed or guard

them. The soul not only does not guard them now, but has no other occupation than to wait upon God.

‘Nor have I any other employment.’

6. Before the soul succeeded in effecting this gift and surrender of itself, and of all that belongs to it, to the Beloved, it was entangled in many unprofitable occupations, by which it sought to please itself and others, and it may be said that its occupations at this kind were as many as its habits of imperfection.

7. To these habits belong that of speaking, thinking, and the doing of things that are useless; and likewise, the not making use of these things according to the requirements of the soul’s perfection; other desires also the soul may have, wherewith it ministers to the desires of others, to which may be referred, display, compliments, flattery, human respect, aiming at being well thought of, and the giving pleasure to people, and other useless actions, by which it laboured to content them, wasting its efforts herein, and finally all its strength. All this is over, says the soul here, for all its words, thoughts, and works are directed to God, and conversant with Him, freed from their previous imperfections. It is as if it said: I follow no longer either my own or other men’s likings, neither do I occupy or entertain myself with useless pastimes, or the things of this world.

‘My sole occupation is love.’

8. All my occupation now is the practice of the love of God, all the powers of soul and body, memory, understanding, and will, interior and exterior senses, the desires of spirit and of sense, all work in and by love. All I do

is done in love ; all I suffer, I suffer in the sweetness of love. This is the meaning of David when he said : ‘ I will keep my strength to Thee.’\*

9. When the soul has arrived at this state all the acts of its spiritual and sensual nature, whether active or passive, and of whatever kind they may be, always occasion an increase of love and delight in God : even the act of prayer and communion with God, which was once carried on by reflections and divers other methods, is now wholly an act of love. So much so is this the case that the soul may always say, whether occupied with temporal or spiritual things, ‘ My sole occupation is love.’ Happy life ! happy state ! and happy the soul which has attained to it ! where all is the very substance of love, the joyous delights of the betrothal, when it may truly say to the Beloved with the bride in the Canticle : ‘ The new and the old, my Beloved, have I kept for Thee.’† All that is bitter and painful I keep for Thy sake, all that is sweet and pleasant I keep for Thee. The meaning of the words, for my purpose, is that the soul, in the state of spiritual betrothal, is for the most part living in the union of love, that is, the will is habitually waiting lovingly on God.

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#### NOTE.

OF a truth the soul is now lost to all things, and gained only to love, and the mind is no longer occupied with anything else. It is, therefore, deficient in what concerns the active life, and other exterior duties, that it may apply

\* Ps. lviii. 10.

† Cant. vii 13.



in earnest to the one thing which the Bridegroom has pronounced necessary;\* and that is waiting upon God, and the continuous practice of His love. So precious is this in the eyes of God that He rebuked Martha, because she would withdraw Mary from His feet to occupy her actively in the service of our Lord. Martha thought that she was doing everything herself, and that Mary at the feet of Christ was doing nothing. But it was far otherwise: for there is nothing better or more necessary than love. Thus, in the Canticle, the Bridegroom protects the bride, adjuring the daughters of Jerusalem, that is, all created things, not to disturb her spiritual sleep of love, nor to waken her, nor to let her open her eyes to anything till she pleased. ‘I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up, nor awake my beloved till she please.’†

2. Observe, however, that if the soul has not reached the state of unitive love, it is necessary for it to make acts of love, as well in the active as in the contemplative life. But when it has reached it, it is not requisite it should occupy itself in other and exterior duties—unless they be matters of obligation – which might hinder, were it but for a moment, the life of love in God, though they may minister greatly to His service; because an instant of pure love is more precious in the eyes of God and the soul, and more profitable to the Church, than all other good works together, though it may seem as if nothing were done. Thus, Mary Magdalene, though her preaching was most edifying, and might have been still more so afterwards, out of the great desire she had to please God

\* St. Luke x. 42.

† Cant. iii. 5.

and benefit the Church, hid herself, nevertheless, in the desert thirty years, that she might surrender herself entirely to love; for she considered that she would gain more in that way, because an instant of pure love is so much more profitable and important to the Church.

3. When the soul, then, in any degree possesses the spirit of solitary love, we must not interfere with it. We should inflict a grievous wrong upon it, and upon the Church also, if we were to occupy it, were it only for a moment, in exterior or active duties, however important they might be. When God Himself adjures all not to waken it from its love, who shall venture to do so, and be blameless? In a word, it is for this love that we are all created. Let those men of zeal, who think by their preaching and exterior works, to convert the world, consider that they would be much more edifying to the Church, and more pleasing unto God—setting aside the good example they would give—if they would spend at least one half their time in prayer, even though they may have not attained to the state of unitive love. Certainly they would do more, and with less trouble, by one single good work than by a thousand: because of the merit of their prayer, and the spiritual strength it supplies. To act otherwise is to beat the air, to do little more than nothing, sometimes nothing and occasionally even mischief; for God may give up such persons to vanity, so that they may seem to have done something, when in reality their outward occupations bear no fruit; for it is quite certain that good works cannot be done but in the power of God. O how much might be written on this subject! this, however, is not the place for it.

4. I have said this to explain the stanza that follows, in which the soul replies to those who call in question its holy tranquillity, who will have it wholly occupied with outward duties, that its light may shine before the world : these persons have no conception of the fibres and the unseen root whence the sap is drawn, and which nourish the fruit.

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### STANZA XXIX.

*If then on the common land  
I am no longer seen or found,  
You will say that I am lost ;  
That being enamoured,  
I lost myself ; and yet was found.*

THE soul replies here to a tacit reproach. Worldly people are in the habit of censuring those who give themselves up in earnest to God, regarding them as extravagant, in their withdrawal from the world, and in their manner of life. They say also of them that they are useless for all matters of importance, and lost to everything the world prizes and respects ! This reproach the soul meets in the best way ; boldly and courageously despising it with everything else that the world can lay to its charge. Having attained to a living love of God it makes little account of all this ; and that is not all : it confesses it itself in this stanza, and boasts that it has committed that folly, and that it is lost to the world and to itself for the Beloved.

2. That which the soul is saying here, addressing itself to the world, is in substance this :—If you see

me no longer occupied with the subjects that engrossed me once, with the other pastimes of the world, say and believe that I am lost to them, and a stranger to them, yea, that I am lost of my own choice, seeking my Beloved whom I so greatly love. But that they may see that the soul's loss is gain, and not consider it folly and delusion, it adds, that its loss was gain, and that it therefore lost itself deliberately.

‘If then on the common I am no longer seen or found.’

3. The common is a public place where people assemble for recreation, and where shepherds feed their flocks. By the common here is meant the world in general, where men amuse themselves and feed the herd of their desires. The soul says to the worldly-minded: ‘If you see me no more where I used to be before I gave myself up wholly to God, look upon me as lost, and say so:’ the soul rejoices in that and would have men so speak of it.

‘Say that I am lost.’

4. He who loves is not ashamed before men of what he does for God, neither does he hide it through shame though the whole world should condemn it. He who shall be ashamed to confess the Son of God before men, neglecting to do His work, the Son of God also will be ashamed to acknowledge him before His Father. ‘He that shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father Who is in heaven.’\* The soul, therefore, in the courage of its love, glories in what ministers to the honour of the Beloved, in that it has done anything for Him and is lost to the things of the world.

\* St. Matt. x. 33.

5. But few spiritual persons arrive at this perfect courage and resolution in their conduct. For though some attempt to practise it, and some even think themselves proficient therein, they never entirely lose themselves on certain points connected with the world or self, so as to be perfectly detached for the sake of Christ, despising appearances and the opinion of the world. These can never answer, 'Say that I am lost,' because they are not lost to themselves, and are still ashamed to confess Christ before men through human respect; these do not therefore really live in Christ.

'That being enamoured,' that is, practising virtues for the love of God.

'I lost myself; and yet was found.'

6. The soul remembers well the words of the Bridegroom in the Gospel: 'No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other,'\* and therefore, in order not to lose God, loses all that is not God, that is, all created things, even itself, being lost to all things for the love of Him. He who truly loves makes shipwreck of himself in all else that he may gain the more in the object of his love. Thus the soul says that it has lost itself, that is, deliberately, of set purpose.

7. This loss occurs in two ways. The soul loses itself, making no account whatever of itself, but of the Beloved, resigning itself freely into His hands without any selfish views, losing itself deliberately, and seeking nothing for itself. Secondly, it loses itself in all things, making no account of anything save that which concerns the Beloved. This is to lose oneself, that is, to be willing

\* Ib. vi. 24.

that others should have all things. Such is he that loves God; he seeks neither gain nor reward, but only to lose all, even himself, according to God's will; this is what such an one counts gain. This is real gain, for the Apostle saith, 'to die is gain;'<sup>\*</sup> that is, to die for Christ is my gain and profit spiritually. This is why the soul says that it 'was found;' for he who knows not how to lose, finds not, but rather loses himself, as our Saviour teaches us in the Gospel, saying, 'He that will save his life shall lose it; and he that shall lose his life for my sake shall find it.'<sup>†</sup>

8. But if we wish to know the deeper spiritual meaning of this line, and its peculiar fitness here, it is as follows: When a soul has advanced so far on the spiritual road as to be lost to all the natural methods of communing with God; when it seeks Him no longer by meditation, images, impressions, nor by any other created ways, or representations of sense, but only by rising above them all, in the joyful communion with Him by faith and love, then it may be said to have found God of a truth, because it has truly lost itself as to all that is not God, and also as to its own self.



#### NOTE.

THE soul being thus gained, all its works are gain, for all its powers are exerted in the spiritual intercourse of most sweet interior love with the Beloved. The interior communications between God and the soul are now so

<sup>\*</sup> Phil. i. 21.

<sup>†</sup> St. Matt. xvi. 25.



delicious, so full of sweetness, that no mortal tongue can describe them, nor human understanding comprehend them. As a bride on the day of her betrothal attends to nothing but to the joyous festival of her love, and brings forth all her jewels and ornaments for the pleasure of the bridegroom, and as he too in the same way exhibits his own magnificence and riches for the pleasure of his bride, so is it in the spiritual betrothal where the soul feels that which the bride says in the Canticle, ‘I to my Beloved and my Beloved to me.’\* The virtues and graces of the bride-soul, the grandeur and magnificence of the Bridegroom, the Son of God, come forth into the light, for the celebration of the bridal feast, communicating each to the other the goods and joys with the wine of sweet love in the Holy Ghost. The present stanza, addressed to the Bridegroom by the soul, has this for its subject.

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## STANZA XXX.

*Of emeralds, and of flowers,  
In the early morning gathered,  
We will make the garlands,  
Flowering in Thy love,  
And bound together with one hair of my head.*

THE bride now turns to the Bridegroom and addresses Him in the intercourse and comfort of love; the subject of the stanza being the solace and delight which the bride-soul and the Son of God find in the possession of the virtues and gifts of each other, and in the exercise thereof, both rejoicing in their mutual love. Thus the

\* Cant. vi. 2.

soul, addressing the Beloved, says, that they will make garlands rich in graces and acquired virtues, obtained at the fitting and convenient season, beautiful and lovely in the love He bears the soul, and kept together by the love which it itself has for Him. This rejoicing in virtue is what is meant by making garlands, for the soul and God rejoice together in these virtues bound up as flowers in a garland, in the common love which each bears the other.

‘Of emeralds, and of flowers.’

2. The flowers are the virtues of the soul; the emeralds are the gifts it has received from God. Then of these flowers and emeralds

‘In the early morning gathered.’

3. That is, acquired in youth, which is the early morning of life. They are said to be gathered because the virtues which we acquire in youth are most pleasing unto God; because youth is the season when our vices most resist the acquisition of them, and when our natural inclinations are most prone to lose them. Those virtues also are more perfect which we acquire in early youth. This time of our life is the early morning; for as the freshness of the spring morning is more agreeable than any other part of the day, so also are the virtues acquired in our youth more pleasing in the sight of God.

4. By the fresh morning we may understand those acts of love by which we acquire virtue, and which are more pleasing unto God than the fresh morning is to the sons of men; good works also, wrought in the season of spiritual dryness and hardness; this is the freshness of the winter morning, and what we then do for God in dryness of spirit is most precious in His eyes. Then it is

that we acquire virtues and graces abundantly ; and what we then acquire, with toil and labour, is for the most part better, more perfect and lasting than what we acquire in comfort and spiritual sweetness ; for virtue sends forth its roots in the season of dryness, toil, and trial : as it is written, ‘ Virtue is made perfect in infirmity.’\* It is with a view to show forth the excellence of these virtues, of which the garland is wrought for the Beloved, that the soul says of them, that they have been gathered in the early morning : because it is these flowers alone, with the emeralds of virtue, the choice and perfect graces, and not the imperfect, which are pleasing to the Beloved, and so the bride says :

‘ We will make the garlands.’

5. All the virtues and graces which the soul, and God in it, acquire, are as a garland of divers flowers, wherewith the soul is marvellously adorned, as with a vesture of rich embroidery. As material flowers are gathered, and then formed into a garland, so the spiritual flowers of virtues and graces are acquired and set in order in the soul ; and when the acquisition is complete, the garland of perfection is complete also. The soul and the Bridegroom rejoice in it, both beautiful, adorned with the garland, as in the state of perfection.

6. These are the garlands which the soul says they will make. That is, it will wreath itself with this variety of flowers, with the emeralds of virtues and perfect gifts, that it may present itself worthily before the face of the King, and be on an equality with Him, sitting as a queen on His right hand ; for it has merited this by its beauty.

\* 2 Cor. xii. 9.

Thus David saith, addressing himself to Christ: 'The queen stood on Thy right hand in vestments of gold, girt with variety.'\* That is, at His right hand, clad in perfect love, girt with the variety of graces and perfect virtues.

7. The soul does not say, I will make garlands, nor, Thou wilt make them, but, We will make them, not separately, but both together; because the soul cannot practice virtues alone, nor acquire them alone, without the help of God; neither does God alone create virtue in the soul, without the soul's concurrence. Though it be true, as the Apostle saith, that 'every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, descending from the Father of lights,'† still they enter into no soul without that soul's concurrence and consent. Thus the bride in the Canticle saith to the Bridegroom: 'Draw me; we will run after thee.'‡ Every inclination to good comes from God alone, as we learn here; but as to running, that is, good works, they proceed from God and the soul together, and it is therefore written, 'We will run,' that is, both together, but not God nor the soul alone.

8. These words may also be fittingly applied to Christ and His Church, which, as His bride, says unto Him, We will make the garlands. In this application of the words the garlands are the holy souls born to Christ in the Church. Every such soul is by itself a garland adorned with the flowers of virtues and graces, and all of them together a garland for the head of Christ the Bridegroom.

9. We may also understand by these beautiful garlands the crowns formed by Christ and the Church, of which

\* Ps. xliv. 10.

† St. James i. 17.

‡ Cant. i. 3.

there are three kinds. The first is formed of the beauty and white flowers of the virgins, each one with her virginal crown, and forming altogether one crown for the head of the Bridegroom Christ. The second, of the brilliant flowers of the holy doctors, each with his crown of doctor, and all together forming one crown above that of the virgins on the head of Christ. The third is composed of the purple flowers of the martyrs, each with his own crown of martyrdom, and all united into one, perfecting that on the head of Christ. Adorned with these garlands He will be so beautiful, and so lovely to behold, that heaven itself will repeat the words of the bride in the Canticle, saying : ‘Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see king Solomon in the diadem wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his betrothal, and in the day of the joy of his heart.’\* The soul then says we will make garlands.

‘Flowering in Thy love.’

10. The flowers of good works and virtues is the grace and power which they derive from the love of God, without which they not only flower not, but become even dry, and worthless in the eyes of God, though they may be humanly perfect. But if He gives His grace and love they flourish in His love.

‘And bound together with one hair of my head.’

11. The hair is the will of the soul, and the love it bears the Beloved. This love performs the function of the thread that keeps the garland together. For as a thread binds the flowers of a garland, so love knits together and sustains virtues in the soul. ‘Charity,’ that

\* Cant. iii. 11.

is, love, saith the Apostle, 'is the bond of perfection.'\* Love, in the same way, binds the virtues and supernatural gifts together, so that when love fails by our departure from God, all our virtue perishes also, just as the flowers drop from the garland when the thread that bound them together is broken. It is not enough for God's gift of virtues, that He should love us, but we too must love Him in order to receive them, and preserve them.

12. The soul speaks of one hair, not of many, to show that the will by itself is fixed on God, detached from all other hairs; that is, from strange love. This points out the great price and worth of these garlands of virtues; for when love is single, firmly fixed on God, as here described, the virtues also are entire, perfect, and flowering in the love of God; for the love He bears the soul is beyond all price, and the soul also knows it well.

13. Were I to attempt a description of the beauty of that binding of the flowers and emeralds together, or of the strength and majesty which their harmonious arrangement furnishes to the soul, or the beauty and grace of its embroidered vesture, expressions and words would fail me; for if God says of the evil spirit, 'His body is like molten shields, shut close up with scales, pressing upon one another, one is joined to another, and not so much as any air can come between them;† if the evil spirit be so strong, clad in malice thus compacted together, for the scales that cover his body, like molten shields are malice, and malice is in itself but weakness, what must be the strength of the soul that is clothed in virtues so compacted and united together that no impurity

\* Coloss. iii. 14.

† Job xli. 6, 7.



or imperfection can penetrate between them; each virtue severally adding strength to strength, beauty to beauty, wealth to wealth, and to majesty, dominion and grandeur.

12. What a marvellous vision will be that of the bride-soul, when it shall sit on the right hand of the Bridegroom-King, crowned with graces! ‘How beautiful are thy steps in shoes, O prince’s daughter!’\* The soul is called a prince’s daughter because of the power it has; and if the beauty of the steps in shoes be great, what must be that of the whole vesture? Not only is the beauty of the soul crowned with admirable flowers, but its strength also, flowing from the harmonious order of the flowers, intertwined with the emeralds of its innumerable graces, is terrible: ‘Terrible as the army of a camp set in array.’† For, as these virtues and gifts of God refresh the soul with their spiritual perfume, so also, when united in it, do they, out of their substance, minister strength. Thus, in the Canticle, when the bride was weak, languishing with love—because she had not been able to bind together the flowers and the emeralds with the hair of her love—and anxious to strengthen herself by that union of them, cries out: ‘Stay me with flowers, compass me about with apples; because I languish with love.’‡ The flowers are the virtues, and the apples are the other graces.

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#### NOTE.

I BELIEVE I have now shown how the intertwining of the garlands, and their lasting presence in the soul, explains

\* Cant. vii. 1.

† Ib. vi. 3.

‡ Ib. ii. 5.

the divine union of love which now exists between the soul and God. The Bridegroom, as He saith Himself, is 'the flower of the field and the lily of the valleys,'\* and the soul's love is the hair that unites to itself this flower of flowers. Love is the most precious of all things, because it is the 'bond of perfection,' as the Apostle saith,† and perfection is union with God. The soul is, as it were, a sheaf of garlands, for it is the subject of this glory, no longer what it was before, but the very perfect flower of flowers in the perfection and beauty of all; for the thread of love binds so closely God and the soul, and so unites them that it transforms them and makes them one by love; so that, though in essence different, yet in glory and appearance the soul seems God and God the soul. Such is this marvellous union, baffling all description.

2. We may form some conception of it from the love of David and Jonathan, whose 'soul was knit with the soul of David.'‡ If the love of one man for another can be thus strong, so as to knit two souls together, what must that love of God be which can knit the soul of man to God the Bridegroom? God Himself is here the suitor Who in the omnipotence of His unfathomable love absorbs the soul with greater violence and efficacy than a torrent of fire a single drop of the morning dew which resolves itself into air. The hair, therefore, which accomplishes such a union must, of necessity, be most strong and subtile, seeing that it penetrates and binds together so effectually the soul and God. In the present stanza the soul declares the qualities of this hair.

\* Cant. ii. 1.

† Col. iii. 14.

‡ 1 Kings xviii. 1.

## STANZA XXXI.

*By that one hair  
 Thou hast observed fluttering on my neck,  
 And on my neck regarded,  
 Thou wert captivated;  
 And wounded by one of my eyes.*

THERE are three things mentioned here. The first is, that the love, by which the virtues are bound together, is nothing less than a strong love ; for in truth it need be so, in order to preserve them. The second is, that God is greatly taken by this hair of love, seeing it to be alone and strong. The third is, that God is deeply enamoured of the soul, beholding the purity and integrity of its faith.

‘ By that one hair Thou hast observed fluttering on my neck.’

2. The neck signifies that strength in which, it is said, fluttered the hair of love, strong love, which bound the virtues together. It is not sufficient for the preservation of virtues that love be alone, it must be also strong, so that no contrary vice may anywhere destroy the perfection of the garland ; for the virtues are so bound up together in the soul by the hair, that if the thread be once broken, all the virtues are lost ; for where one virtue is, all are, and where one fails, all fail also. The hair is said to flutter on the neck, because its love of God, without any hindrance whatever, flutters strongly and lightly in the strength of the soul.

3. As the air causes hair to wave and flutter on the neck, so the breath of the Holy Ghost stirs the strong

love that it may fly upwards to God; for without this divine wind, which excites the powers of the soul to the practice of divine love, all the virtues the soul may possess become ineffectual and fruitless. The Beloved observed the hair fluttering on the neck, that is, He considered it with particular attention and regard; because strong love is a great attraction for the eyes of God.

‘And on my neck regarded.’

4. This shews us that God not only esteems this love, seeing it alone, but also loves it, seeing it strong; for to say that God regards is to say that He loves, and to say that He observes is to say that He esteems what He observes. The word neck is repeated in this line, because it, being strong, is the cause why God loves it so much. It is as if the soul said, Thou hast loved it, seeing it strong without weakness or fear, and without any other love, and flying upwards swiftly and fervently.

5. Until now God had not looked upon this hair, so as to be captivated by it, because He had not seen it alone, separate from the others, withdrawn from other loves, feelings, and affections, which hindered it from fluttering alone on the neck of strength. Afterwards, however, when mortifications and trials, temptations and penance had detached it, and made it strong, so that nothing whatever could break it, then God beholds it, and is taken by it, and binds the flowers of the garlands with it; for it is now so strong that it can keep the virtues united together in the soul.

6. But what these temptations and trials are, how they come, and how far they reach, that the soul may attain to that strength of love in which God unites it

to Himself, I have described in the 'Dark Night,'\* and in the explanation of the four stanzas† which begin with the words, 'O living flame of love!' The soul having passed through these trials, has reached a degree of love so high that it has merited the divine union.

'Thou wert captivated.'

7. O joyful wonder! God captive to a hair. The reason of this capture so precious is that God was pleased to observe the fluttering of the hair on the soul's neck; for where God regards He loves. If He in His grace and mercy had not first looked upon us and loved us,‡ as St. John saith, and humbled Himself, He never could have been taken by the fluttering of the hair of our miserable love. His flight is not so low as that our love could lay hold of the divine bird, attract His attention, and fly so high with a strength worthy of His regard, if He had not first looked upon us. He, however, is taken by the fluttering of the hair; He makes it worthy and pleasing to Himself, and then is captivated by it. 'Thou hast seen it on my neck, Thou wert captivated by it.' This renders it credible that a bird which flies low may capture the royal eagle in its flight; if the eagle should fly so low and be taken by it willingly.

'And wounded by one of my eyes.'

8. The eye is faith. The soul speaks of but one, and and that this has wounded the Beloved. If the faith and trust of the soul in God were not one, without admixture of other considerations, God never could have been wounded by love. Thus the eye that wounds, and the hair that binds, must be one. So strong is the love of

\* Dark Night, Bk. 2, ch. xxiv.

† Stanza ii. v. 5.

‡ 1 St. John iv. 10.

the Bridegroom for the bride, because of her simple faith, that, if the hair of her love binds Him, the eye of her faith imprisons Him so closely, as to wound Him through that most tender affection He bears her, which is to the bride a further progress in His love.

9. The Bridegroom Himself speaks in the Cantic of the hair and the eyes, saying to the bride, 'Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my bride, thou hast wounded my heart with one of thy eyes, and with one hair of thy neck.'<sup>\*</sup> He says twice that His heart is wounded, that is, with the eye and the hair, and therefore the soul in this stanza speaks of them both, because they signify its union with God in the understanding and the will; for the understanding is subdued by faith, signified by the eye, and the will by love. Here the soul exults in this union, and gives thanks to the Bridegroom for it, it being His gift; accounting it a great matter that He has been pleased to requite its love, and to become captive to it. We may also observe here the joy, happiness, and delight of the soul with its prisoner, having been for a long time His prisoner, enamoured of Him.

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#### NOTE.

GREAT is the power and courage of love, for God is its prisoner. Blessed is the soul that loves, for it has made a captive of God who obeys its good pleasure. Such is the nature of love, that it makes those who love do what is asked of them, and, on the other hand, without love the utmost efforts will be fruitless, but one hair will bind

<sup>\*</sup> Cant. iv. 9.



those that love. The soul, knowing this, and conscious of blessings beyond its merits, in being raised up to so high a degree of love, through the rich endowments of graces and virtues, attributes all to the Beloved, saying :

### STANZA XXXII.

*When Thou didst regard me,  
Thine eyes imprinted in me Thy grace :  
For this didst Thou love me again,  
And thereby mine eyes did merit,  
To adore what in Thee they saw.*

It is the nature of perfect love to seek or accept nothing for itself, to attribute nothing to itself, but to refer all to the Beloved. If this be true of earthly love, how much more so of the love of God, the reason of which is so constraining. In the two foregoing stanzas the bride seemed to attribute something to herself; for she said that she would make garlands with her Beloved, and bind them with a hair of her head; that is a great work, and of no slight importance and worth; afterwards she said that she exulted in having captivated Him by a hair, and wounded Him with one of her eyes. All this seems as if she attributed great merits to herself. Now, however, she explains her meaning, and removes the wrong impression with great care and fear, lest any merit should be attributed to herself, and therefore less to God than His due, and less also than she desired. She now refers all to Him, and at the same time gives Him thanks, saying, that the cause of His being the captive of the hair of her love, and of His being wounded by the eye of her

faith, was His mercy in looking lovingly upon her, thereby rendering her lovely and pleasing in His sight; and that the loveliness and worth she received from Him merited His love, and made her worthy to adore her Beloved, and to bring forth good works worthy of His love and favour.

‘When Thou didst regard me.’

2. That is, with loving affection, for I have already said, that where God regards there He loves.

‘Thine eyes imprinted in me Thy grace.’

3. The eyes of the Bridegroom signify here His merciful divinity, which mercifully inclined to the soul, imprints or infuses in it the love and grace by which He makes it beautiful, and so elevates it that He makes it the partaker of His divinity. When the soul sees to what height of dignity God has raised it, it says—

‘For this didst Thou love me again.’

4. To love again is to love much; it is more than simple love, it is a twofold love, and for two reasons. Here the soul explains the two motives of the Bridegroom’s love; He not only loved it because captivated by the fair, but He loved it again, because He was wounded with one of its eyes. The reason why He loved it so deeply is that He would, when He looked upon it, give it the grace to please Him, endowing it with the fair of love, and animating with His charity the faith of the eye. And therefore the soul saith:

‘For this didst Thou love me again.’

5. To say that God shows favour to the soul is to say that He renders it worthy and capable of His love. It is therefore as if the soul said, having shown Thy favour to

me, worthy pledges of Thy love, Thou hast therefore loved me again : that is, Thou hast given me grace upon grace ; or, in the words of St. John, ‘ grace for grace ; ’ \* grace for the grace He has given, that is more grace, for without grace we cannot merit His grace.

6. If we could clearly understand this truth, we must keep in mind that, as God loves nothing beside Himself, so loves He nothing more than Himself, because He loves all things with reference to Himself. Thus love is the final cause, and God loves nothing for what it is in itself. Consequently, when we say that God loves such a soul, we say, in effect, that He brings it in a manner to Himself, making it His equal, and thus it is He loves that soul in Himself with that very love with which He loves Himself. Every good work, therefore, of the soul in God is meritorious of God’s love, because the soul in His favour, thus exalted, merits God Himself in every act.

‘ And thereby mine eyes did merit.’

7. That is, by the grace and favour which the eyes of Thy compassion have wrought, when Thou didst look upon me, rendering me pleasing in Thy sight and worthy of Thy regard.

‘ To adore what in Thee they saw.’

8. That is : The powers of my soul, O my Bridegroom, the eyes by which I can see Thee, although once fallen and miserable in the vileness of their mean occupations, have merited to look upon Thee. To look upon God is to do good works in His grace. Thus the powers of the soul merit in adoring because they adore in the grace of

\* St. John i. 16.

God, in which every act is meritorious. Enlightened and exalted by grace, they adored what in Him they saw, and what they saw not before, because of their blindness and meanness. What then have they now seen? The greatness of His power, His overflowing sweetness, infinite goodness, love, and compassion, innumerable benefits received at His hands, as well now when so near Him, as before when far away. The eyes of the soul now merit to adore, and by adoring merit, for they are beautiful and pleasing to the Bridegroom. Before they were unworthy, not only to adore or behold Him, but even to look upon Him at all: great indeed is the stupidity and blindness of a soul without the grace of God.

9. It is a melancholy thing to see how far a soul departs from its duty when it is not enlightened by the love of God. For being bound to acknowledge these and other innumerable favours which it has every moment received at His hands, temporal as well as spiritual, and to worship and serve Him unceasingly with all its faculties; it not only does not do so, but is unworthy even to think of Him; nor does it make any account of Him whatever. Such is the misery of those who are living, or rather who are dead, in sin.

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#### NOTE.

FOR the better understanding of this and of what follows, we must keep in mind that the regard of God benefits the soul in four ways: it cleanses, adorns, enriches, and enlightens it, as the sun when it shines, dries, warms, beautifies, and brightens the earth. When God has

visited the soul in the three latter ways, whereby He renders it pleasing to Himself, He remembers its former uncleanness and sin no more: as it is written, ‘All the iniquities that he hath wrought, I will not remember’\*.

God having once done away with our sin and uncleanness, He will look upon them no more; nor will He withhold His mercy because of them, for He never punishes twice for the same sin, according to the words of the prophet: ‘There shall not rise a double affliction.’†

Still, though God forgets the sin He has once forgiven, we are not for that reason to forget it ourselves; for the Wise Man saith, ‘Be not without fear about sin forgiven.’‡ There are three reasons for this. We should always remember our sin, that we may not presume, that we may have a subject of perpetual thanksgiving, and because it serves to give us more confidence that we shall receive greater favours; for if, when we were in sin, God showed Himself unto us so merciful and forgiving, how much greater mercies may we not hope for when we are clean from sin, and in His love?

The soul, therefore, calling to mind all the mercies it has received, and seeing itself united to the Bridegroom in such dignity, rejoices greatly with joy, thanksgiving and love. In this it is helped exceedingly by the recollection of its former condition, which was so mean and filthy that it not only did not deserve that God should look upon it, but was unworthy that He should even utter its name, as He saith by the mouth of the prophet David: ‘Nor will I be mindful of their names by My lips.’§ Thus the soul seeing that there was, and that there can

\* Ezech. xviii. 22

† Ecclus. v. 5.

‡ Nahum. i. 9.

§ Ps. xv. 4.

be, nothing in itself to attract the eyes of God, but that all comes from Him of pure grace and good-will, attributes its misery to itself, and all the blessings it enjoys to the Beloved; and, seeing further, that because of these blessings it can merit now what it could not merit before, it becomes bold with God, and prays for the divine spiritual union, wherein its mercies are multiplied. This is the subject of the following stanza:—

### STANZA XXXIII.

*Despise me not,  
For if I was swarthy once,  
Thou canst regard me now;  
Since Thou hast regarded me,  
Grace and beauty hast Thou given me.*

THE soul now is becoming bold, and respects itself, because of the gifts and endowments which the Beloved has bestowed upon it. It recognises that these things, while itself is worthless and undeserving, are at least means of merit, and consequently it ventures to say to the Beloved: ‘Do not disregard me now, or despise me;’ for if before it deserved contempt because of the filthiness of its sin, and the meanness of its nature, now that He has once looked upon it, and thereby adorned it with grace and beauty, He may well look upon it a second time and increase its grace and beauty. That He has once done so, when the soul deserved it not, and had no attractions for Him, is reason enough why He should do so again and again.

‘Despise me not.’

2. The soul does not say this because it desires in any way to be esteemed—for contempt and insult are of



great price, and occasions of joy to the soul that truly loves God—but because it acknowledges that in itself it merits nothing else, were it not for the gifts and graces it has received from God, as it appears from the words that follow.

‘For if I was swarthy once.’

3. If, before Thou did graciously look upon me Thou didst find me in my filthiness, black with imperfections and sins, and naturally mean and vile,

‘Thou canst regard me now; since Thou hast regarded me.’

4. After once looking upon me, and taking away my swarthy complexion, defiled by sin and disagreeable to look upon, when Thou didst render me lovely for the first time, Thou mayest well look upon me now—that is, now I may be looked on and deserve to be regarded, and thereby to receive further favours at Thy hands. For Thine eyes, when they first looked upon me, did not only take away my swarthy complexion, but rendered me also worthy of Thy regard; for in Thy look of love

‘Grace and beauty hast Thou given me.’

5. The two preceding lines are a commentary on the words of St. John, ‘grace for grace,’\* for when God beholds a soul that is lovely in His eyes, He is moved to bestow more grace upon it because He dwells well-pleased within it. Moses knew this, and prayed for further grace: he would, as it were, constrain God to grant it because he had already received so much. ‘Thou hast said: I know thee by name, and thou hast found favour in My sight: if therefore I have found favour in Thy

\* St. John. i. 16.

sight, shew me Thy face, that I may know Thee, and may find grace before Thine eyes.\*

6. Now a soul which in the eyes of God is thus exalted in grace, honourable and lovely, is for that reason an object of His unutterable love. If He loved that soul before it was in a state of grace, for His own sake, He loves it now, when in a state of grace, not only for His own sake, but also for itself. Thus enamoured of its beauty, through its affections and good works, now that it is never without them, He bestows upon it continually further grace and love, and the more honourable and exalted He renders that soul, the more is He captivated by it, and the greater His love for it.

7. God Himself sets this truth before us, saying to His people, by the mouth of the prophet, 'since thou becamest honourable in My eyes, and glorious, I have loved thee.'† That is, since I have cast Mine eyes upon thee, and thereby shewed thee favour, and made thee glorious and honourable in My sight, thou hast merited other and further favours; for to say that God loves, is to say that He multiplies His grace. The bride in the Canticle speaks to the same effect, saying: 'I am black but beautiful, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,'‡ and the Church adds,§ saying: 'Therefore hath the King loved me, and brought me into His secret chamber.' This is as much as saying: O ye souls who have no knowledge nor understanding of these favours, marvel not that the heavenly King has shown such mercy unto me as to plunge me in the depths of His love, for,

\* Exod. xxxiii. 12, 13.

† Is. xliii. 4.

‡ Cant. i. 4.

§ Antiphon in Vesper. St. M. V.

though I am swarthy, He has so regarded me, after once looking upon me, that He could not be satisfied without betrothing me to Himself, and calling me into the inner chamber of His love.

8. Who can measure the greatness of the soul's exaltation when God is pleased with it? No language, no imagination is sufficient for this; for in truth God doeth this as God, to show that it is He who does it. The dealings of God with such a soul may in some degree be understood; but only in this way, namely, that He gives more to him who has more, and that His gifts are multiplied in proportion to the previous endowments of the soul. This is what He teaches us Himself in the Gospel, saying: 'He that hath to him shall be given, and he shall abound: but he that hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath.'\*

9. Thus the talent of that servant, not then in favour with his lord, was taken from him and given to another who had gained others, so that the latter might have all, together with the favour of his lord.† God heaps the noblest and the greatest favours of His house, which is the Church militant as well as the Church triumphant, upon him who is most His friend, ordaining it thus for His greater honour and glory, as a great light absorbs many little lights. This is the spiritual sense of those words already cited,‡ the prophet Isaías addressed to the people of Israel: 'I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I have given Egypt for thy atonement and Saba for thee. I will give men for thee, and people for thy life.'§

\* Matt. xiii. 12

† Ib. xxv. 28.

‡ § 7.

§ Is. xliii. 3,

10. Well mayest Thou then, O God, gaze upon and prize that soul which Thou regardest, for Thou hast made it precious by looking upon it, and given it graces which in Thy sight are precious, and by which Thou art captivated. That soul, therefore, deserves that Thou shouldest regard it not once only but often, seeing that Thou hast once looked upon it ; for so is it written in the book of Esther by the Holy Ghost: ‘This honour is he worthy of, whom the king hath a mind to honour.’\*

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#### NOTE.

THE gifts of love which the Bridegroom bestows on the soul in this state are inestimable; the praises and endearing expressions of divine love which pass so frequently between them are beyond all utterance. The soul is occupied in praising Him, and in giving Him thanks; and He in exalting, praising, and thanking the soul, as we see in the Canticle, where He thus speaks to the bride: ‘Behold, thou art fair, O My love, behold, thou art fair ; thy eyes are as those of doves.’ The bride replies: ‘Behold thou art fair my Beloved, and comely.’† These, and other like expressions, are addressed by them each to the other.

2. In the previous stanza the soul despised itself, and said it was swarthy and unclean, praising Him for His beauty and grace, Who, by looking upon the soul, rendered it gracious and beautiful. He, whose way it is

\* Esth. vi. 11.

† Cant. iv. 1, vi. 3.

to exalt the humble, fixing His eyes upon the soul, as He was entreated to do, praises it in the following stanza. He does not call it swarthy, as the soul calls itself, but He addresses it as His white dove, praising it for its good dispositions, those of a dove and a turtle-dove.

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### STANZA XXXIV.

#### THE BRIDEGROOM.

*The little white dove  
Has returned to the ark with the bough ;  
And now the turtle-dove  
Its desired mate  
On the green banks has found.*

It is the Bridegroom Himself who now speaks. He celebrates the purity of the soul in its present state, the rich rewards it has gained, in having prepared itself, and laboured to come to Him. He also speaks of its blessedness in having found the Bridegroom in this union, and of the fulfilment of all its desires, the delight and joy it has in Him now that all the trials of life and time are over.

‘ The little white dove ’

2. He calls the soul, on account of its whiteness and purity—effects of the grace it has received at the hands of God—a dove, ‘ the little white dove,’ for this is the term He applies to it in the Canticle, to mark its

simplicity, its natural gentleness, and its loving contemplation. The dove is not only simple, and gentle without gall, but its eyes are also clear, full of love. The Bridegroom, therefore, to point out in it this character of loving contemplation, wherein it looks upon God, says of it that its eyes are those of a dove: ‘Thy eyes are dove’s eyes.’\*

‘Has returned to the ark with the bough.’

3. Here the Bridegroom compares the soul to the dove of Noe’s ark, the going and returning of which is a figure of what befalls the soul. For as the dove went forth from the ark, and returned because it found no rest for its feet on account of the waters of the deluge, until the time when it returned with the olive branch in its mouth—a sign of the mercy of God in drying the waters which had covered the earth—so the soul went forth at its creation out of the ark of God’s omnipotence, and having traversed the deluge of its sins and imperfections, and finding no rest for its desires, flew and returned on the air of the longings of its love to the ark of its Creator’s bosom; but it only effected an entrance when God had dried the waters of its imperfections. Then it returned with the olive branch, that is, the victory over all things by His merciful compassion, to this blessed and perfect recollection in the bosom of the Beloved, not only triumphant over all its enemies, but also rewarded for its merits; for both the one and the other are symbolised by the olive bough. Thus the dove-soul returns to the ark of God not only white and pure as it went forth when

\* Cant. iv. 1.



He created it, but with the olive branch of reward and peace obtained by the conquest of itself.

‘ And now the turtle-dove its desired mate  
on the green banks has found.’

4. The Bridegroom calls the soul the turtle-dove, because when it is seeking after the Beloved it is like the turtle-dove when it cannot find its desired mate. It is said of the turtle-dove, when it cannot find its mate, that it sitteth not on the green boughs, nor drinketh of the cool refreshing waters, nor retireth to the shade, nor mingleth with companions; but when it finds its mate then it doeth all this.

5. Such, too, is the condition of the soul, and necessarily, if it is to attain to union with the Bridegroom. The soul’s love and anxiety must be such that it cannot rest on the green boughs of any joy, nor drink of the waters of this world’s honour and glory, nor recreate itself with any temporal consolation, nor shelter itself in the shade of created help and protection: it must repose nowhere, it must avoid the society of all its inclinations, mourn in its loneliness, until it shall find the Bridegroom to its perfect contentment.

6. And because the soul, before it attained to this estate, sought the Beloved in great love, and was satisfied with nothing short of Him, the Bridegroom here speaks of the end of its labours, and the fulfilment of its desires, saying: ‘ Now the turtle-dove its desired mate on the green banks has found.’ That is: Now the bride-soul sits on the green bough, rejoicing in her Beloved; drinks of the clear waters of the highest contemplation and of the wisdom of God; is refreshed by the consolations it

finds in Him, and is also sheltered under the shadow of His favour and protection, which she had so earnestly desired. There is she deliciously and divinely comforted, refreshed, and nourished, as she saith in the Canticle: ‘I sat down under His shadow Whom I desired, and His fruit was sweet to my palate.’\*

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### NOTE.

THE Bridegroom proceeds to speak of the satisfaction which He derives from the happiness which the bride has found in that solitude wherein she desired to live—a stable peace and unchangeable good. For when the bride is confirmed in the tranquillity of her soul and solitary love of the Bridegroom, she reposes so sweetly in the love of God, and God also in her, that she requires no other means or masters to guide her in the way of God; for God Himself is now her light and guide, fulfilling in her what He promised by the mouth of Oseas, saying: ‘I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart.’† That is, it is in solitude that He communicates Himself, and unites Himself, to the soul, for to speak to the heart is to satisfy the heart, and no heart can be satisfied with less than God. And so the Bridegroom says:

\* Cant. ii. 3.

† Os. ii. 14.

## STANZA XXXV.

*In solitude she lived,  
And in solitude built her nest;  
And in solitude, alone  
Hath the Beloved guided her,  
In solitude also wounded with love.*

IN this stanza the Bridegroom is doing two things: one is, He is praising the solitude in which the soul once lived, for it was the means whereby it found the Beloved, and rejoiced in Him, away from all its former anxieties and troubles. For, as the soul abode in solitude, abandoning all created help and consolation, in order to obtain the fellowship and union of the Beloved, it deserved thereby possession of the peace of solitude in the Beloved, in Whom it reposes alone, undisturbed by any anxieties.

2. The second is this: the Bridegroom is saying that, inasmuch as the soul has desired to be alone, far away, for His sake, from all created things, He has been enamoured of it because of its loneliness, has taken care of it, held it in His arms, fed it with all good things, and guided it to the deep things of God. He does not merely say that He is now the soul's guide, but that He is its only guide, without any intermediate help, either of angels or of men, either of forms or of figures; for the soul in this solitude has attained to true liberty of spirit, and is wholly detached from all subordinate means.

‘In solitude she lived.’

3. The turtle-dove, that is, the soul, lived in solitude before she found the Beloved in this state of union; for

the soul that longs after God derives no consolation from any other companionship,—yea, until it finds Him, everything does but increase its solitude.

‘And in solitude built her nest.’

4. The previous solitude of the soul was its voluntary privation of all the comforts of this world, for the sake of the Bridegroom—as in the instance of the turtle-dove—its striving after perfection, and acquiring that perfect solitude wherein it attains to union with the Word, and in consequence to complete refreshment and repose. This is what is meant by ‘nest;’ and the words of the stanza may be thus explained: ‘In that solitude, wherein the bride formerly lived, tried by afflictions and troubles, because she was not perfect, there, in that solitude, hath she found refreshment and rest, because she has found perfect rest in God.’ This, too, is the spiritual sense of these words of the Psalmist: ‘The sparrow hath found herself a house, and the turtle a nest for herself, where she may lay her young ones;’\* that is, a sure stay in God, in Whom all the desires and powers of the soul are satisfied.’

‘And in solitude.’

5. In the solitude of perfect detachment from all things, wherein it lives alone with God—there He guides it, moves it, and elevates it to divine things. He guides the understanding in the perception of divine things, because it is now detached from all strange and contrary knowledge, and is alone. He moves the will freely to love Himself, because it is now alone, disencumbered from all other affections. He fills the memory with divine

\* Ps. lxxxiii. 4.

knowledge, because that also is now alone, emptied of all imaginations and fancies. For the instant the soul clears and empties its faculties of all earthly objects, and from attachments to higher things, keeping them in solitude, God immediately fills them with the invisible and divine; it being God Himself Who guides it in this solitude. St. Paul says of the perfect, that they 'are led by the Spirit of God,' and that is the same as saying: 'In solitude hath He guided her.'

'Alone hath the Beloved guided her.'

6. That is, the Beloved not only guides the soul in its solitude, but it is He alone Who works in it directly and immediately. It is of the nature of the soul's union with God in the spiritual marriage, that God works directly, and communicates Himself immediately, not by the ministry of angels, or by the help of natural capacities. For the exterior and interior senses, all created things, and even the soul itself, contribute very little towards the reception of those great supernatural favours which God bestows in this state; yea, rather, inasmuch as they do not fall within the cognizance of natural efforts, ability and application, God effects them alone.

7. The reason is, that He finds the soul alone in its solitude, and therefore will not give it another companion, nor will He entrust His work to any other than Himself.

8. There is a certain fitness in this; for the soul having abandoned all things, and passed through all the ordinary means, rising above them unto God, God Himself becomes the guide, and the way to Himself. The soul in solitude, detached from all things, having now ascended above all things, nothing now can profit or

help it to ascend higher except the Bridegroom Word Himself, Who, because enamoured of the bride, will Himself alone bestow these graces on the soul. And so He says :

‘ In solitude also wounded with love.’

9. That is, the love of the bride ; for the Bridegroom not only loves greatly the solitude of the soul, but is also wounded with love of her, because the soul would abide in solitude and detachment, on account of its being itself wounded with love of Him. He will not, therefore, leave it alone ; for being wounded with love because of the soul’s solitude on His account, and seeing that nothing else can satisfy it, He comes Himself to be alone its guide, drawing it to, and absorbing it in, Himself. But He would not have done so, if He had not found it in this spiritual solitude.

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#### NOTE.

IT is a strange characteristic of persons in love, that they take a much greater pleasure in their loneliness than in the company of others. For if they meet together in the presence of others with whom they need have no intercourse, and from whom they have nothing to conceal, and if those others neither address them nor interfere with them, yet the very fact of their presence is sufficient to rob the lovers of all pleasure in their meeting. The cause of this lies in the fact, that love is the union of two persons, who will not communicate with each other if they are not alone. And now the soul, having reached



the summit of perfection, and liberty of spirit in God, all the resistance and contradictions of the flesh being subdued, has no other occupation or employment than indulgence in the joys of its intimate love of the Bridegroom. It is written of holy Tobias, after the trials of his life were over, that God restored his sight, and that 'the rest of his life was in joy.\*' So is it with the perfect soul, it rejoices in the blessings that surround it.

2. The prophet Isaias says of the soul which, having been tried in the works of perfection, has arrived at the goal desired: 'Thy light shall arise up in darkness, and thy darkness shall be as the noonday. And our Lord will give thee rest always, and will fill thy soul with brightness, and deliver thy bones, and thou shalt be as a watered garden, and as a fountain of water whose waters shall not fail. And the deserts of the world shall be builded in thee: thou shalt raise up the foundations of generation and generation; and thou shalt be called the builder of the hedges, turning the paths into rest. If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy will in My holy day, and call the sabbath delicate, and the Holy of our Lord glorious, and glorify Him while thou doest not thine own ways, and thy will be not found, to speak a word: then shalt thou be delighted upon the Lord, and I will lift thee up above the heights of the earth, and will feed thee with the inheritance of Jacob thy father,† Who is God Himself. The soul, therefore, has nothing else to do now but to rejoice in the delights of this pasture, and one thing only to desire, the perfect fruition of it in everlasting life. Thus, in the next and the

\* Tob. xiv. 4.

Is. lviii. 10—14.

following stanzas, it implores the Beloved to admit it into this beatific pasture in the clear vision of God, and says :

## STANZA XXXVI.

### THE BRIDE.

*Let us rejoice, O my Beloved,  
Let us go forth to see ourselves in Thy beauty,  
To the mountain and the hill,  
Where the pure water flows ;  
Let us enter into the heart of the thicket.*

THE perfect union of love between itself and God being now effected, the soul longs to occupy itself with those things that belong to love. It is the soul which is now speaking, making three petitions to the Beloved. In the first place, it asks for the joy and sweetness of love, saying : ‘ Let us rejoice.’ In the second place, it prays to be made like Him, saying : Let us go forth to see ourselves in Thy beauty.’ In the third place, it begs to be admitted to the knowledge of His secrets, saying : ‘ Let us enter into the heart of the thicket.’

‘ Let us rejoice, O my Beloved.’

2. That is, in the sweetness of our love ; not only in that sweetness of ordinary union, but also in that which flows from active and affective love, whether in the will by an act of affection, or outwardly, in good works which tend to the service of the Beloved. For love, as I have said, where it is firmly rooted, ever runs after those joys and delights which are the acts of exterior and interior

love. All this the soul does that it may be made like to the Beloved.

‘Let us go forth to see ourselves in Thy beauty.’

3. Let us so act, that, by the practice of this love, we may come to see ourselves in Thy beauty in everlasting life. That is: Let me be so transformed in Thy beauty, that, being alike in beauty, we may see ourselves both in Thy beauty; having Thy beauty, so that, one beholding the other, each may see his own beauty in the other, the beauty of both being Thine only, and mine absorbed in it. And thus I shall see Thee in Thy beauty, and myself in Thy beauty, and Thou shalt see me in Thy beauty; and I shall see myself in Thee in Thy beauty, and Thou Thyself in me in Thy beauty; so shall I seem to be Thyself in Thy beauty, and Thou myself in Thy beauty; my beauty shall be Thine, Thine shall be mine, and I shall be Thou in it, and Thou myself in Thine own beauty; for Thy beauty will be my beauty, and so we shall see, each the other, in Thy beauty.

4. This is the adoption of the sons of God, who may truly say what the Son Himself says to the Eternal Father: ‘All my things are Thine, and Thine are mine,’\* He by essence, being the Son of God by nature, we by participation, being sons by adoption. This He says not for Himself only, Who is the Head, but for the whole mystical body, which is the Church. For the Church will share in the very beauty of the Bridegroom in the day of her triumph, when she shall see God face to face. And this is the vision which the soul prays that the Bridegroom and itself may go in His beauty to see.

\* St. John xvii. 10.

‘To the mountain and the hill.’

5. That is, to the morning and essential knowledge of God, which is knowledge in the Divine Word, Who, because He is so high, is here signified by ‘the mountain.’ Thus Isaias saith, calling upon men to know the Son of God: ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of our Lord;’\* and before: ‘In the last days the mountain of the house of our Lord shall be prepared.’†

‘And to the hill,’

6. That is, to the evening knowledge of God, to the knowledge of Him in His creatures, in His works, and in His marvellous laws. This is signified by the expression ‘hill,’ because it is a kind of knowledge lower than the other. The soul prays for both when it says: ‘to the mountain and the hill.’

7. When the soul says: ‘Let us go forth to see ourselves in Thy beauty to the mountain,’ its meaning is: Transform me, and make me like the beauty of the Divine Wisdom, the Word, the Son of God. When it says: ‘to the hill,’ the meaning is: Do Thou instruct me in the beauty of this lower knowledge, which is manifest in Thy creatures and mysterious works. This also is the beauty of the Son of God, wherewith the soul desires to shine.

8. But the soul cannot see itself in the beauty of God if it be not transformed in His wisdom, wherein all things are seen and possessed, whether in heaven or in earth. It was to this mountain and to this hill the bride longed to come when she said: ‘I will go to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.’‡ The mountain of myrrh is the clear vision of God, and the hill of

\* Is. ii. 3.

† Ib. 2.

‡ Cant. iv. 6.

frankincense the knowledge of Him in His works, for the myrrh on the mountain is of a higher order than the incense on the hill.

‘Where the pure water flows.’

9. This is the wisdom and knowledge of God, which cleanse the understanding, and detach it from all accidents and fancies, and which clear it of the mist of ignorance. The soul is ever influenced by this desire of perfectly and clearly understanding the divine verities, and the more it loves the more it desires to penetrate them, and hence the third petition which it makes,

‘Let us enter into the heart of the thicket;’

10. Into the depths of God’s marvellous works and profound judgments. Such is their multitude and variety, that they may be called a thicket. They are so full of wisdom and mystery, that we may not only call them a thicket, but we may even apply to them the words of David: ‘The mountain of God is a rich mountain, a mountain curdled as cheese, a rich mountain.’\* The thicket of the wisdom and knowledge of God is so deep, and so immense, that the soul, how much soever it knows of it, can always penetrate further within it, because it is so immense and so incomprehensible. ‘O the depth,’ cries out the Apostle, ‘of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!’†

11. But the soul longs to enter this thicket and incomprehensibility of His judgments, for it is moved by that longing for a deeper knowledge of them. That knowledge is an inestimable delight, transcending all

\* Ps. lxxvii. 16.

† Rom. xi. 33.

understanding. David speaking of the sweetness of them, saith: 'The judgments of our Lord are true, justified in themselves, to be desired above gold and many precious stones, and sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. For Thy servant keepeth them.'\* The soul therefore earnestly longs to be engulfed in His judgments, and to have a deeper knowledge of them, and for that end would esteem it a joy and great consolation to endure all sufferings and afflictions in the world, and whatever else might help it to that end, however hard and painful it might be; it would gladly pass through the agonies of death to enter deeper into God.

12. Hence, also, the thicket, which the soul desires to enter, may be fittingly understood as signifying the great and many trials and tribulations which the soul longs for, because suffering is most sweet and most profitable to it, inasmuch as it is the way by which it enters more and more into the thicket of the delicious wisdom of God. The most pure suffering leads to the most pure and the deepest knowledge, and consequently, to the purest and highest joy, for that is the issue of the deepest knowledge. Thus, the soul, not satisfied with ordinary suffering, says: 'Let us enter into the heart of the thicket,' even the anguish of death, that I may see God.

13. Job, desiring to suffer that he might see God, thus speaks: 'Who will grant that my request may come, and that God may give me what I look for? And that He that hath begun may destroy me, that He may let loose His hand and cut me off? And that this may be my comfort, that afflicting me with sorrow, He spare not.'†

\* Ps. xviii. 10—12.

† Job vi. 8—10.



O that men would understand how impossible it is to enter the thicket, the manifold riches of the wisdom of God, without entering into the thicket of manifold suffering making it the desire and consolation of the soul; and how that the soul which really longs for the divine wisdom, longs first of all for the sufferings of the Cross, that it may enter in.

14. For this cause it was that St. Paul admonished the Ephesians not to faint in their tribulations, but to take courage: 'That being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth; to know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.'\* The gate by which we enter into the riches of the knowledge of God, is the Cross; and that gate is narrow. They who desire to enter in that way are few, while those who desire the joys that come by it are many.

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#### NOTE.

ONE of the principal reasons why the soul desires to be released and to be with Christ, is, that it may see Him face to face, and penetrate to the depths of His ways and the eternal mysteries of His incarnation, which is not the least part of its blessedness; for in the Gospel of St. John He, addressing the Father, said: 'Now this is eternal life: that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent.'† As the first act of a

\* Ephes. iii. 17—19.

† St. John xvii. 3.

person who has taken a long journey is to see and converse with him whom he was in search of, so the first thing which the soul desires, when it has attained to the beatific vision, is to know and enjoy the deep secrets and mysteries of the incarnation and the ancient ways of God depending on them. Thus the soul, having said that it longed to see itself in the beauty of God, sings as in the following stanza :—

### STANZA XXXVII.

*We shall go at once  
To the deep caverns of the rock  
Which are all secret  
There we shall enter in,  
And taste of the new wine of the pomegranate.*

ONE of the reasons which most influence the soul to desire to enter into the ‘thicket’ of the wisdom of God, and to have a more intimate knowledge of the beauty of the divine wisdom, is, as I have said, that it may unite the understanding with God in the knowledge of the mysteries of the Incarnation, as of all His works the highest and most full of sweetness, and the most delicious knowledge. And here the bride therefore says, that after she has entered in within the divine wisdom—that is, the spiritual marriage, which is now and will be in glory, seeing God face to face—her soul united with the divine wisdom, the Son of God, she will then understand the deep mysteries of God and Man, which are the highest wisdom hidden in God. They, that is, the bride and the Bridegroom, will enter in—the soul ingulfed and absorbed—and both together will have the fruition of the joy

which springs from the knowledge of mysteries, and attributes and power of God which are revealed in those mysteries, such as His justice, His mercy, wisdom, power, and love.

‘We shall go at once to the deep caverns of the rock.’

2. ‘This rock is Christ,’ as we learn from St. Paul.\* The deep caverns of the rock are the deep mysteries of the wisdom of God in Christ, in the hypostatical union of the human nature with the Divine Word, and in the correspondence with it of the union of man with God, and in the agreement of God’s justice and mercy in the salvation of mankind, in the manifestation of His judgments. And because His judgments are so high and so deep, they are here fittingly called ‘deep caverns;’ deep, because of the depth of His mysteries, and caverns because of the depth of His wisdom in them. For as caverns are deep, with many windings, so each mystery of Christ is of deepest wisdom, and has many windings of His secret judgments of predestination and foreknowledge with respect to men.

‘Which are all secret.’

3. Notwithstanding the marvellous mysteries which holy doctors have discovered, and holy souls have understood in this life, many more remain behind. There are in Christ great depths to be fathomed, for He is a rich mine, with many recesses full of treasures, and however deeply we may descend we shall never reach the end, for in every recess new veins of new treasures abound in all directions: ‘In Whom,’ according to the Apostle, ‘are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.’† But the soul cannot reach these hidden treasures unless it first

\* 1 Cor. x. 4.

† Coloss. ii. 3.

passes through the thicket of interior and exterior suffering: for even such knowledge of the mysteries of Christ as is possible in this life, cannot be had without great sufferings, and without many intellectual and moral gifts, and without previous spiritual exercises; for all these gifts are far inferior to this knowledge of the mysteries of Christ; being only a preparation for it.

4. Thus God said to Moses, when he asked to see His glory, 'Man shall not see Me and live.' God, however, said that He would show him all that could be revealed in this life; and so He set Moses 'in a hole of the rock,' which is Christ, where he might see His 'back parts;'\* that is He made him understand the mysteries of the Sacred Humanity.

5. The soul longs to enter in earnest into these caverns of Christ, that it may be absorbed, transformed, and inebriated in the love and knowledge of His mysteries, hiding itself in the bosom of the Beloved. It is into these caverns that He invites the bride, in the Cantic, to enter, saying: 'Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come; my dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall.'† These clefts of the rock are the caverns of which we are here speaking, and to which the bride refers, saying,

'And there we shall enter in.'

6. That is in the knowledge of the divine mysteries. The bride says not, 'I will enter' alone, which seems the most fitting—seeing that the Bridegroom has no need to enter in again—but 'we will enter,' that is, the Bridegroom and the bride, to show that this is not the work of the

\* Exod. xxxiii. 20—23.

† Cant. ii. 13, 14.

bride, but of the Bridegroom with her. Moreover, inasmuch as God and the soul are now united in the state of spiritual marriage, the soul doeth nothing of itself without God. To say 'we will enter,' is as much as to say, there shall we transform ourselves: that is, I shall be transformed in Thee through the love of Thy divine and sweet judgments: for in the knowledge of the predestination of the just, and in the foresight of the wicked, wherein the Father prevented the just in the benedictions of His sweetness in Jesus Christ His Son, the soul is transformed in a most exalted and perfect way in the love of God according to this knowledge, giving thanks to the Father, and loving Him again and again with great sweetness and delight, for the sake of Jesus Christ His Son. This the soul does in union with Christ and together with Him. The delight flowing from this act of praise is ineffably sweet, and the soul speaks of it in the words that follow,

'And taste of the new wine of the pomegranates.'

7. The pomegranates here are the mysteries of Christ and the judgments of the wisdom of God; His power and attributes, the knowledge of which we have from these mysteries; and they are infinite. For as pomegranates have many grains in their round orb, so in each one of the attributes and judgments and power of God is a multitude of admirable arrangements and marvellous works contained within the sphere of power and mystery, appertaining to those works. Consider the round form of the pomegranate; for each pomegranate signifies some one power and attribute of God, which power or attribute is God Himself, symbolized here by the circular figure, which has neither beginning nor end.

It was in the contemplation of the judgments and mysteries of the wisdom of God, which are infinite, that the bride said ‘His belly is of ivory set with sapphires.’\* The sapphires are the mysteries and judgments of the divine Wisdom, which is here signified by the ‘belly’—the sapphire being a precious stone of the colour of the heavens when clear and serene.

8. The wine of the pomegranates which the bride says that she and the Bridegroom will taste is the fruition and joy of the love of God which overflows the soul in the understanding and knowledge of His mysteries. For as the many grains of the pomegranate pressed together give forth but one wine, so all the marvels and magnificence of God, infused into the soul, issue in but one fruition and joy of love, which is the drink of the Holy Ghost, and which the soul offers at once to God the Word, its Bridegroom, with great tenderness of love.

9. This divine drink the bride promised to the Bridegroom if He would lead her into this deep knowledge: ‘There Thou shalt teach me,’ saith the bride, ‘and I will give Thee a cup of spiced wine, and new wine of my pomegranates.’† The soul calls them ‘my pomegranates,’ though they are God’s Who had given them to it, and the soul offers them to God as if they were its own, saying, ‘we will taste of the wine of the pomegranates;’ for when He tastes it He gives it to the soul to taste, and when the soul tastes it, the soul gives it back to Him, and thus it is that both taste it together.

\* Cant. v. 14.

† Cant. viii. 2.



## NOTE.

IN the two previous stanzas the bride sung of those good things which the Bridegroom is to give her in everlasting bliss, namely, her transformation in the beauty of created and uncreated wisdom, and also in the beauty of the union of the Word with flesh, wherein she shall behold His face as well as His back. Accordingly two things are set before us in the following stanza. The first is the way in which the soul tastes of the divine wine of the pomegranates; the second is the soul's putting before the Bridegroom the glory of its predestination. And though these two things are spoken of separately, one after the other, they are both involved in the one essential glory of the soul.

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## STANZA XXXVIII.

*There Thou wilt show me  
That which my soul desir'd;  
And there Thou wilt give me at once,  
O Thou, my life,  
That which Thou gavest me the other day,*

THE reason why the soul longed to enter the caverns was that it might attain to the consummation of the love of God, the object of its continual desires; that is, that it might love God with the pureness and perfection where-with He has loved it, so that it might thereby requite His love. Hence in the present stanza the bride saith to the Bridegroom that He will there show her what she

had always aimed at in all her actions, namely, that He would show her how to love Him perfectly, as He has loved her. And, secondly, that He will give her that essential glory for which He has predestined her from the day of His eternity.

‘ There Thou wilt show me

That which my soul desired.’

2. That which the soul aims at is equality in love with God, the object of its natural and supernatural desire. He who loves cannot be satisfied if he does not feel that he loves as much as he is loved. And when the soul sees that in the transformation in God, such as is possible in this life, notwithstanding the immensity of its love, it cannot equal the perfection of that love wherewith God loves it, it desires the clear transformation of glory wherein it shall equal the perfection of love wherewith it is itself beloved of God; it desires, I say, the clear transformation of glory wherein it shall equal His love.

3. For though in this high state, which the soul reaches on earth, there is a real union of the will, yet it cannot reach that perfection and strength of love which it will possess in the union of glory; seeing that then, according to the Apostle, the soul will know God as it is known of Him: ‘ Then I shall know even as I am known.’\* That is, I shall then love God even as I am loved by Him. For as the understanding of the soul will then be the understanding of God, and its will the will of God, so its love will also be His love. Though in heaven the will of the soul is not destroyed, it is so intimately united with the power of the will of God, Who loves it,

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

that it loves Him as strongly and as perfectly as it is loved of Him ; both wills being united in one sole will and one sole love of God.

4. Thus the soul loves God with the will and strength of God Himself, being made one with that very strength of love wherewith itself is loved of God. This strength is of the Holy Ghost, in Whom the soul is there transformed. He is given to the soul to strengthen its love ; ministering to it, and supplying in it, because of its transformation in glory, that which is defective in it. In the perfect transformation, also, of the state of spiritual marriage, such as is possible on earth, in which the soul is all clothed in grace, the soul loves in a certain way in the Holy Ghost, Who is given to it in that transformation,

5. We are to observe here that the bride does not say, There wilt Thou give me Thy love, though that be true—for that means only that God will love her—but that He will there show her how she is to love Him with that perfection at which she aims, because there in giving her His love, He will at the same time show her how to love Him as He loves her. For God not only teaches the soul to love Himself purely, with a disinterested love, as He hath loved us, but He also enables it to love Him with that strength with which He loves the soul, transforming it in His love, wherein He bestows upon it His own power, so that it may love Him. It is as if He put an instrument in its hand, taught it the use thereof, and played upon it together with the soul. This is shewing the soul how it is to love, and at the same time endowing it with the capacity of loving.

6. The soul is not satisfied until it reaches this point,

neither would it be satisfied even in Heaven, unless it felt, as St. Thomas teaches,\* that it loved God as much as it is loved of Him. And as I said of the state of spiritual marriage of which I am speaking, there is now, at this time, though it cannot be that perfect love in glory, a certain vivid vision and likeness of that perfection, which is wholly indescribable.

‘And there Thou wilt give me at once, O Thou my life,  
that which Thou gavest me the other day.’

7. What He will give is the essential glory which consists in the vision of God. Before proceeding further it is requisite to solve a question which arises here, namely, Why is it, seeing that essential glory consists in the vision of God, and not in loving Him, the soul says that its longing is for His love, and not for the essential glory? Why is it that the soul begins the stanza with referring to His love, and then introduces the subject of the essential glory afterwards, as if it were something of less importance.

8. There are two reasons for this. The first is this: As the whole aim of the soul is love, the seat of which is in the will, the property of which is to give and not to receive; the property of the understanding, the subject of essential glory, being to receive and not to give; to the soul inebriated with love, the first consideration is not the essential glory which God will bestow upon it, but the entire surrender of itself to Him in true love, without any regard to its own advantage.

9. The second reason is that the second object is included in the first, and has been taken for granted in

\* Opusc. de Beatitudine, cap. 2.

the previous stanzas, it being impossible to attain to the perfect love of God without the perfect vision of Him. The question is solved by the first reason, for the soul renders to God by love that which is His due, but with the understanding it receives from Him and does not give.

10. I now resume the explanation of the stanza, and enquire what day is meant by the 'other day,' and what is it that God then gave the soul, and what that is which it prays to receive afterwards in glory? By 'other day' is meant the day of the eternity of God, which is other than the day of time. In that day of eternity God predestined the soul unto glory, and determined the degree of glory which He would give it, and freely gave from the beginning before He created it. This now, in a manner, so truly belongs to the soul that no event or accident, high or low, can ever take it away, for the soul will enjoy for ever that for which God had predestined it from all eternity.

11. This is that which He gave it 'the other day;' that which the soul longs now to possess visibly in glory. And what is that which He gave it? That what 'eye hath not seen nor ear hath heard, neither hath it ascended into the heart of man.'\* 'The eye hath not seen,' saith Isaias, 'O God beside Thee, what things Thou hast prepared for them that expect Thee.'† The soul has no word to describe it, so it says 'What.' It is in truth the vision of God, and as there is no expression by which we can explain what it is to see God, the soul says only 'that which Thou gavest me.'

12. But that I may not leave the subject without saying something further concerning it, I will repeat what

\* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

† Is. lxiv. 4.

Christ hath said of it in the Apocalypse of St. John, in many terms, phrases, and comparisons, because a single word once uttered cannot describe it, for there is much still unsaid, notwithstanding all that Christ hath spoken at seven different times. ‘To him that overcometh,’ saith He, ‘I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of My God.’\* But as this does not perfectly describe it, He says again: ‘Be thou faithful unto death; and I will give thee the crown of life.’†

13. This also is insufficient, and so He speaks again more obscurely, but explaining it more: ‘To him that overcometh I will give the hidden manna, and will give him a white counter, and on the counter a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it.’‡ And as even this is still insufficient, the Son of God speaks of great power and joy, saying: ‘He that shall overcome and keep My works unto the end, I will give him power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, and as a vessel of the potter they shall be broken, as I also have received of My Father, and I will give him the morning star.’§ Not satisfied with these words He adds: ‘He that shall overcome shall thus be vested in white garments, and I will not put his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father.’||

14. Still, all this falls short. He speaks of it in words of unutterable majesty and grandeur: ‘He that shall overcome I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more; and I will write

\* Apoc. ii. 7.

† Ib. 10.

‡ Ib. 17.

§ Ib. 26—28.

|| Ib. iii. 5.



upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem which descendeth out of Heaven from My God, and My new name.\* The seventh time He says: 'He that shall overcome, I will give unto him to sit with Me in My throne: as I also have overcome, and sat with My Father in His throne. He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.†

15. These are the words of the Son of God; all of which tend to describe that which was given to the soul. The words correspond most accurately with it, but still they do not explain it, because it involves infinite good. The noblest expressions befit it, but none of them reach it, no, not all together.

16. Let us now see whether David hath said anything of it. In one of the Psalms he saith: 'O how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee.‡ In another place he calls it a 'torrent of pleasure,' saying, 'Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure.' And as he did not consider this enough, he says again, 'Thou hast prevented him with blessings of sweetness.¶ The expression that rightly fits this 'that' of the soul, namely its predestined bliss, cannot be found. Let us, therefore, rest satisfied with what the soul has used in reference to it, and explain the words as follows:

'That which Thou gavest me.'

17. That is, that weight of glory to which Thou didst predestine me, O my Bridegroom, in the day of Thy

\* Ib. 12.

† Ib. 21, 22.

‡ Ps. xxx. 20.

§ Ib. xxxv. 9.

|| Ib. xx. 4.

eternity, when it was Thy good pleasure to decree my creation, Thou wilt then give me in my day of my betrothal and of my nuptials, in my day of the joy of my heart, when released from the burden of the flesh, led into the deep caverns of Thy bridal chamber and gloriously transformed in Thee we drink the wine of the sweet pomegranates.

### NOTE.

BUT inasmuch as the soul, in the state of spiritual marriage, of which I am now speaking, cannot but know something of this 'that,' seeing that because of its transformation in God something of it must be experienced by it, it will not omit to say something on the subject, the pledges and signs of which it is conscious of in itself, as it is written: 'Who can withhold the words He hath conceived?'\* Hence in the following stanza the soul says something of the fruition which it shall have in the beatific vision, explaining so far as it is possible the nature and the manner of it.

### STANZA XXXIX.

*The breathing of the air,  
The song of the sweet nightingale,  
The grove and its beauty  
In the serene night,  
With the flame that consumes and gives no pain.*

THE soul refers here, under five different expressions, to that which the Bridegroom is to give it in the beatific transformation. 1. The aspiration of the Holy Spirit of

\* Job iv. 2.

God after it, and its own aspiration after God. 2. Joyous praise of God in the fruition of Him. 3. The knowledge of creatures and the order of them. 4. The pure and clear contemplation of the divine essence. 5. Perfect transformation in the infinite love of God.

‘The breathing of the air.’

2. This is a certain faculty which God will there give the soul in the communication of the Holy Ghost, Who, like one breathing, raises the soul by His divine aspiration, informs it, strengthens it, so that it too may breathe in God with the same aspiration of love which the Father breathes with the Son, and the Son with the Father, which is the Holy Ghost Himself, Who is breathed into the soul in the Father and the Son in that transformation so as to unite it to Himself; for the transformation will not be true and perfect if the soul is not transformed in the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity in a clear manifest degree. This breathing of the Holy Ghost in the soul, whereby God transforms it in Himself, is to the soul a joy so deep, so exquisite, and so grand, that no mortal tongue can describe it, no human understanding, as such, conceive it in any degree; for even that which passes in the soul with respect to the communication which takes place in its transformation wrought in this life, cannot be described, because the soul united with God and transformed in Him, breathes in God that very divine aspiration which God breathes Himself in the soul when transformed in Him.

3. In the transformation which takes place in this life, this breathing of God in the soul, and of the soul in God, is of most frequent occurrence, and the source of

the most exquisite delight of love to the soul, but not however in the clear and manifest degree which it will have in the life to come. This, in my opinion, is what St. Paul referred to when he said: 'Because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father.'\* The blessed in the life to come, and the perfect in this, thus experience it.

4. Nor is it to be thought impossible that the soul should be capable of so great a thing as that it should breathe in God as God in it, in the way of participation. For granting that God has bestowed upon it so great a favour as to unite it to the most Holy Trinity, whereby it becomes like unto God, and God by participation, is it altogether incredible, that it should exercise the faculties of its understanding, perform its acts of knowledge and of love, or, to speak more accurately, should have all done in the Holy Trinity together with It, as the Holy Trinity Itself? This, however, takes place by communication and participation, God Himself effecting it in the soul, for this is to be transformed in the Three Persons in power, wisdom, and love, and herein it is that the soul becomes like unto God, Who, that it might come to this, created it to His own image and likeness.

5. How this can be so cannot be explained in any other way than by showing how the Son of God has raised us to so high a state, and merited for us the 'Power to be made the sons of God.'† He prayed to the Father saying: 'Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me, that they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me.'‡

\* Gal. iv. 6.

† St. John i. 12.

‡ Ib. xvii. 24.

That is, that they may do by participation in Us what I do naturally, namely, breathe the Holy Ghost. He says also: 'Not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me, that they all may be one, as Thou Father in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them: that they may be one as We also are one. I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one, and the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast also loved Me,'\* that is in bestowing upon them that love which He bestows upon the Son, though not naturally as upon Him, but in the way I speak of, in the union and transformation of love.

6. We are not to suppose from this that our Lord prayed that the saints might become one in essence and nature, as the Father and the Son are; but that they might become one in the union of love as the Father and the Son are one in the oneness of love. Souls have by participation that very God which the Son has by nature, and are therefore really gods by participation like unto God and of His society.

7. St. Peter speaks of this as follows: 'Grace to you and peace be accomplished in the knowledge of God, and Christ Jesus our Lord; as all things of His divine power, which pertain to life and godliness, are given us by the knowledge of Him who hath called us by His own proper glory and virtue, by Whom He hath given us most great and precious promises: that by these you

\* Ib. xvii. 20—23.

may be made partakers of the divine nature.’\* Thus far St. Peter, who clearly teaches that the soul will be a partaker of God Himself, and will do, together with Him, the work of the Most Holy Trinity, because of the substantial union between the soul and God. And though this union be perfect only in the life to come, yet even in this, in the state of perfection, which the soul is said now to have attained, some anticipation of its sweetness is given it, in the way I am speaking of, though in a manner wholly ineffable.

8. O souls created for this and called thereto, what are you doing? What are your occupations? Your aim is meanness, and your enjoyments misery. Oh, wretched blindness of the children of Adam, blind to so great a light, and deaf to so clear a voice; you see not that, while seeking after greatness and glory, you are miserable and contemptible, ignorant, and unworthy of blessings so great. I now proceed to the second expression which the soul has made use of to describe that which He gave it.

‘The song of the sweet nightingale.’

9. Out of this ‘breathing of the air’ comes the sweet voice of the Beloved addressing Himself to the soul, in which the soul sends forth its own sweet song of joy to Him. Both are meant by the song of the nightingale. As the song of the nightingale is heard in the spring of the year, when the cold, and rain, and changes of winter are past, filling the ear with melody, and the mind with joy; so, in the true intercourse and transformation of love, which takes place in this life, the bride now

\* 2 St. Peter i. 2—4.



protected and delivered from all trials and changes of the world; detached, and free from the imperfections, sufferings and darkness, both of mind and body, becomes conscious of a new spring in liberty, largeness and joy of spirit, in which she hears the sweet voice of the Bridegroom, Who is her sweet nightingale, renewing and refreshing the very substance of her soul, now prepared for the journey of everlasting life.

10. That voice is sweet to her ears, and calls her sweetly, as it is written: 'Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come. For winter is now past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land, the time of pruning is come: the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.'\* When the bride hears the voice of the Bridegroom in her inmost soul, she feels that her troubles are over and her prosperity begun. In the refreshing comfort and sweet sense of this voice she, too, like the nightingale, sends forth a new song of rejoicing unto God, in unison with Him Who now moves her to do so.

11. It is for this that the Beloved sings; that the bride in unison with Him may sing unto God; this is the aim and desire of the Bridegroom, that the soul should sing with the spirit joyously unto God; and this is what He asks of the bride in the Canticle: 'Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come; my dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall, shew me thy face, let thy voice sound in my ears.'†

12. The ears of God signify the desire He hath that the soul should sing in perfect joy. And that this song

\* Cant. ii. 10—12.

† Ib. ii. 13, 14.

may be perfect, the Bridegroom bids the soul to send it forth, and to let it sound in the clefts of the rock, that is, in the transformation which is the fruit of the mysteries of Christ, of which I spoke just now.\* And because in this union of the soul with God, the soul sings unto Him together with Him, in the way I spoke of when I was speaking of love,† the song of praise is most perfect and pleasing unto God ; for the acts of the soul, in the state of perfection, are most perfect ; and thus the song of its rejoicing is sweet unto God as well as to itself.

13. ‘Thy voice is sweet,’‡ saith the Bridegroom, not only to thee, but also to Me, for as we are one, thy voice is also in unison and one with Mine. This is the canticle which the soul sings in the transformation which takes place in this life, about which no exaggeration is possible. But as this song is not so perfect as the new song in the life of glory, the soul, having a foretaste of that by what it feels on earth, shadows forth by the grandeur of this the magnificence of that in glory, which is beyond all comparison nobler, and calls it to mind and says that what its portion there will be, is the song of the sweet nightingale.

‘The grove and its beauty.’

14. This is the third thing which the Bridegroom is to give the soul. The grove, because it contains many plants and animals, signifies God as the Creator and Giver of life to all creatures, which have their being and origin from Him, reveal Him and make Him known as the Creator. The beauty of the grove, which the soul

\* Stanza xxxvii. § 5.

† Stanza xxxviii. § 6,

‡ Cant. ii. 14.

prays for, is not only the grace, wisdom, and loveliness which flow from God over all created things, whether in heaven or on earth, but also the beauty of the mutual harmony and wise arrangement of the inferior creation, and the higher also, and of the mutual relations of both. The knowledge of this gives the soul great joy and delight. The fourth request is:—

‘In the serene night.’

15. That is, contemplation, in which the soul desires to behold the grove. It is called night, because contemplation is dim; and that is the reason why it is also called mystical theology, that is, the secret or hidden wisdom of God, where, without the sound of words, or the intervention of any bodily or spiritual sense, as it were in silence and in repose, in the darkness of sense and nature, God teaches the soul—and the soul knows not how—in a most secret and hidden way.

16. Some spiritual writers call this ‘understanding without understanding,’ because it does not take place in what philosophers call the active understanding, which is conversant with the forms, fancies, and apprehensions of the physical faculties, but in the understanding as it is possible and passive, which without receiving such forms, receives passively only the substantial knowledge of them free from all imagery. This occurs without effort or exertion on its part, and for this reason contemplation is called night, in which the soul, through the channel of its transformation, learns in this life that it already possesses, in a supreme degree, this divine grove, together with its beauty.

17. Still, however clear may be its knowledge, it is dark

night in comparison with that of the blessed, for which the soul prays. Hence, while it prays for the clear contemplation, that is, the fruition of the grove and its beauty with the other objects here enumerated, it says, let it be in the night now serene; that is, in the clear beatific contemplation: let the night of dim contemplation cease here below, and change into the clear contemplation of the serene vision of God above. Thus the serene night is the clear and unclouded contemplation of the face of God. It was to this night of contemplation that David referred, when he said: 'Night shall be my light in my pleasures;'\* that is, when I shall have my delight in the essential vision of God, the night of contemplation will have dawned in the day and light of my understanding.

'With the flame that consumes, and gives no pain.'

18. This flame is the love of the Holy Ghost. 'Consumes' means absolute perfection. Therefore, when the soul says that the Beloved will give it all that is mentioned in this stanza, and that they will be its possession in love absolute and perfect, all of them and itself with them in perfect love, and that without pain, its purpose is to show forth the utter perfection of love. Love, to be perfect, must have these two properties, it must consume and transform the soul in God; the burning and transformation wrought in the soul by the flame must give no pain. But this can be only in the state of the blessed, where the flame is sweet love, for in this transformation of the soul therein there is a blessed agreement and contentment on both sides, and no change to a

\* Ps. cxxxviii. 11.

greater or less degree gives pain, as before, when the soul had attained to the state of perfect love.

19. But the soul having attained to this state abides in its love of God, a love so like His and so sweet, God being, as Moses saith,\* a consuming fire, 'the Lord thy God is a consuming fire,' perfects and renews it. But this transformation is not like that which is wrought in this life, which though most perfect and in love consummate was still in some measure consuming the soul and wearing it away. It was like fire in burning coals, for though the coals may be transformed into fire, and made like it, and ceased from seething, and smoke no longer arises from them as before they were wholly transformed into fire, still, though they have become perfect fire, the fire consumes them and reduces them to ashes.

20. So is it with the soul which in this life is transformed by perfect love: for though it be wholly conformed yet it still suffers, in some measure, both pain and loss. Pain, on account of the beatific transformation which is still wanting; loss, through the weakness and corruption of the flesh coming in contact with love so strong and so deep: for everything that is grand hurts and pains our natural infirmity, as it is written: 'The corruptible body is a load upon the soul.'† But in the life of bliss there will be neither loss nor pain, though the sense of the soul will be most acute, and its love without measure, for God will give power to the former and strength to the latter, perfecting the understanding in His wisdom and the will in His love.

21. As, in the foregoing stanzas, and in the one which

\* Deuteron. iv. 24.

† Wisd. ix. 15.

follows, the bride prays for the boundless knowledge of God, for which she requires the strongest and the deepest love that she may love Him in proportion to the grandeur of His communications, she prays now that all these things may be bestowed upon her in love consummated, perfect, and strong.

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### STANZA XL.

*None saw it ;  
Neither did Aminadab appear.  
The siege was intermitted,  
And the cavalry dismounted  
At the sight of the waters*

THE bride perceiving that the desire of her will is now detached from all things, cleaving unto God with most fervent love ; that the sensual part of the soul, with all its powers, faculties, and desires, is now conformed to the spirit ; that all rebellion is quelled for ever ; that satan is overcome and driven far away in the varied contest of the spiritual struggle ; that her soul is united and transformed in the rich abundance of the heavenly gifts ; and that she herself is now prepared, strong and apparelled, ' leaning upon her Beloved,' to go up ' by the desert '\* of death ; full of joy to the glorious throne of His bride. She is longing for the end, and puts before the eyes of her Bridegroom, in order to influence Him the more, all that is mentioned in the present stanza, these five considerations :—

2. The first is that the soul is detached from all things and a stranger to them. The second is that the

\* Cant. iii. 6 ; viii. 5.



devil is overcome and put to flight. The third is that the passions are subdued, and the natural desires mortified. The fourth and the fifth are that the sensual and lower nature of the soul is changed and purified, and so conformed to the spiritual, as not only not to hinder spiritual blessings, but is, on the contrary, prepared for them, for it is even a partaker already, according to its capacity, of those which have been bestowed upon it.

‘None saw it.’

3. That is, my soul is so detached, so denuded, so lonely, so estranged from all created things, in heaven and earth; it has become so recollected in Thee, that nothing whatever can come within sight of that most intimate joy which I have in Thee. That is, there is nothing whatever that can cause me pleasure with its sweetness, or disgust with its vileness; for my soul is so far removed from all such things, absorbed in such profound delight in Thee, that nothing can behold me. This is not all, for :

‘Neither did Aminadab appear.’

4. Aminadab, in the Holy Writings, signifies the devil; that is the enemy of the soul, in a spiritual sense, who is ever fighting against it, and disturbing it with his innumerable artillery, that it may not enter into the fortress and secret place of interior recollection with the Bridegroom. There, the soul is so protected, so strong, so triumphant in virtue which it then practises, so defended by God’s right hand, that the devil not only dares not approach it, but runs away from it in great fear, and does not venture to appear. The practice of virtue, and the state of perfection to which the soul has come, is

a victory over satan, and causes him such terror, that he cannot present himself before it. Thus Aminadab appeared not with any right to keep the soul away from the object of its desire.

‘The siege was intermitted.’

5. By the siege is meant the passions and desires, which, when not overcome and mortified, surround the soul and fight against it on all sides. Hence the term siege is applied to them. This siege is ‘intermitted,’ that is, the passions are subject to reason, and the desires mortified. Under these circumstances the soul entreats the Beloved to communicate to it those graces for which it has prayed, for now the siege is no hindrance. Until the four passions of the soul are ordered in reason according to God, and until the desires are mortified and purified, the soul is incapable of seeing God.

‘The cavalry dismounted at the sight of the waters.’

6. The waters are the spiritual joys and blessings which the soul now enjoys interiorly with God. The cavalry is the bodily senses of the sensual part, interior as well as exterior, for they carry with them the phantasms and figures of their objects. They dismount now at the sight of the waters, because the sensual and lower part of the soul in the state of spiritual marriage is purified, and in a certain way spiritualised, so that the soul with its powers of sense and natural forces becomes so recollected as to participate and rejoice, in their way, in the spiritual grandeurs which God communicates to it in the spirit within. To this did the Psalmist refer when he said: ‘My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.’\*

\* Ps. lxxxiii. 2

7. It is to be observed that the cavalry did not dismount to taste of the waters, but only at the sight of them, because the sensual part of the soul, with its powers, is incapable of tasting substantially and properly the spiritual blessings, not merely in this life, but also in the life to come. Still, because of a certain overflowing of the spirit, they are sensibly refreshed and delighted, and this delight attracts them—that is, the senses with their bodily powers—towards that interior recollection where the soul is drinking the waters of the spiritual benedictions. This condition of the senses is rather a dismounting at the sight of the waters than a dismounting for the purpose of seeing or tasting them. The soul says of them that they dismounted, not that they went, or did anything else, and the meaning is that in the communication of the sensual with the spiritual part of the soul, when the spiritual waters become its drink, the natural operations subside and merge into spiritual recollection.

8. All these perfections and dispositions of the soul the bride sets forth before her Beloved, the Son of God, longing at the same time to be translated by Him out of the spiritual marriage, to which God has been pleased to advance her in the Church militant, to the glorious marriage of the Church triumphant. Whereunto may He bring of His mercy all those who call upon the most sweet name of Jesus, the Bridegroom of faithful souls, to Whom be all honour and glory, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, *in sæcula sæculorum*.

# THE LIVING FLAME OF LOVE.

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## PROLOGUE.

IT is not without some unwillingness that, at the requests of others, I enter upon the explanation of the four stanzas because they relate to matters so interior and spiritual as to baffle the powers of language. The spiritual transcends the sensual, and he speaks but indifferently of the mind of the spirit who has not a spiritual mind himself. I have, therefore, in consideration of my own defects, put off this matter until now. But now that our Lord seems in some way to have opened to me the way of knowledge herein, and to have given me some fervour of spirit, I have resolved to enter on the subject. I know too well that of myself I can say nothing to the purpose on any subject, how much less then on a matter of such depth and substance as this! What is mine here will be nothing but the defects and errors, and I therefore submit the whole to the better judgment and discretion of our Holy Mother the Catholic Roman Church, under whose guidance no one goeth astray. And now having said

this, I will venture, in reliance on the Holy Writings, to give utterance to what I may have learned, observing at the same time, that all I say falls far short of that which passes in this intimate union of the soul with God.

2. There is nothing strange in the fact that God bestows favours so great and so wonderful upon those souls whom He is pleased to comfort. For if we consider that it is God Himself as God, and with infinite love and goodness, Who bestows them; and this being the case, they will not seem unreasonable, for He hath said Himself that the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost will come to him that loves Him, and will dwell in him.\* And this is accomplished in making such an one live and abide in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in the life of God, as it shall be explained in the stanzas that follow.

3. In the former stanzas I spoke of the highest degree of perfection to which it is possible to attain in this life, transformation in God; yet these, the explanation of which I now propose to undertake, speak of that love still more perfect and complete in the same state of transformation. For though it is true that the former and the present stanzas refer to one and the same state of transformation, and that no soul can pass beyond it as such, still with time and habits of devotion, the soul is more perfected and grounded in it. Thus, when a log of wood is set on fire, and when it is transformed into fire and united with it, the longer it burns and the hotter the fire, the more it glows until sparks and flames are emitted from it.

\* St. John xiv. 23.

4. So too the soul—and this is the subject of these stanzas—when transformed, and glowing interiorly in the fire of love, is not only united with the divine fire, but becomes a living flame, and itself conscious of it. The soul speaks of this with an intimate delicious sweetness of love, burning in its own flame, dwelling upon the various marvellous effects wrought within it. These effects I now proceed to describe, following the same method: that is, I shall first transcribe the four stanzas, then each separately, and finally each line by itself as I explain them.

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## STANZAS.\*

### I

O Living Flame of Love,  
That woundest tenderly  
My soul in its inmost depth !  
As thou art no longer grievous,  
Perfect thy work, if it be thy will,  
Break the web of this sweet encounter.

### II

O sweet burn !  
O delicious wound  
O tender hand ! O gentle touch !  
Savouring of everlasting life,  
And paying the whole debt,  
By slaying Thou hast changed death into life.

\* These stanzas were written after the saint's escape from the prison of the friars in Toledo, and the commentary on them was written at the request of doña Ana de Peñalosa, one of his penitents.



## III

O Lamps of fire,  
In the splendours of which  
The deep caverns of sense,  
Dim and dark,  
With unwonted brightness  
Give light and warmth together to their Beloved.

## IV

How gently and how lovingly  
Thou wakest in my bosom,  
Where alone Thou secretly dwellest ;  
And in Thy sweet breathing  
Full of grace and glory,  
How tenderly Thou fillest me with Thy love.

## EXPLANATION OF THE FIRST STANZA.

THE bride of Christ, now feeling herself to be all on fire in the divine union, and that rivers of living waters are flowing from her belly, as Christ our Lord said\* they would flow from the like souls, believes that, as she is transformed in God with such vehemence and so intimately possessed by Him, so richly adorned with gifts and graces, she is near unto bliss, and that a slender veil only separates her from it. Seeing, too, that this sweet flame of love burning within her, each time it touches her, makes her as it were glorious with foretaste of glory, so much so that whenever it absorbs and assails her, it seems to be admitting her to everlasting life, and to rend the veil of her mortality, she addresses herself, with a great longing, to the flame, which is the Holy Ghost, and prays Him to destroy her mortal life in this sweet encounter,

\* St. John vii. 38.

and bestow upon her in reality what He seems about to give, namely, perfect glory, crying: 'O living flame of love.'

'O living flame of love.'

2. In order to express the fervour and reverence with which the soul is speaking in these four stanzas, it begins them with 'O' and 'How,' which are significant of great earnestness, and whenever altered show that something passes within that is deeper than the tongue can tell. O is the cry of strong desire, and of earnest supplication, in the way of persuasion. The soul employs it in both senses here, for it magnifies and intimates its great desire, calling upon love to end its mortal life.

3. This flame of love is the Spirit of the Bridegroom, the Holy Ghost, of whose presence within itself the soul is conscious, not only as fire which consumes it, and transforms it in sweet love, but as a fire burning within it, sending forth a flame which bathes it in glory and recreates it with the refreshment of everlasting life. The work of the Holy Ghost in a soul transformed in His love is this: His interior action within it is to kindle it and set it on fire; this is the burning of love, in union with which the will loves most deeply, being now one by love with that flame of fire. And thus the soul's acts of love are most precious, and even one of them more meritorious than many elicited not in the state of transformation. The transformation in love differs from the flame of love as a habit differs from an act, or as the glowing fuel from the flames it emits, the flames being the effect of the fire which is there burning.

4. Hence then we may say of the soul which is

transformed in love, that its ordinary state is that of the fuel in the midst of the fire; that the acts of such a soul are the flames which rise up out of the fire of love, vehement in proportion to the intensity of the fire of union, and to the rapture and absorption of the will in the flame of the Holy Ghost; rising like the angel who ascended to God in the flame which consumed the holocaust of Manue.\* And as the soul, in its present condition, cannot elicit these acts without a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, all these acts must be divine, in so far as the soul is under the special influence of God. Hence then it seems to the soul, as often as the flame breaks forth, causing it to love sweetly with a heavenly disposition, that its life everlasting is begun, and that its acts are divine in God.

5. This is the language in which God addresses purified and stainless souls, namely, words of fire. ‘Thy word,’ saith the Psalmist, ‘is a vehement fire.’† And in Jeremias we read, ‘are not My words as a fire? saith our Lord.’‡ His ‘words,’ we learn from Himself, ‘are spirit and life;’ § the power and efficacy of which are felt by such souls as have ears to hear; pure souls full of love. But those souls whose palate is not healthy, whose desire is after other things, cannot perceive the spirit and life of His words. And therefore the more wonderful the words of the Son of God, the more insipid they are to some who hear them, because of the impurity in which they live.

6. Thus, when He announced the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, a doctrine full of sweetness and of love,

\* Judg. xiii. 20.

† Ps. cxviii. 140.

‡ Jerem. xxiii. 29.

§ St. John vi. 64.

‘many of His disciples went back.’\* If such persons as these have no taste for the words of God which He speaks inwardly to them, it is not to be supposed that all others are like them. St. Peter loved the words of Christ, for he replied, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.’† The woman of Samaria forgot the water, and ‘left her waterpot’‡ at the well, because of the sweetness of the words of God.

7. And now when the soul has drawn so near unto God as to be transformed in the flame of love, when the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost are in communion with it, is it anything incredible to say, that it has a foretaste—though not perfectly, because this life admits not of it—of everlasting life in this fire of the Holy Ghost? This is the reason why this flame is said to be a *living* flame, not because it is not always living, but because its effect is to make the soul live spiritually in God, and to be conscious of such a life, as it is written, ‘My heart and my flesh have rejoiced toward the living God.’§ The Psalmist makes use of the word ‘living,’ not because it was necessary, for God is ever-living, but to show that the body and the spirit had a lively feeling of God; that is the rejoicing in the living God. Thus, in this flame, the soul has so vivid a sense of God, and a perception of Him so sweet and delicious, that it cries out: ‘O living flame of love!’

‘That woundest tenderly.’

8. That is, Thou touchest me tenderly in Thy love. For when this flame of divine life wounds the soul with the gentle languishing for the life of God, it wounds it

\* Ib. vi. 67.    † St. John vi. 69.    ‡ Ib. iv. 28.    § Ps. lxxxiii. 3.

with so much endearing tenderness, and softens it so that it melts away in love. The words of the bride in the Canticle are now fulfilled in the soul. 'My soul melted when He spoke.'\* This is the effect in the soul when God speaks.

9. But how can we say that it wounds the soul, when there is nothing to wound, seeing that it is all consumed in the fire of love? It is certainly marvellous; for as fire is never idle, but in continual movement, flashing in one direction, then in another, so love, the function of which is to wound, so as to cause love and joy, when it exists in the soul as a living flame, darts forth its most tender flames of love, causing wounds, exerting joyously all the arts and wiles of love as in the palace of its wedding feast. So Assuerus exhibited his riches, and the glory of his power at 'the wedding and marriage of Esther; † and so is wrought in the soul what is read in the Proverbs: I 'was delighted every day . . . playing in the world, and My delights were to be with the children of men.' ‡ that is to give myself to them. This wounding, therefore, which is the 'playing' of divine wisdom, is the flames of those tender touches which touch the soul continually, touches of the fire of love which is never idle. And of these flashings of the fire it is said that they wound the soul in its inmost substance.

'My soul in its inmost depth.'

10. The feast of the Holy Ghost is celebrated in the substance of the soul, which is inaccessible to the devil, the world, and the flesh; and therefore the more interior the feast, the more secure, substantial, and delicious is it.

\* Cant. v. 6.

† Esth. ii. 18.

‡ Prov. viii. 30, 31.

For the more interior it is, the purer it is; and the greater the purity, the greater the abundance, frequency, and universality of God's communication of Himself; and thus the joy of the soul and spirit is so much the greater, for it is God Himself Who is the author of all this, and the soul doeth nothing of itself, in the sense I shall immediately explain.

11. And inasmuch as the soul cannot work naturally here, nor make any efforts of its own otherwise than through the bodily senses and by their help—of which it is in this case completely free, and from which it is most detached—the work of the soul is solely to receive what God communicates, Who alone in the depths of the soul, without the help of the senses, can influence and direct it, and operate within it. Thus, then, all the movements of such a soul are divine, and though of God, still they are the soul's, because God effects them within it, itself willing them and assenting to them.

12. The expression, 'inmost depth,' implies other depths of the soul less profound, and it is necessary to consider this. In the first place the soul, regarded as spirit, has neither height nor depth of greater or less degree in its own nature, as bodies have which have bulk. The soul has no parts, neither is there any difference between its interior and exterior, for it is uniform; it has no depths of greater or less profundity, nor can one part of it be more enlightened than another, as is the case with physical bodies, for the whole of it is enlightened uniformly at once.

13. Setting aside this signification of depth, material and measurable, we say that the inmost depth of the soul



is there where its being, power, and the force of its action and movement penetrate and cannot go further. Thus fire, or a stone, tend by their natural force to the centre of their sphere, and cannot go beyond it, or help resting there, unless some obstacle intervene. Accordingly, when a stone lies on the ground it is said to be within its centre, because within the sphere of its active motion, which is the element of earth, but not in the inmost depth of that centre, the middle of the earth, because it has still power and force to descend thither, provided all that hinders it be taken away. So when it shall have reached the centre of the earth, and is incapable of further motion of its own, we say of it that it is then in its inmost or deepest centre.

14. The centre of the soul is God. When the soul shall have reached Him, according to its essence, and according to the power of its operations, it will then have attained to its ultimate and deepest centre in God. This will be when the soul shall love Him, comprehend Him, and enjoy Him with all its strength. When, however, the soul has not attained to this state, though it be in God, Who is the centre of it by grace and communion with Him, still if it can move further and is not satisfied, though in the centre, it is not in the deepest centre, because there is still room for it to advance.

15. Love unites the soul with God, and the greater its love the deeper does it enter into God, and the more is it centered in Him. According to this way of speaking we may say, that as the degrees of love, so are the centres, which the soul finds in God. These are the many mansions of the Father's house.\* Thus, a soul which has

\* St. John xiv. 2.

but one degree of love is already in God, Who is its centre: for one degree of love is sufficient for our abiding in Him in the state of grace. If we have two degrees of love we shall then have found another centre, more interiorly in God; and if we have three we shall have reached another and more interior centre still.

16. But if the soul shall have attained to the highest degree of love, the love of God will then wound it in its inmost depth or centre; and the soul will be transformed and enlightened in the highest degree in its substance, faculties, and strength, until it shall become most like unto God. The soul in this state may be compared to crystal, lucid and pure; the greater the light thrown upon it, the more luminous it becomes by the concentration thereof, until at last it seems to be all light and undistinguishable from it; it being then so illumined, and to the utmost extent, that it seems to be one with the light itself.

17. The flame wounds the soul in its inmost depth; that is, it wounds it when it touches the very depths of its substance, power and force. This expression implies that abundance of joy and bliss, which is the greater and the more tender, the more vehemently and substantially the soul is transformed and centred in God. It greatly surpasses that which occurs in the ordinary union of love, for it is in proportion to the greater heat of the fire of love which now emits the living flame. The soul which has the fruition only of the ordinary union of love may be compared, in a certain sense, to the 'fire' of God which is in Sion, that is in the Church Militant; while the soul which has the fruition of glory so sweet may be compared

to 'His furnace in Jerusalem,'\* which means the vision of peace.

18. The soul in the burning furnace is in a more peaceful, glorious, and tender union, the more the flame of the furnace transcends the fire of ordinary love. Thus the soul, feeling that the living flame ministers to it all good—divine love brings all blessings with it—cries out : 'O living flame of love, that woundest tenderly.' The cry of the soul is : O kindling burning love, how tenderly dost thou make me glorious by thy loving movements in my greatest power and strength, giving me a divine intelligence according to the capacity of my understanding, and communicating love according to the utmost freedom of my will ; that is, thou hast elevated to the greatest height, by the divine intelligence, the powers of my understanding in the most intense fervour and substantial union of my will. This ineffable effect then takes place when this flame of fire rushes upwards in the soul. The divine wisdom absorbs the soul—which is now purified and most clean—profoundly and sublimely in itself ; for 'wisdom reacheth everywhere by reason of her purity.'† It is in this absorption of wisdom that the Holy Ghost effects those glorious quiverings of His flame of which I am speaking. And as the flame is so sweet, the soul says : 'As thou art no longer grievous.'

'As Thou art no longer grievous.'

19. Thou dost not afflict, nor vex, nor weary me as before. This flame, when the soul was in the state of spiritual purgation, that is, when it was entering that of contemplation, was not so peaceful and sweet as it is now

\* Is. xxxi. 9.

† Wisd. vii. 24.

in the state of union. For before the divine fire enters into the soul and unites itself to it in its inmost depth by the perfect purgation and purity thereof, the flame wounds it, destroys and consumes the imperfections of its evil habits. This is the work of the Holy Ghost, Who thereby disposes the soul for its divine union and transformation in God by love. For the flame which afterwards unites itself to the soul in the bliss of love, is the very same which before assailed and purified it; just as the fire which ultimately penetrates the substance of the fuel, is the very same which in the beginning darted its flames around it, playing about it, and depriving it of its coldness until it prepared it with its heat for its own entrance into it, and transformation of it into itself.

20. The soul suffers greatly in this spiritual exercise, and endures grievous afflictions of spirit which occasionally overflow into the senses; for then the flame is felt to be grievous. As I have described it in the Treatise of the Dark Night, and in that of the Ascent of Mount Carmel, I shall therefore not pursue the subject further. It is enough for us to know that God, Who seeks to enter the soul by union and transformation of love, is He who previously assailed the soul, purifying it with the light and heat of His divine flame, which was before grievous but is now sweet.

21. The meaning of the whole is as follows: Thou art now not only not darkness as before, but the divine light of my understanding wherewith I behold Thee: not only dost Thou abstain from causing me to faint in my weakness, but Thou art become the strength of my will, wherein I can love and enjoy Thee, being wholly trans-

formed by divine love. Thou art no longer grief and affliction, but rather my glory, my delight, and my liberty, seeing that the words of the Canticle may be said of me, 'Who is this that cometh up from the desert flowing with delights leaning upon her Beloved,'\* scattering love on this side and on that? 'Perfect thy work, if it be thy will.'

'Perfect thy work, if it be thy will.'

22. That is, do Thou perfect the spiritual marriage in the beatific vision. Though it is true that the soul is the more resigned the more it is transformed, when it has attained to a state so high as this, for it knows nothing and seeks nothing with a view to itself,† but only in and for the Beloved—for Charity seeks nothing but the good and glory of the Beloved—still because it lives in hope, and hope implies a want, it groans deeply—though sweetly and joyfully—because it has not fully attained to the perfect adoption of the sons of God, in which, being perfected in glory, all its desires will be satisfied. However intimate the soul's union may be with God, it will never be satisfied here below till His 'glory shall appear;‡ especially because it has already tasted, by anticipation, of its sweetness.

23. That sweetness is such that if God had not had pity on its natural frailty and covered it with His right hand, as He did Moses, that he might not die when he saw the glory of God—for the natural powers of the soul receive comfort and delight from that right hand, rather than hurt—it would have died at each vibration of the flame, seeing that the inferior part thereof is incapable of

\* Cant. viii. 5.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

‡ Ps. xvi. 15.

enduring so great and so sharp a fire. This desire of the soul is therefore no longer painful, for its condition is now such that all pain is over, and its prayers are offered for the object it desires in great sweetness, joy and resignation. This is the reason why it says, 'if it be thy will,' for the will and desire are now so united in God, each in its own way, that the soul regards it as its glory that the will of God should be done in it. Such are now the glimpses of glory, and such the love which now shines forth, that it would argue but little love on its part if it did not pray to be admitted to the perfect consummation of love.

24. Moreover, the soul in the power of this sweet communication, sees that the Holy Ghost incites it, and invites it in most wonderful ways, and by sweet affections, to this immeasurable glory, which He there sets before it, saying, 'Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come. For winter is now past, the rain is gone and departed. The flowers have appeared in our land. . . . The fig-tree hath brought forth her green figs, the flourishing vineyards have given their savour. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come; my dove in the holes of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall, show me thy face, let thy voice sound in mine ears, for thy voice is sweet, and thy face comely.\*' The soul hears all this spoken by the Holy Ghost in this sweet and tender flame, and therefore answers Him, saying, 'Perfect Thy work, if it be Thy will,' thereby making the two petitions which our Lord commands, 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done;† that is, give me Thy kingdom

\* Cant. ii. 10—14.

† St. Matt. vi. 10.



according to Thy will, and that it may be so 'Break the web of this sweet encounter.'

'Break the web of this sweet encounter.'

25. That is, the hindrance to this so grand an affair. It is an easy thing to draw near unto God when all hindrances are set aside, and when the web that divides us from Him is broken. There are three webs to be broken before we can have the perfect fruition of God : 1. The temporal web, which comprises all created things. 2. The natural web, which comprises all mere natural actions and inclinations. 3. The web of sense, which is merely the union of soul and body ; that is, the sensitive and animal life, of which St. Paul speaks, saying, 'For we know if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven.'\*

26. The first and second web must of necessity have been broken in order to enter into the fruition of God in the union of love, when we denied ourselves in worldly things and renounced them, when our affections and desires were mortified, and when all our operations became divine. These webs were broken in the assaults of this flame when it was still grievous. In the spiritual purgation the soul breaks the two webs I am speaking of, and becomes united with God ; the third alone, the web of the life of sense remains now to be broken. This is the reason why but one web is mentioned here. For now one web alone remains, and this the flame assails not painfully and grievously as it assailed the others, but with great sweetness and delight.

\* 2 Cor. v. 1.

27. Thus the death of such souls is most full of sweetness, beyond that of their whole spiritual life, for they die of the sweet violence of love, like the swan which sings more sweetly when death is nigh.

28. This is why the Psalmist said, 'Precious in the sight of our Lord is the death of His saints,'\* for then the rivers of the soul's love flow into the sea of love, so wide and deep as to seem a sea themselves; the beginning and the end unite together to accompany the just departing for His kingdom. 'From the ends of the earth,' in the words of Isaias, are 'heard praises, the glory of the just one,'† and the soul feels itself in the midst of these glorious encounters on the point of departing in all abundance for the perfect fruition of the kingdom, for it beholds itself pure and rich, and prepared, so far as it is possible, consistently with the faith and the conditions of this life. God now permits it to behold its own beauty, and intrusts it with the gifts and graces He has endowed it with, for all this turns into love and praise without the stain of presumption or of vanity, because no leaven of imperfection remains to corrupt it.

29. When the soul sees that nothing is wanting but the breaking of the frail web of its natural life, by which its liberty is enthralled, it prays that it may be broken; for it longs 'to be dissolved and to be with Christ,' to burst the bonds which bind the spirit and the flesh together, that both may resume their proper state, for they are by nature different, the flesh to 'return to its earth, and the spirit unto God who gave it.'‡ The mortal body, as St. John saith, 'profiteth nothing,'§ but is rather

\* Ps. cxv. 15.

† Is. xxiv. 16.

‡ Eccles. xii. 7.

§ St. John. vi. 64.

a hindrance to the good of the spirit. The soul, therefore, prays for the dissolution of the body, for it is sad that a life so mean should be a hindrance in the way of a life so noble.

31. This life is called a web for three reasons: 1. Because of the connection between the spirit and the flesh. 2. Because it separates the soul and God. 3. Because a web is not so thick but that light penetrates it. The connection between soul and body, in this state of perfection, is so slight a web, that the divinity shines through it, now that the soul is so spiritualised, subtilised, and refined. When the power of the life to come is felt in the soul, the weakness of this life becomes manifest. Its present life seems to be but a slender web, even a spider's web, in the words of David, 'our years shall be considered as a spider,'\* and even less than that, when the soul is raised to a state so high, for being raised so high, it perceives things as God does, in Whose sight 'a thousand years are as yesterday which is past,'† and before Whom 'all nations are as if they had no being at all.'‡ In the same way all things appear to the soul as nothing, yea, itself is nothing in its own eyes, and God alone is its all.

30. It may be asked here why the soul prays for the breaking of the web rather than for its cutting or its removal, since the effect would be the same in either case. There are four reasons which determine it: 1. The expression it employs is the most proper, because it is more natural that a thing should be broken in an encounter, than that it should be cut or taken away. 2. Because love likes force, with violent and impetuous

\* Ps. lxxxix. 9.

† Ps. lxxxix. 4.

‡ Is. xl. 17.

contacts, and these result in breaking rather than in cutting or taking away. 3. Because its love is so strong, it desires that the act of breaking the web may be done in a moment; the more rapid and spiritual the act, the greater its force and worth.

32. The power of love is now more concentrated and more vigorous, and the perfection of transforming love enters the soul, as form into matter, in an instant. Until now there was no act of perfect transformation, only the disposition towards it in desires and affections successively repeated, which in very few souls attain to the perfect act of transformation. Hence a soul that is disposed may elicit many more, and more intense acts in a brief period than another soul not so disposed in a long time, for this soul spends all its energies in the preparation of itself, and even afterwards the fire does not wholly penetrate the fuel it has to burn. But when the soul is already prepared, love enters in continuously, and the spark at the first contact seizes on the fuel that is dry. And thus the enamoured soul prefers the abrupt breaking of the web to its tedious cutting or waiting for its removal.

33. 4. The fourth reason why the soul prays for the breaking of the web of life is its desire that it may be done quickly: for when we cut or remove anything we do it deliberately, when the matter is ripe, and then time and thought become necessary; but a violent rupture requires nothing of the kind. The soul's desire is not to wait for the natural termination of its mortal life, because the violence of its love and the disposition it is in incline it with resignation towards the violent rupture of its natural life in the supernatural assaults of love. Moreover, it knows

well that it is the way of God to call such souls to Himself before the time, that He fills them with good, and delivers them from evil, perfecting them in a short space, and bestowing upon them, through love, what they could have gained only by length of time. 'Pleasing God, he is made beloved, and living among sinners he was translated. He was taken away lest malice should change his understanding, or lest any guile deceive his soul. Being consummate in a short space, he fulfilled much time, for his soul pleased God; for this cause He hastened to bring him out of the midst of iniquities.'\* The constant practice of love is therefore a matter of the last importance, for when the soul is perfect therein, its detention here below cannot be long before it is admitted to see God face to face.

34. But why is this interior assault of the Holy Ghost called an encounter? Though the soul is very desirous to see the end of its natural life, yet because the time is not yet come, that cannot be, and so God, to make it perfect and to raise it above the flesh more and more, assails it divinely and gloriously, and these assaults are really encounters wherein God penetrates the soul, deifies the very substance of it, and renders it as it were divine. The substance of God absorbs the soul, because He assails and pierces it to the quick by the Holy Ghost, whose communications are vehement when they are of fire as at present. The soul says this encounter is sweet, because it has therein a lively taste of God; not that many other touches and encounters of God, of which the soul is now the object, cease to be sweet and delicious, but on account of the supereminent sweetness of this; for God effects it in order to detach it perfectly and make it

\* Wisd. iv. 10—14.



glorious. Hence the soul relying on His protection becomes bold, and says, 'Break the web of this sweet encounter.'

35. The whole stanza may be paraphrased as follows :—  
O flame of the Holy Ghost, penetrating so profoundly and so tenderly the very substance of my soul, and burning it with Thy heat, since Thou art now so gentle as to manifest Thy desire of giving Thyself wholly to me in everlasting life; if formerly my petitions did not reach Thine ears, when I was weary and worn with love, suffering through the weakness of sense and spirit, because of my great infirmities, impurity, and little love, I prayed to be set free—for with desire hath my soul desired Thee—when my impatient love would not suffer me to submit to the conditions of this life according to Thy will—for it was Thy will that I should live—and when the previous impulses of my love were insufficient in Thy sight, because there was no substance in them; now that I am grown strong in love, that body and soul together do not only follow after Thee, but that my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God \* with one consent, so that I am praying for that which Thou willest I should pray for, and what Thou willest not, that I pray not for—it seems even that I could not do it, neither does it enter into my mind to do so—and as my prayers are now more efficacious and more reasonable in Thy sight, for they proceed from Thee, and Thou willest I should so pray, and as I pray in the joy and sweetness of the Holy Ghost, and 'my judgment cometh forth from Thy countenance,'† when Thou art pleased with my prayer and hearkenest to

\* Ps. lxxxiii. 2.

† Ps. xvi. 2.



it—break Thou the slender web of this life that I may be enabled to love Thee hereafter with that fulness and abundancē which my soul desires, without end for evermore.

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## STANZA II.

*O sweet burn !  
O delicious wound !  
O tender hand ! O gentle touch !  
Savouring of everlasting life,  
And paying the whole debt,  
In destroying death Thou hast changed it into life.*

## EXPLANATION.

WE learn here that it is the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Who accomplish the divine work of union in the soul. The ‘hand,’ the ‘touch,’ and the ‘burn’ are in substance one and the same; and the three terms are employed because they express effects peculiar to each. The ‘burn’ is the Holy Ghost; the ‘hand’ is the Father; and the ‘touch’ is the Son. Thus the the soul magnifies the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, extolling those three grand gifts and graces which They perfect within it, in that They have changed death into life, transforming it in Themselves.

2. The first of these gifts is the delicious wound, attributed to the Holy Ghost, and so the soul calls it the ‘burn.’ The second is the ‘taste of everlasting life,’ attributed to the Son, and the soul calls it the ‘gentle

touch.' The third is that 'gift' which is the perfect recompense of the soul, attributed to the Father, and is therefore called the 'tender hand.' Though the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity are referred to severally, because of the operations peculiar to Each, the soul is addressing itself to but One Essence, saying, 'Thou hast changed it into life,' for the Three Divine Persons work together, and the whole is attributed to Each, and to All.

'O sweet burn.'

3. In the book of Deuteronomium, Moses saith, 'Our Lord God, is a consuming fire,'\* that is, a fire of love. And as His power is infinite, He consumes infinitely, burning with great vehemence, and transforming into Himself all He touches. But He burns everything according to the measure of its preparation, some more, others less; and also according to His own good pleasure, as, and when, and how, He will. And as this is an infinite fire of love, so when He touches the soul somewhat sharply, the burning heat within it becomes so extreme as to surpass all the fires of the world. This is the reason why this touch of God is said to be a 'burn:' for the fire there is more intense, and more concentrated, and the effect of it surpasses that of all other fires.

4. When the divine fire shall have transformed the soul into itself, the soul not only feels the burn, but itself is become wholly and entirely burnt up in this vehement fire. O how wonderful the fire of God! though so vehement and so consuming, though it can destroy a thousand worlds with more ease than the material fire

\* Deut. iv. 24.

can destroy a single straw, it consumes not the spirit wherein it burns, but rather, in proportion to its strength and heat, delights and deifies it, burning sweetly within according to the strength which God has given. Thus, on the day of Pentecost the fire descended with great vehemence upon the Apostles, who, according to St. Gregory\*, sweetly burned interiorly. The Church also says, when celebrating that event: 'The divine fire came down, not consuming but enlightening.'† For as the object of these communications is to elevate the soul, the burning of the fire does not distress it but gladdens it, does not weary it but delights it, and renders it glorious and rich. This is the reason why it is said to be sweet.

5. Thus then the blessed soul, which by the mercy of God has been burnt, knoweth all things, tasteth all things, 'whatsoever it shall do shall prosper,'‡ against it nothing shall prevail, nothing shall touch it. It is of that soul that the Apostle said: 'The spiritual man judgeth all things, and he himself is judged of no man,'§ for 'the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God,'|| because it belongs to love to search into all that the Beloved has.

6. O, the great glory of the souls who are worthy of this supreme fire, which having infinite power to consume and annihilate you, consumes you not, but makes you infinitely perfect in glory! Wonder not that God should elevate some souls to so high a degree, for He alone is wonderful in His marvellous works. As this burn then is so sweet—as it is here said to be—how happy must that soul be which this fire has touched! The soul would

\* Hom. 30, in Evangel.

† Brev. Rom. fer. 2 Pent.

‡ Ps. i. 3.

§ 1 Cor. ii. 15.

|| Ib. 10.

speak of it, but cannot, so it says only, 'O delicious wound.'

ii. 'O delicious wound.'

7. He Who inflicts the wound relieves, and heals while He inflicts it. It bears some resemblance to the caustic usage of natural fire, which when applied to a wound increases it, and renders a wound, which iron or other instruments occasioned, a wound of fire. The longer the caustic is applied, the more grievous the wound, until the whole matter be destroyed. Thus the divine burn of love heals the wound which love has caused, and by each application renders it greater. The healing which love brings is to wound again what was wounded before, until the soul melts away in the fire of love. So when the soul shall become wholly one wound of love it will then be transformed in love, wounded with love. For herein he who is most wounded is the most healthy, and he who is all wound is all health.

8. And yet even if the whole soul be one wound, and consequently sound, the divine burning is not intermitted; it continues its work, which is to wound the soul with love. But then, too, its work is to soothe the healed wound, and the soul therefore cries out, 'O delicious wound,' and so much the more delicious the more penetrating the fire of love. The Holy Ghost inflicted the wound that He might soothe it, and as His will and desire to soothe it are great, great will be the wound which He will inflict, in order that the soul He has wounded may be greatly comforted. O blessed wound inflicted by Him Who cannot but heal it!

9. O happy and most blessed wound! For thou art

inflicted only for the joy and comfort of the soul. Great is the wound, because He is great Who has wrought it ; and great is the delight of it : for the fire of love is infinite. O delicious wound then, and the more delicious the more the burn of love penetrates the inmost substance of the soul, burning all it can burn that it may supply all the delight it can give. This burning and wound, in my opinion, are the highest condition attainable in this life. There are many other forms of this burning, but they do not reach so far, neither are they like unto this : for this is the touch of the Divinity without form or figure, either natural, formal, or imaginary.

10. But the soul is burned in another and most excellent way, which is this : when a soul is on fire with love, but not in the degree of which I am now speaking—though it should be so, that it may be the subject of this—it will feel as if a seraph with a burning brand of love had struck it, and penetrated it already on fire as glowing coal, or rather as a flame, and burns it utterly. And then in that burn the flame rushes forth and surges vehemently as in a glowing furnace or forge ; the fire revives and the flame ascends when the burning fuel is disturbed. Then when the burning brand touches it, the soul feels that the wound it has thus received is delicious beyond all imagination. For beside being altogether moved and stirred, at the time of this stirring of the fire, by the vehement movement of the seraph, wherein the ardour and the melting of love is great, it feels that its wound is perfect, and that the herbs which serve to attemper the steel are efficacious ; it feels the very depths of the spirit transpierced, and its delight to be exquisite beyond the power of language to express.

The soul feels, as it were, a most minute grain of mustard seed, most pungent and burning in the inmost heart of the spirit; in the spot of the wound, where the substance and the power of the herb reside, diffuse itself most subtilely through all the spiritual veins of the soul in proportion to the strength and power of the heat. It feels its love to grow, strengthen, and refine itself to such a degree, as to seem to itself as if seas of fire were in it filling it with love.

11. The fruition of the soul now cannot be described otherwise than by saying that it understands why the kingdom of heaven is compared in the gospel to a mustard seed, which by reason of its great natural heat grows into a lofty tree. 'The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. Which is the least surely of all seeds; but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs, and is made a tree, so that the fowls of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof.'\* The soul beholds itself now as one immense sea of fire. Few souls, however, attain to this state, but some have done so, especially those whose spirit and power is to be transmitted to their spiritual children; since God bestows on the founder gifts and graces, according to the succession of the order in the first-fruits of the Spirit.

12. To return to the work of the seraph, which in truth is to strike and wound. If the effect of the wound be permitted to flow exteriorly into the bodily senses, an effect corresponding to the interior wound itself will manifest itself without. Thus it was with St. Francis, for when the seraph wounded his soul with love, the

\* St. Matth. xiii. 31, 32.



effects of that wound became outwardly visible. God confers no favours on the body which He does not confer in the first place chiefly on the soul. In that case, the greater the joy and violence of the love which is the cause of the interior wound, the greater will be the pain of the visible wound, and as the former grows so does the latter.

13. The reason is this: such souls as these, being already purified and strong in God, their spirit, strong and sound, delights in the strong and sweet Spirit of God; Who, however, causes pain and suffering in their weak and corruptible flesh. It is thus a most marvellous thing to feel pain and sweetness together. Job felt it when he said, 'Returning, Thou tormentest me wonderfully.'\* This is marvellous, worthy of the multitude of the sweetness of God, which He has hidden for them that fear Him;† the greater the sweetness and delight, the greater the pain and suffering.

14. O Infinite greatness, in all things showing Thyself omnipotent. Who, O Lord, can cause sweetness in the midst of bitterness, and pleasure in the midst of pain? O delicious wound, the greater the delight the deeper the wound. But when the wound is within the soul, and not communicated to the body without, it is then much more intense and keen. As the flesh is a bridle to the spirit, so, when the graces of the latter overflow into the former, the flesh draws in and restrains the swift steed of the spirit and checks its course; 'for the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things.'‡ He,

\* Job x. 16.

† Ps. xxx. 20.

‡ Wisd. ix. 15.

therefore, who shall trust much to the bodily senses will never become a very spiritual man.

15. This I say for the sake of those who think they can ascend to the heights and power of the spirit, by the mere energy and action of the senses, which are mean and vile. We cannot become spiritual unless the bodily senses be restrained. It is a state of things wholly different from this, when the spirit overflows into the senses, for there may be great spirituality in this; as in the case of St. Paul, whose deep sense of the sufferings of Christ overflowed into his body, so that he said: 'I bear the marks of our Lord Jesus in my body.'\* Thus, as the wound and the burn, so the hand that inflicted it; and as the touch, so He who touched. O tender hand, O gentle touch.

'O tender hand, O gentle touch.'

16. O hand, as generous as Thou art powerful and rich, giving me gifts with power. O gentle hand! laid so gently upon me, and yet, if Thou wert to press at all, the whole world must perish; for only at the sight of Thee the earth trembles,† the nations melt, and the mountains are crushed in pieces.‡ O gentle hand, I say it again, for him thou didst touch so sharply. Upon me Thou art laid so softly, so lovingly, and so tenderly; Thou art the more gentle and sweet for me than thou wert hard for him; the loving sweetness with which Thou art laid upon me is greater than the severity with which he was touched. Thou killest, and Thou givest life, and there is no one who shall escape out of Thy hand.

17. But Thou, O divine life, never killest but to give

\* Gal. vi. 17.

† Ps. ciii. 32.

‡ Hab. iii. 6.

life, as Thou never woundest but to heal. Thou hast wounded me, O divine hand! that Thou mayest heal me. Thou hast slain in me that which made me dead, and without the life of God which I now live. This Thou hast wrought in the liberality of Thy gracious generosity, through that touch, wherewith Thou dost touch me, of the brightness of Thy glory and the figure of Thy substance,\* Thine only begotten Son, in Whom, being Thy Wisdom, Thou reachest 'from end to end mightily.'†

18. O gentle, subtile touch, the Word, the Son of God, Who, because of the pureness of Thy divine nature, dost penetrate subtilely the very substance of my soul, and, touching it gently, absorbest it wholly in divine ways of sweetness not 'heard of in the land of Canaan,' nor 'seen in Teman.'‡ O touch of the Word, so gentle, so wonderfully gentle to me; and yet Thou wert 'overthrowing mountains, and breaking rocks in Horeb, by the shadow of Thy power going before, when Thou didst announce Thy presence to the prophet in 'the whisper of a gentle air.'§ O soft air, how is it that Thou touchest so softly when Thou art so terrible and so strong? O blessed soul, most blessed, which Thou, who art so terrible and so strong, touchest so gently. Proclaim it to the world, O my soul—no, proclaim it not, for the world knoweth not the 'gentle air,' neither will it listen to it, because it cannot comprehend matters so deep.

19. O my God and my life, they shall know Thee|| and behold Thee when Thou touchest them, who, making themselves strangers upon earth, shall purify themselves,

\* Heb. i. 3.

† Wisd. viii. 1.

‡ Bar iii. 22.

§ 3 Kings xix. 11, 12.

|| St. John xiv. 17.

because purity corresponds with purity. The more gently Thou touchest, the more Thou art hidden in the purified soul of those who have made themselves strangers here, hidden from the face of all creatures, and whom 'Thou shalt hide in the secret of Thy face from the disturbance of men.'\*

20. O, again and again, gentle touch, which by the power of its tenderness, undoest the soul, removest it far away from every other touch whatever, and makest it Thine own; Thou which leavest behind Thee effects and impressions so pure, that the touch of everything else seems vile and low, the very sight offensive, and all relations therewith a deep affliction. The more subtile any matter is, the more it spreads and fills, and the more it diffuses itself the more subtile is it. O gentle touch, the more subtile the more infused. And now the vessel of my soul, because Thou hast touched it, is pure and clean and able to receive Thee.

21. O gentle touch! as in Thee there is nothing material, so Thy touch is the more penetrating, changing what in me is human into divine, for Thy Divine essence, wherewith Thou touchest me, is wholly unaffected by modes and manner, free from the husks of form and figure. Finally then, O gentle touch, and most gentle, for Thou touchest me with Thy most simple and pure essence, which being infinite is infinitely gentle; therefore it is that this touch is so subtile, so loving, so deep, and so delicious.

‘Savouring of everlasting life.’

22. What the soul tastes now in this touch of God, is,

\* Ps. xxx. 21.

in truth, though not perfectly, a certain foretaste of everlasting life, as I said before.\* It is not incredible that it should be so when we believe, as we do believe, that this touch is most substantial, and that the substance of God touches the substance of the soul. Many Saints have experienced it in this life. The sweetness of delight which this touch occasions baffles all description. Neither will I speak of it, lest men should suppose that it is nothing beyond what my words imply, for there are no terms by which we can designate or explain the deep things of God transacted in perfect souls. The proper way to speak of them is for him who has been favoured with them to understand them, feel them, and enjoy them, and be silent.

23. For the soul now sees that they are in some measure like the white counter of which it is written, 'To him that overcometh I will give . . . a white counter, and in the counter a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it.† Thus it may be truly said, 'savouring of everlasting life.' For though the fruition of it is not perfect in this life as it will be in glory; nevertheless the touch, being of God, savoureth of everlasting life, and accordingly the soul tastes in a marvellous manner, and by participation, of all the things of God; fortitude, wisdom, love, beauty, grace, and goodness being communicated unto it.

24. Now as God is all this, the soul tastes of all in one single touch of God in a certain eminent way. And from this good bestowed upon the soul, some of the unction of the Spirit overflows at times into the body itself,

\* Stanza i. § 8.

† Apoc. ii. 17.

penetrating into the very bones, as it is written, 'All my bones shall say: Lord, who is like unto Thee?'\* But as all I can say falls short of the subject, it is enough to repeat, 'savouring of everlasting life.'

'And paying the whole debt.'

25. But what debts are they to which the soul here refers, and which it declares to be paid or satisfied? We should know that souls which attain to this high state, to the kingdom of the spiritual betrothal, have in general passed through many tribulations and trials, because it is 'through many tribulations that we enter into the kingdom of heaven.'† And these tribulations are now passed.

26. What they have to suffer who are to attain unto union with God, are divers afflictions and temptations of sense, trials, tribulations, temptations, darkness, and distress of mind, so that both the flesh and the spirit may be purified together, as I said in my treatise of the Ascent of Mount Carmel, and of the Dark Night. The reason is that the joy and knowledge of God cannot be established in the soul, if the flesh and spirit are not perfectly purified and spiritualized, and as trials and penances purify and refine the senses, as tribulations, temptations, darkness and distress spiritualize and prepare the spirit, so they must undergo them who would be transformed in God—as the souls in purgatory who through that trial attain to the beatific vision—some more intensely than others, some for a longer, others for a shorter time, according to those degrees of union to which God intends to raise them, and according to their need of purification.

27. It is by these trials to which God subjects the

\* Ps. xxxiv. 10.

† Acts xiv. 21.



spirit and the flesh that the soul, in bitterness, acquires virtues and fortitude and perfection, as the Apostle writes, ‘Power is made perfect in infirmity;’\* for virtue is made perfect in weakness, and refined by sufferings. Iron cannot be fashioned according to the pattern of the artificer but by fire and the hammer, and during the process its previous condition is injured. This is the way in which God taught Jeremias, ‘From on high He hath cast a fire in my bones and hath taught me.’† The prophet speaks of the hammer also when he saith, ‘Thou hast chastised me, and I am taught.’‡ So, too, the wise man asks, ‘He that hath not been proved, what knoweth he?’§

28. Here comes the question, why is it that so few ever attain to this state? The reason is that, in this marvellous work which God Himself begins, so many are weak, shrinking from trouble, and unwilling to endure the least discomfort or mortification, or to labour with constant patience. Hence it is that God, not finding them diligent in cultivating the graces He has given them when He began to try them, proceeds no further with their purification, neither does He lift them up out of the dust of the earth, because it required greater courage and resolution for this than they possessed.

29. Thus it may be said to those who desire to advance, but who will not endure a lighter trial nor submit themselves thereto, in the words of Jeremias, ‘If with running with footmen thou hast laboured how canst thou contend with horses? and whereas in a land of peace thou hast been secure, what wilt thou do in the pride of

\* 2 Cor. xii. 9. † Lam. i. 13. ‡ Jerem. xxxi. 18. § Eccles xxxiv. 11.

Jordan?’\* That is, if the ordinary trials of human life which to all men are wearisome and a burden, how art thou to ‘contend with horses?’ that is, how canst thou venture out of the common trials of life upon others of greater violence and swiftness? If thou hast been unwilling to make war against the peace and pleasures of the earth, thine own sensuality, but rather seekest comfort and tranquillity on it, what wilt thou do in the pride of Jordan? that is, how wilt thou stand against the rushing waters of tribulations and the more interior trials of the spirit?

30. O souls that seek your own ease and comfort, if you knew how necessary for this high state is suffering, and how profitable suffering and mortification are for attaining to these great blessings, you would never seek for comfort anywhere, but you would rather take up the cross with the vinegar and the gall, and would count it an inestimable favour, knowing that by thus dying to the world and to your own selves, you would live to God in spiritual joy; in the patient endurance of your exterior afflictions you would merit at the hands of God, that He should look upon you, cleanse and purify you more and more in these spiritual tribulations. They whom He thus blesses must have served Him well and long, must have been patient and persevering, and their life most pleasing in His sight. The angel said unto Tobias, ‘Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee.’† Tobias was acceptable to God, therefore He tried him; He gave him the grace of tribulation, the source of greater graces still, and it is written of him that ‘the rest of his life was in joy.’‡

\* Jerem. xii 5.

† Tob. xii. 13.

‡ Tob. xiv. 4.

31. The same truth is exemplified in the life of Job. God acknowledged him as His faithful servant in the presence of the angels good and evil, and immediately sent him heavy trials, that He might afterwards raise him higher, as He did, both in temporal and spiritual things.\*

32. This is the way God deals with those whom it is His will to exalt. He suffers them to be tempted, afflicted, tormented and chastened, inwardly and outwardly, to the utmost limit of their strength, that He may deify them, unite them to Himself in His wisdom, which is the highest state, purifying them, first in that wisdom, as David observed, saying that the ‘words of our Lord are chaste words, silver, examined by fire,’ tested in the earth of our flesh and purified† seven times, that is, made perfectly pure.

33. It is not necessary I should stop here to say how each of these purgations tends to the divine wisdom, which in this life is as silver, for however pure it may be, yet is not comparable to the pure gold, which is reserved for everlasting glory.

34. But it is very necessary for the soul to endure these tribulations and trials, inward and outward, spiritual and corporal, great and small, with great resolution and patience, accepting all as from the hand of God for its healing and its good, not shrinking from them, because they are for the health of the soul. ‘If the spirit of him that hath power,’ saith the wise man, ‘ascend upon thee, leave not thy place, because carefulness’—that is healing—‘will make the greatest sins to cease.’‡ ‘Leave not thy place,’ that is, the place of thy trial, which is thy

\* Job. i. 8-20; Ps. xi. 7.

† Eccles. x. 4.

troubles ; for the healing which they bring will break the thread of thy sins and imperfectious, which is evil habits, so that they shall proceed no further. Thus, interior trials and tribulations destroy and purge away the imperfect and evil habits of the soul. We are, therefore, to count it a great favour when our Lord sends us interior and exterior trials, remembering that they are few in number who deserve to be made perfect through sufferings so as to attain to so high a state as this.

35. I return to the explanation of the words before me. The soul now remembers that its past afflictions are most abundantly recompensed, for ‘as the darkness so also the light thereof,’\* and that having once been ‘a partaker of the sufferings,’ it is now ‘of the consolation,’† that its interior and exterior trials have been recompensed by the divine mercies, none of them being without its corresponding reward. It therefore acknowledges itself perfectly satisfied, and says, ‘paying the whole debt,’ as David did, ‘How great tribulations hast Thou shown me, many and evil, and turning Thou hast quickened me, and from the depths of the earth Thou hast brought me back again. Thou hast multiplied Thy magnificence, and turning to me Thou hast comforted me.’‡

36. Thus the soul which once stood without at the gates of the palace of God—like Mardocheus weeping in the streets of Susan because his life was threatened, clothed with sackcloth and refusing the garments which Esther sent him, unrewarded for his faithful service in defending the king’s honour and life,§—finds, also, like Mardocheus, all its trials and service rewarded in one day.

\* Ps. cxxxviii. 12.    † 2 Cor. i. 7.    ‡ Ps. lxx. 20.    § Esth. iv. 1-6

It is not only admitted within the palace and stands in royal robes before the king, but has also a diadem on its head, and in its hand a sceptre, and sitting on the royal throne with the king's signet on its finger, symbols of its power in the kingdom of the Bridegroom. For those souls who attain to this high state obtain all their desires; the whole debt is amply paid: the appetites, their enemies which sought their life, are dead, while they are living in God. 'In destroying death Thou hast changed it into life.'

'Thou hast changed death into life.'

37. Death is nothing else but the privation of life, for when life cometh there is no trace of death in that which is spiritual. There are two kinds of life, one beatific, consisting in the vision of God, and this must be preceded by a natural and bodily death, as it is written, 'We know if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven.'\* The other is the perfect spiritual life, consisting in the possession of God by the union of love. Men attain to this through the mortification of their evil habits and desires. Until this be done, the perfection of the spiritual life of union with God is unattainable, 'For,' as the Apostle saith, 'if you live according to the flesh, you shall die: but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.'†

38. By 'death' here is meant the old man, that is the employment of our faculties, memory, understanding, and will, upon the things of this world, and the desire on the pleasure which created things supply. All this is the old

\* 2 Cor. v. 1.

† Rom. viii. 13.

life; it is the death of the new life which is spiritual, and which the soul cannot live perfectly unless to the old man it be perfectly dead, for so the Apostle teaches, when he bids us put 'away according to the old conversation, the old man . . . and put on the new man, which, according to God, is created in justice and holiness of the truth.'\* In this new life, when the soul shall have attained to perfect union with God, all its affections, powers, and acts, in themselves imperfect and vile, become as it were divine. And as everything that lives, to use the expression of philosophers, lives in its acts, so the soul, having its acts in God by virtue of its union with Him, lives the life of God, its death being changed into life.

39. This is so, because the understanding, which, previous to its union with God, understood but dimly by means of its natural light, is now under the influence and direction of another principle, and of a higher illumination of God. The will, which previously loved but weakly, is now changed into the life of divine love, for now it loves deeply with the affections of divine love, moved by the Holy Ghost in whom it now lives. The memory, which once saw nothing but the forms and figures of created things, is now changed, and keeps in 'mind the eternal years,'† as David spoke. The desire, which previously longed for created food, now tastes and relishes the food that is divine, influenced by another and more efficacious principle, the sweetness of God.

40. Finally, all the motions and acts of the soul, proceeding from the principle of its natural and imperfect

\* Ephes. iv. 22, 24.

† Ps. lxxvi.



life, are now changed in this union with God into motions divine. For the soul, as the true child of God, is moved by the Spirit of God, as it is written, ‘Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.’\* The substance of the soul, though it is not the substance of God, because inconvertible into Him, yet being united to Him and absorbed in Him, is by participation God. This is accomplished in the perfect state of the spiritual life, but not so perfectly as in the other; hence is it well said: ‘While slaying thou hast changed death into life.’†

41. The soul, therefore, has good reason for saying with St. Paul, ‘I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.’‡ What in the soul is dead and cold, becomes changed into the life of God, the soul “swallowed up of life” in fulfilling the words of the Apostle, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory,’§ and those of Oseea, ‘I will be thy death, O death.’||

42. The soul being thus swallowed up of life, detached from all secular and temporal things, and delivered from the disorderliness of nature, is led into the chamber of the King, where it rejoices and is glad in the Beloved, remembering His breasts more than wine, and saying, ‘I am black but beautiful, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,’¶ for my natural blackness is changed into the beauty of the heavenly King. O then, the burning of the fire! infinitely burning above all other fires, O how infinitely beyond all other fires dost thou burn me, and the more thou burnest the sweeter thou art to me. ‘O delicious

\* Rom. viii. 14.

† Galat. ii. 20.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 4.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 54.

|| Os. xiii. 14.

¶ Cant. i. 3, 4.

wound,' more delicious to me than all the delights and health of the world. 'O tender hand,' infinitely more tender than all tenderness, and the greater the pressure of it the more tender is it to me. 'O gentle touch,' the gentleness of which surpasses infinitely all the gentleness and all the loveliness of created things, sweeter and more delicious than honey and the honeycomb, because thou savourest of everlasting life; and is the more sweet the more profoundly thou dost touch me. Thou art infinitely more precious than gold and precious stones, for thou payest debts which nothing else can pay, because thou changest marvellously death into life.

43. In this state of life, so perfect, the soul is, as it were, keeping a perpetual feast with the praises of God in its mouth, with a new song of joy and love, full of the knowledge of its high dignity. It sometimes exulteth, repeating the words of Job, 'My glory shall always be renewed,' and 'as a palm tree' I 'will multiply days.'\* That is, God will not suffer my glory to grow old as before, and He will multiply my days, that is, my merits, unto heaven, as a palm tree multiplies its branches. And also the words of David in the twenty-ninth Psalm, the soul sings interiorly to God, especially the conclusion thereof, 'Thou hast turned my mourning into joy unto me: Thou hast cut my sackcloth and hast compassed me with gladness, that my glory may sing to Thee, and I be not compunct'—for this state is inaccessible to pain—'Lord my God, for ever will I confess to Thee.'

44. Here the soul is so conscious of God's solicitude to comfort it, feeling that He is Himself encouraging it

\* Job xxix. 18, 20.

with words so precious, so tender, so endearing; that He is conferring graces upon it, one upon another, so that it seems as if there were no other soul in the world for Him to comfort, no other object of His care, but that everything was done for this one soul alone. This truth is admitted by the bride in the Canticle when she says, ‘My Beloved to me and I to Him.’\*

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### STANZA III.

*O lamps of fire,  
In the splendours of which  
The deep caverns of sense,  
Dim and dark  
With unwonted brightness  
Give light and warmth together to their Beloved.*

### EXPLANATION.

I STAND greatly in need of the help of God to enter into the deep meaning of this stanza: great attention also is necessary on the part of the reader, for if he be without experience of the matter he will find it very obscure, while, on the other hand, it will be clear and full of sweetness to him who has had that experience.

2. In this stanza the soul most heartily thanks the Bridegroom for the great mercies which, in the state of union, it has received at His hands, for He has given therein a manifold and most profound knowledge of Himself, which enlightens its powers and senses, and fills them with love. These powers, previous to the state of

\* Cant. ii. 16.

union, were in darkness and blindness, but are now illumined by the fires of love and respond thereto, offering that very light and love to Him who has kindled and inspired them by infusing into the soul gifts so divine. For he who truly loves is satisfied then when his whole self, all he is, all he can be, all he has, and all he can acquire, is spent in the service of his love; and the greater that service the greater is his pleasure in giving it. Such is the joy of the soul now, because it can shine in the presence of the Beloved in the splendours with which He has surrounded it, and love Him with that love which He has communicated to it.

‘O Lamps of fire.’

3. Lamps have two properties, that of giving light and of burning. If we are to understand this stanza, we must keep in mind, that God in His one and simple essence is all the power and majesty of His attributes. He is omnipotent, wise, good, merciful, just, strong, loving; He is all the other attributes and perfections of which we have no knowledge here below. He is all this. When the soul is in union with Him, and He is pleased to admit it to a special knowledge of Himself, the soul sees in Him all these perfections and majesty together in the one and simple essence clearly and distinctly, so far as it is consistent with the faith, and as each one of these attributes is the very being of God, Who is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. As each attribute is God Himself, and as God is infinite light, and infinite divine fire, it follows that each attribute gives light and burns as God Himself. God therefore, according to this knowledge of Him in unity, is to the soul as many lamps, because it

has the knowledge of each of them, and because they minister to it the warmth of love, each in its own way, and yet all of one substance, all one lamp. This lamp is all lamps, because it gives light, and burns, in all ways.

4. The soul seeing this, the one lamp is to it as many lamps, for though but one, it can do all things, and has all power and comprehends every spirit. And thus it may be said that the one lamp shines and burns many ways in one: it shines and burns as omnipotent, as wise, as good, ministering to the soul knowledge and love, and revealing itself unto it, according to the measure of its strength for the reception of all. The splendour of the lamp as omnipotent gives to the soul the light and warmth of the love of God as omnipotent, and accordingly God is now the lamp of omnipotence to the soul, shining and burning according to that attribute. The splendour of the lamp as wisdom produces the warmth of the love of God as all wise, and so of the other attributes; for the light which emanates from each of the attributes of God and from all the others, produces in the soul the fire of the love of God as such. Thus God is to the soul in these communications and manifestations of Himself—they are, I think, the highest possible in this life—as innumerable lamps from which light and love proceed.

5. These lamps revealed Him to Moses on mount Sinai, where God passed before Him, and where Moses fell prostrate on the earth in all haste. He mentions some of the perfections of God which he then saw, and, loving Him in them, speaks of them separately in the following words: ‘O Lord God, merciful and clement, patient and of much compassion, and true, Who keepest

mercy unto thousands ; Who takest away iniquity and wicked deeds and sin, and no man of himself is innocent before Thee.’\* It appears that the principal attributes of God which Moses then recognised and loved were those of omnipotence, dominion, mercy, justice and truth, which was a most profound knowledge, and the deepest delight of love.

6. It follows from this that the joy and rapture of love communicated to the soul in the fire of the light of these lamps is admirable, and immeasurable : as abundant as from many lamps, each of which burns with love, the heat of one subserving that of the other, as the light of one ministers to that of the other ; all of them forming but one light and fire, and each of them that one fire. The soul, too, infinitely absorbed in these delicious flames, is subtilely wounded by each one of them, and by all of them more subtilely and more profoundly, in the love of life ; the soul sees clearly that this love is everlasting life, which is the union of all blessings, and recognises the truth of those words, ‘The lamps thereof lamps of fire and flames.’†

7. If ‘a great and darksome horror seized upon’ Abram as he saw one ‘lamp of fire passing’‡ before him, when he learned with what rigorous justice God was about to visit the Chananeaus, shall not the lamps of the knowledge of God shining now sweetly and lovingly produce greater light and joy of love than that one lamp produced of horror and darkness, when it passed before Abram ? O my soul ! how great, how excellent, and how manifold, will be thy light and joy : seeing that in all, and by all, thou shalt feel that He gives thee His own joy and love,

\* Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

† Cant. viii. 6.

‡ Gen. xv. 12, 17.



loving thee according to His powers, attributes, and properties. For he who loves and does good to another honours him and does him good according to his own nature and qualities. Thus the Bridegroom abiding in thee, being all powerful, gives Himself to thee, and loves thee with all power; being wise, with wisdom; being good, with goodness; being holy, with holiness. And as He is liberal thou wilt feel also that He loves thee with liberality, without self-interest, only to do thee good, showing joyfully His countenance full of grace, and saying: I am thine and for thee, and it is My pleasure to be what I am, that I may give Myself to thee and be thine.

8. Who then shall describe thy feeling, O blessed soul, when thus beloved, and so highly honoured? ‘Thy belly as a heap of wheat compassed about with lilies.’\* ‘Thy belly,’ that is, thy will, is like a heap of wheat covered and compassed with lilies; for in the grains of wheat which form the bread of life, which thou now art tasting, the lilies of virtue, which gird thee about, fill thee with delight. For the daughters of the king, that is the virtues, will delight thee wondrously with the fragrance of their aromatical herbs, which are the knowledge of Himself which He gives thee. Thou wilt be so absorbed in this knowledge, and it will be so infused in thee, that thou shalt be also ‘a well of living waters which run with a strong stream from Mount Libanus,† and Libanus is God. Thy joy will now be so marvellously complete, because the words of the Psalmist are accomplished in thee: ‘The violence of the river maketh the city of God joyful.’‡

\* Cant. vii. 2.

† Cant. iv. 15.

‡ Ps. xlv. 5.

9. O wonder! The soul is now overflowing with the divine waters, which run from it as from an abundant fountain unto everlasting life.\* It is true that this communication is light and fire of the lamps of God, yet the fire is here so sweet, that though an infinite fire, it is as the waters of life which satisfy the soul, and quench its thirst with that vehemence for which the spirit longs. Thus, though they are lamps of fire, they are also the living waters of the spirit. Those which descended on the Apostles, though lamps of fire, were also waters pure and limpid, according to the words of Ezechiel who thus prophesied the descent of the Holy Ghost: 'I will pour out upon you clean water, and will put a new spirit in the midst of you.'† Thus though it be fire, it is water also, a figure of which we have in the sacrificial fire, hid by Jeremias,‡ it was water in the place of concealment, but fire when it was brought forth and sprinkled upon the sacrifice.§

10. So in like manner the Spirit of God, while hidden in the veins of the soul, is sweet water quenching its spiritual thirst; but when the soul offers the sacrifice of love, the Spirit is then living flames of fire, and these are the lamps of the acts of love which the bride spoke of in the Canticle when she said, 'The lamps thereof lamps of fire and flames.'|| The soul speaks of them thus because it has the fruition thereof not only as waters of wisdom, but also as the fire of love in an act of love, saying, 'O lamps of fire. All language now is ineffectual to express the matter. If we consider that the soul is now transformed in God, we shall in some measure understand

\* St. John iv. 14.

† Ezech. xxxvi. 25, 26.

‡ 2 Mac. ii. 1.

§ Ib. i. 22.

|| Cant. viii. 6.

how it is true that it is also become a fountain of living waters boiling and bubbling upwards in the fire of love which is God.

‘In the splendours.’

11. I have already said that these splendours are the communications of the divine lamps in which the soul in union shines with its powers, memory, understanding, and will, enlightened and united in this loving knowledge. But we are not to suppose that the light of these splendours is like that of material fire, when it breaks into flames and heats objects external to it, but rather when it heats what is within it, for the soul is now within these splendours—‘in the splendours.’ That is to say, it is within them, not near them, within their splendours, in the flames of the lamps, itself transformed in flame.

12. The soul therefore may be said to resemble the air which is burning within the flame and transformed in fire, for the flame is nothing else but air inflamed. The flickerings of the flame are not those of air only or of fire only, but of air and fire together; and the fire causes the air which is within to burn. It is thus that the soul with its powers is illumined in the splendours of God. The movements of the flame, that is its vibrations and its flickerings, are not the work of the soul only, transformed in the fire of the Holy Ghost, nor of the Holy Ghost only, but of the soul and of the Holy Ghost, together Who moves the soul as the fire moves the air that is burning.

13. Thus, then, these movements of God and of the soul together are as it were the acts of God by which He renders the soul glorious. For these vibrations and

movements are the 'playing' and the joyous feasts of the Holy Ghost in the soul, spoken of before,\* in which He seems to be on the point of admitting it into everlasting life. And thus these movements and quiverings of the flame are as it were goads applied to the soul, furthering its translation into His perfect glory now that it is really entered into Him. So with fire: all movements and vibrations which it makes in the air burning within it, are efforts to ascend to its proper sphere, and that as quickly as possible, but they are all fruitless because the air itself is within its own sphere.

14. In the same way the movements of the Holy Ghost, though full of fire and most effectual to absorb the soul in great bliss, do not accomplish their work until the time is come when it is to sally forth from the sphere of the air of this mortal life and reach the centre of the spirit, the perfect life in Christ. These visions of the glory of God, to which the soul is now admitted, are more continuous than they used to be, more perfect and more stable; but in the life to come they will be most perfect, unchanging, and uninterrupted. There, too, the soul will see clearly how that God, though here appearing to move within it, yet in Himself moves not at all, as the fire moves not in its sphere. These splendours are inestimable graces and favours which God bestows upon the soul. They are called also overshadowings, and are, in my opinion, the greatest and the highest graces which can be bestowed in this life in the way of transformation.

15. Now overshadowing is the throwing of a shadow;

\* Stanza 1, line 2, § 10.

and to throw one's shadow over another signifies protection and favour, for when the shadow of one touches us, it is a sign that he whose shadow it is stands by us to favour and protect us. Thus it was said to the Virgin, 'The power of the Most High shall overshadow thee,'\* for the Holy Ghost was about to approach her so closely as to 'come upon' her. The shadow of every object partakes of the nature and proportions of it, for if the object be dense, the shadow will be dense and dark; if it be light and clear, so will be the shadow, as we see in the case of wood or crystal: the former being dense, throws a dark shadow, and the latter being clear, throws a shadow that is light. In spiritual things, too, death is the privation of all things, so the shadow of death will be darkness, which in a manner deprives us of all things. Thus, too, speaks the Psalmist, saying, 'sitting in darkness and the shadow of death,'† whether the spiritual darkness of spiritual death, or the bodily darkness of bodily death.

16. The shadow of life is light, if divine, a divine light, and if the shadow be human, the light is natural, and so the shadow of beauty will be as another beauty according to the nature and properties of that beauty of which it is the shadow. The shadow of strength will be as another strength, in measure and proportion. The shadow of wisdom will be another wisdom, or rather, beauty, strength, and wisdom themselves will be in the shadow, wherein is traced the form and property, the shadow whereof is there.

17. This, then, being so, what must be the shadow of

\* St. Luke i. 35.

† Ps. cvi. 10.

the Holy Ghost, the shadow of all His power, might, and attributes, when He is so near the soul? He touches the soul not with His shadow only, for He unites Himself to it, feeling and tasting with it the form and attributes of God in the shadow of God: that is, feeling and tasting the property of divine power in the shadow of omnipotence: feeling and tasting the divine wisdom in the shadow of the divine wisdom; and finally, tasting the glory of God in the shadow of glory, which begets the knowledge and the taste of the property and form of the glory of God. All this takes place in clear and luminous shadows, because the attributes and powers of God are lamps, which, being resplendent and luminous in their own nature, throw forth shadows resplendent and luminous, and a multitude of them in one sole essence.

18. O what a vision for the soul when it shall experience the power of that which Ezechiel saw: 'the likeness of four living creatures,' and the 'wheel with four faces,' the appearance 'like that of burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps;'<sup>\*</sup> when it shall behold that wheel, the wisdom of God, full of eyes within and without, that is the marvellous knowledge of wisdom; when it shall hear the noise of their wings as they pass, a noise 'like the noise of an army,' that is of many things at once which the soul learns by one sole sound of God's passing before it; and finally, when it shall hear the beating of the wings, which is like the 'noise of many waters, as it were the voice of the Most High God,'<sup>†</sup> which signifies the rushing of the divine waters, the overflowing of which on the descent of the Holy Ghost

<sup>\*</sup> Ezech. i. 5, 13, 15.

<sup>†</sup> Ib. i. 24.



envelopes the soul in a flame of love. Here the soul rejoices in the glory of God, under the protection of His shadow, for the prophet adds: 'This was the vision of the likeness of the glory of our Lord.'\* O the height to which this blessed soul is raised! O how exalted! O how it marvels at the visions it has within the limits of the faith! Who can describe them? O how it is profoundly immersed in these waters of the divine splendours where the everlasting Father is pouring forth the irrigating streams with a bounteous hand, for these streams penetrate soul and body.

19. O wonder! the lamps of the divine attributes, though one in substance, are still distinct, each burning as the other, one being substantially the other. O abyss of delights, and the more abundant, the more their riches are gathered together in infinite simplicity and unity. There each one is so recognised and felt as not to hinder the feeling and recognition of the other; yea, rather everything in Thee is light which does not impede anything; and by reason of Thy pureness, O divine Wisdom, many things are known in Thee in one, for Thou art the treasury of the everlasting Father, 'the brightness of eternal light, the unspotted mirror of God's majesty, and the image of His goodness,'† 'in the splendours.'

'The deep caverns of sense.'

20. The caverns are the powers of the soul, memory, understanding, and will, and their depth is commensurate with their capacity for great good, because nothing less

\* Ezech. ii. 1.

† Wisd. vii. 26.

than the infinite can fill them. What they suffer when they are empty, shows in some measure the greatness of their delight when they are full of God ; for contraries are known by contraries. In the first place, it is to be remembered that these caverns are not conscious of their extreme emptiness when they are not purified and cleansed from all affection for created things. In this life every trifle that enters them is enough to perplex them, to render them insensible to their loss, and unable to recognise the infinite good which is wanting, or their own capacity for it. It is assuredly a most wonderful thing how, notwithstanding their capacity for infinite good, a mere trifle perplexes them, so that they cannot become the recipients of that for which they are intended, till they are completely emptied.

20. But when they are empty and cleansed, the hunger, the thirst, and the anxiety of the spiritual sense become intolerable, for as the appetite of these caverns is large, so their suffering is great, because the food which they need is great, namely, God. This feeling of pain, so deep, usually occurs towards the close of the illumination and the purgation of the soul, previous to the state of perfect union, during which it is satisfied. For when the spiritual appetite is empty, pure from every creature and from every affection thereto, and when the natural temper is lost and the soul attuned to the divine, and the emptied appetite is well disposed—the divine communication in the union with God being still withheld—the pain of this emptiness and thirst is greater than that of death, especially then when certain glimpses of the divine ray are visible, but not communicated. Souls in this state suffer

from impatient love, and they cannot endure it long without either receiving that which they desire, or dying.\*

21. As to the first cavern, which is the understanding, its emptiness is the thirst after God. So great is this thirst, that the Psalmist compares it to that of the hart, for he knew of none greater, saying, 'As the hart desireth the fountains of waters: so doth my soul desire Thee, O God.'† This thirst is a thirst for the waters of the divine Wisdom, the object of the understanding. The second cavern is the will, and the emptiness thereof is a hunger so great after God, that the soul faints away, as the Psalmist saith, 'My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of our Lord.‡ This hunger is for the perfection of love, the object of the soul's desires. The third cavern is the memory, and the emptiness thereof is the soul's melting away and languishing for the possession of God: 'I will be mindful and remember,' saith Jeremias, 'and my soul shall languish within me: these things I shall think over in my heart, therefore will I hope.'§

22. Great, then, is the capacity of these caverns, because that which they are capable of containing is great and infinite, that is, God. Thus their capacity is in a certain sense infinite, their hunger and thirst infinite also, and their languishing and their pain, in their way, infinite. So when the soul is suffering this pain, though the pain be not so keen as in the other world, it seems to be a vivid image of that pain, because the soul is in a measure prepared to receive that which fills it, the privation of which is the greatest pain. Nevertheless the suffering belongs to another condition, for it abides in the depth of

\* See Spirit. Cant. Stanza vii. § 3.

† Ps. lxxxiii. 2.

‡ Ps. xli. 1.

§ Lam. iii. 20, 21.

the will's love; but in this life love does not alleviate the pain, because the greater it is the greater the soul's impatience for the fruition of God, for which it hopes continually with intense desire.

23. But, O my God, seeing it is certain that when the soul truly longs for God it is already, as St. Gregory saith,\* entered into possession, how comes it that it is in pain? If the desire of the angels, of which St. Peter speaks, to look upon the Son of God† is free from pain and anxiety, because they have the fruition of Him, it would seem then that the soul also having the fruition of God in proportion to its desire of Him—and the fruition of God is the fulness of delight—must in this its desire, in proportion to its intensity, be conscious of that fulness, seeing that it longs so earnestly after God, and so herein there ought not to be any suffering or pain.

24. But it is not so, for there is a great difference between the fruition of God by grace only, and the fruition of Him in union; the former is one of mutual good will, the latter one of special communion. This difference resembles that which exists between betrothal and marriage. The former implies only an agreement and consent; bridal presents, and ornaments graciously given by the bridegroom. But marriage involves also personal union and mutual self-surrender. Though in the state of betrothal, the bridegroom is sometimes seen by the bride, and gives her presents; yet there is no personal union, which is the end of betrothal.

25. In the same way, when the soul has become so pure in itself, and in its powers, that the will is purged

\* Hom. 30 in Evangel.

† 1 St. Pet. i. 12.

completely from all strange desires and inclinations, in its higher and lower nature, and is wholly given up to God, the will of both being one in free and ready concord, it has then attained to the fruition of God by grace in the state of betrothal and conformity of will. In this state of spiritual betrothal of the soul and the Word, the Bridegroom confers great favours upon the soul, and visits it oftentimes most lovingly to its great comfort and delight, but not to be compared with those of the spiritual marriage.

26. Now, though it is true that this takes place in the soul when it is perfectly cleansed of every affection to creatures—because that must occur previous to the spiritual betrothal—still other positive dispositions on the part of God, His visits and gifts of greater excellence, are requisite for this union, and for the spiritual marriage. It is by means of these dispositions, gifts, and visits, that the soul grows more and more in purity, beauty, and refinement, so as to be meetly prepared for a union so high. All this requires time, in some souls more, in others less. We have a type of this in the history of the virgins chosen for king Assuerus. These were taken in all the provinces of the kingdom, and brought from their fathers' houses; but before they could be presented to the king, they were kept in the palace a whole year. For six months they were anointed with oil of myrrh, and for the other six with certain perfumes and sweet spices of a costlier nature, after which they appeared in the presence of the king.\*

27. During the time of the betrothal, and in expecta-

\* Esth. ii. 2, 12.

tion of the spiritual marriage in the unction of the Holy Ghost, when the unction disposing the soul for union is most penetrating, the anxieties of the caverns are wont to become most pressing and keen. For as these unctions are a proximate disposition for union with God, because most near unto Him, they make the soul more eager for Him, and inspire it with a keener longing after Him. Thus this desire is much more keen and deep, because the desire for God is a preparation for union with Him.

28. This is a good opportunity to warn souls whom God is guiding to this delicate unction to take care what they are doing, and to whose hands they commit themselves, that they may not go backwards, were it not beside my purpose. But such is the pain and grief of heart which I feel at the sight of some souls who go backwards, not only by withdrawing themselves from the further anointing of the Holy Ghost, but by losing the effects of what they have already received, that I cannot refrain from speaking on the subject, and telling them what they ought to do in order to avoid so great a loss. I will therefore leave my subject for a moment, but I shall return to it soon again. And in truth the consideration of this matter tends to elucidate the property of these caverns, and it is also necessary, not only for those souls who prosper in their work, but also for all others who are searching after the Beloved.

29. In the first place, if a soul is seeking after God, the Beloved is seeking it much more; if it sends after Him its loving desires, which are sweet as 'a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices, of myrrh and frankincense,'\*

\* Cant. iii. 6.



He on His part sends forth the odour of His ointments, which draw the soul and make it run after Him.\* These ointments are His divine inspirations and touches, which if they come from Him, are always directed and ordered by the motives of perfection according to the law of God and the faith, in which perfection the soul must ever draw nearer and nearer unto God. The soul, therefore, ought to see that the desire of God in all the graces which He bestows upon it by means of the unction and odour of His ointments, is to dispose it for another and higher unction, and more in union with His nature, until it attains to that simple and pure disposition, which is meritorious of the divine union, and of its transformation in all its powers.

30. The soul, therefore, considering that God is the chief doer in this matter, that it is He who guides it and leads it by the hand whither it cannot come of itself, namely, unto supernatural things beyond the reach of understanding, memory, and will, must take especial care to put no difficulties in the way of its guide, who is the Holy Ghost, on that road along which He leads it by the law of God and the faith. Such a difficulty will be raised if the soul intrusts itself to a blind guide; and the blind guides which can lead it astray are three, namely, the spiritual director, the devil, and its own self.

31. As to the first of these, it is of the greatest importance to the soul desirous of perfection and anxious not to fall back, to consider well into whose hands it resigns itself; for as the master so is the disciple; as the father so the child. You will scarcely find one who is in

\* Ib. i. 3.

all respects to guide a soul in the higher parts of this road, or even in the ordinary divisions of it, for a director must be learned, prudent and experienced. Though the foundations of good direction be learning and discretion, yet if experience of the higher ways be wanting, there are no means of guiding a soul therein when God is showing the way, and inexperienced directors may do great harm. Such directors, not understanding these ways of the Spirit, very frequently make souls lose the unction of the delicate ointments, by means of which the Holy Ghost is preparing them for Himself: they are guiding them by other means of which they have read, but which are adapted only for beginners. These directors, knowing how to guide beginners only—and God grant they may know that—will not suffer their penitents to advance, though it be the will of God, beyond the mere rudiments, acts of reflection and imagination, whereby their progress is extremely little.

32. In order to a better knowledge of the state of beginners, we must keep in mind that it is one of meditation and of acts of reflection. It is necessary to furnish the soul in this state with matter for meditation, that it may make reflections and interior acts, and avail itself of the sensible spiritual heat and fervour, for this is necessary in order to accustom the senses and desires to good things, that, being satisfied by the sweetness thereof, they may be detached from the world.

33. When this is in some degree effected, God begins at once to introduce the soul into the state of contemplation, and that very quickly, especially religious, because these, having renounced the world, quickly fashion their

senses and desires according to God ; they have therefore to pass at once from meditation to contemplation. This passage, then, takes place when the discursive acts and meditation fail, when sensible sweetness and first fervours cease, when the soul cannot make reflections as before, nor find any sensible comfort, but is fallen into aridity, because the chief matter is changed into the spirit, and the spirit is not cognisable by sense. As all the natural operations of the soul, which are within its control, depend on the senses only, it follows that God is now working in a special manner in this state, that it is He that infuses and teaches, that the soul is the recipient on which He bestows spiritual blessings by contemplation, the knowledge and the love of Himself together ; that is, He gives it loving knowledge without the instrumentality of its discursive acts, because it is no longer able to form them as before.

34. At this time, then, the direction of the soul must be wholly different from what it was at first. If formerly it was supplied with matter for meditation and it did meditate, now that matter must be withheld and meditation must cease, because, as I have said, it cannot meditate, do what it will, and distractions are the result.\* If before it looked for fervour and sweetness and found them, let it look for them no more nor desire them ; and if it attempt to seek them, not only will it not find them, but it will meet with aridity, because it turns away from the peaceful and tranquil good secretly bestowed upon it, when it attempts to fall back on the operations of sense. In this way it loses the latter without gaining the former, because the senses have ceased to be the channel of spiritual good.

\* Ascent of Mount Carmel, bk. ii., ch. xiii. ch. xv. § 1.

35. Souls in this state are not to be forced to meditate or to apply themselves to discursive reflections laboriously effected, neither are they to strive after sweetness and fervour, for if they did so, they would be thereby hindering the principal agent, who is God Himself, for He is now secretly and quietly infusing wisdom into the soul, together with the loving knowledge of Himself, without many divers distinct or separated acts. But He produces them sometimes in the soul, and that for some space of time. The soul then must be lovingly intent upon God without distinctly eliciting other acts beyond these to which He inclines it; it must be as it were passive, making no efforts of its own, purely, simply, and lovingly intent upon God, as a man who opens his eyes with loving attention. For as God is now dealing with the soul in the way of bestowing by simple and loving knowledge, so the soul also, on its part, must deal with Him in the way of receiving by simple and loving knowledge, so that knowledge may be joined to knowledge, and love to love; because it is necessary here that the recipient should be adapted to the gift, and not otherwise, and that the gift may be accepted and preserved as it is given.

36. It is evident, therefore, that if the soul does not now abandon its ordinary way of meditation, it will receive this gift of God in a scanty and imperfect manner, not in that perfection with which it is bestowed; for the gift being so grand, and an infused gift, cannot be received in this scanty and imperfect way. Consequently, if the soul will at this time make efforts of its own, and encourage another disposition than that of passive loving

attention, most submissive and calm, and if it does not abstain from its previous discursive acts, it will place a barrier against those graces which God is about to communicate to it in this loving knowledge. He gives His grace to beginners in the exercise of purgation, as I have said,\* and afterwards with an increase of the sweetness of love.

37. But if the soul is to be the recipient of His grace passively, in the natural way of God, and not in the supernatural way of the soul, it follows that, in order to be such a recipient, it must be perfectly detached, calm, peaceful, and serene, as God is; it must be like the atmosphere, which the sun illumines and warms in proportion to its calmness and purity. Thus the soul must be attached to nothing, not even to meditation, not to sensible or spiritual sweetness, because God requires a spirit free and annihilated, for every act of the soul, even of thought, of liking or disliking, will hinder and disturb it, and break that profound silence of sense and spirit necessary for hearing the deep and soft voice of God, Who, in the words of Oseas, speaks to the heart in solitude;† it is in profound peace and tranquillity that the soul, like David, is to listen to God, Who will speak peace unto His people.‡ When this takes place, when the soul feels that it is silent and listens, its loving attention must be most pure, without a thought of self, in a manner self-forgotten, so that it shall be wholly intent upon hearing, for thus it is that the soul is free and ready for that which our Lord requires at its hands.

\* Dark Night, Bk. I, ch. viii.

† Os. ii. 14.

‡ Ps. lxxxiv. 9.

38. This tranquillity and self-forgetfulness are ever attended with a certain interior absorption ; and, therefore, under no circumstances whatever, either of time or place, is it lawful for the soul, now that it has begun to enter the state of contemplation, tranquil and simple, to recur to its previous meditation, or to cleave to spiritual sweetness, as I have said, and at great length, in the tenth chapter of the first book of the *Dark Night*, and previously in the last chapter of the second, and in the first of the third book of the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*. It must detach itself from all spiritual sweetness, rise above it in freedom of spirit ; this is what the prophet Habacuc did, for he says of himself, ‘ I will stand upon my watch ’ over my senses—that is, I will leave them below—‘ and fix my step upon the munition ’ of my faculties—that is, they shall not advance a step even in thought—‘ and I will behold to see what will be said to me,’\* that is, I will receive what God shall communicate to me passively.

39. I have already said† that to contemplate is to receive, and it is impossible to receive the highest wisdom, that is contemplation, otherwise than in a silent spirit, detached from all sweetness and particular knowledge. So the prophet Isaias when he says, ‘ Whom shall He teach knowledge ? and whom shall He make to understand the thing heard ? them that are weaned from the milk,’ that is from sweetness and personal likings, ‘ that are plucked away from the breasts.’‡ from reliance on particular knowledge. Take away O spiritual man, the mote and the film from thine eye, and make it clean, and

\* Habac. ii. 1.

† *Dark Night*, Bk. 1, ch. ix.

‡ Is. xxviii. 9



then the sun will shine for thee, and thou shalt see clearly, establish thy soul in the freedom of calm peace, withdraw it from the yoke and slavery of the miserable efforts of thine own strength, which is the captivity of Egypt—for all thou canst do is little more than to gather straw for the bricks—and guide it into the land of promise flowing with milk and honey.

40. O spiritual director, remember it is for this liberty and holy rest of sons that God calls the soul into the wilderness; there it journeys in festal robes, with ornaments of gold and silver,\* for the Egyptians are spoiled and their riches carried away.† Nor is this all: the enemies of the soul are drowned in the sea of contemplation, where the Egyptian of sense finds no support for his feet, leaving the child of God free, that is the spirit, to transcend the narrow limits of its own operations, of its low views, rude perceptions, and wretched likings. God does all this for the soul that He may give it the sweet manna, which, though ‘it contains all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste’‡—objects of desire for the soul according to thy direction—and though it is so delicious that it melts in the mouth, thy penitent shall not taste of it, if he desires anything else, for he shall not receive it.

41. Strive, therefore, to root out of the soul all desire of consolation, sweetness, and meditations; do not disquiet it about spiritual things, still less about earthly things; establish it in perfect detachment, and in the utmost possible solitude. For the greater its progress in this, and the more rapidly it attains to this calm tran-

\* Exod. xxxiii. 4.

† Ib. xii. 35.

‡ Wisd. xvi. 20.

quillity, the more abundant will be the infusion of the spirit of divine wisdom, the loving, calm, lonely, peaceful, sweet ravisher of the spirit. The soul will feel itself at times enraptured, gently and tenderly wounded, not knowing by whom, how, or when, because the Spirit communicates Himself to it without effort on its part. The least work of God in the soul in this state of holy rest and solitude is an inestimable good, transcending the very thought of the soul and of its spiritual guide, and though it does not appear so then, it will show itself in due time.

42. What the soul is now conscious of is a certain estrangement and alienation from all things around it, at one time more than at another, with a certain sweet aspiration of love and life of the spirit, an inclination to solitude, and a sense of weariness in the things of this world, for when we taste of the spirit, the flesh becomes insipid. But the interior goods which silent contemplation impresses on the soul without the soul's consciousness of them, are of inestimable value, for they are the most secret and delicious unctions of the Holy Ghost, whereby He secretly fills the soul with the riches of His gifts and graces; for being God, He doeth the work of God as God.

43. These goods, then, these great riches, these sublime and delicate unctions, this knowledge of the Holy Ghost, which, on account of their exquisite and subtile pureness, neither the soul itself, nor he who directs it, can comprehend, but only He Who infuses them in order to render it more pleasing to Himself—are most easily, even by the slightest application of sense or desire to any particular

knowledge or sweetness, disturbed and hindered. This is a serious evil, grievous and lamentable. O how sad and how wonderful! The evil done is not perceived, and the barrier raised between God and the soul is almost nothing, and yet it is more grievous, an object of deeper sorrow, and inflicts a greater stain, than any other, though seemingly more important, in common souls which have not attained to such a high state of pureness. It is as if a beautiful painting were roughly handled, besmeared with coarse and vile colours; for the injury done is greater, more observable, and more deplorable, than it would be if a multitude of common paintings were thus bedaubed.

44. Though this evil be so great that it cannot be exaggerated, it is still so common that there is scarcely one spiritual director who does not inflict it upon souls whom God has begun to lead by this way to contemplation. For, whenever God is anointing a soul with the unction of loving knowledge, most delicate, serene, peaceful, lonely, strange to sense and imagination; whenever He withholds all sweetness from it, and suspends its power of meditation—because He reserves it for this lonely unction, inclining it to solitude and quiet—a spiritual director will appear, who, like a rough blacksmith, knows only the use of his hammer, and who, because all his knowledge is limited to the coarser work, will say to it: Come, get rid of this, this is waste of time and idleness: arise and meditate, resume thine interior acts, for it is necessary that thou shouldest make diligent efforts of thine own; everything else is delusion and folly. Such a director as this does not understand the degrees

of prayer, nor the ways of the Spirit, neither does he consider that what he recommends the soul to do is already done, since it has passed beyond meditation and is detached from the things of sense; for when the goal is reached, and the journey ended, all further travelling must be away from the goal.

45. Such a director, therefore, is one who understands not that the soul has already attained to the life of the Spirit, wherein there is no reflection, and where the senses cease from their work; where God is Himself the agent in a special way, and is speaking in secret to the solitary soul. Directors of this kind bedaub the soul with the coarse ointments of particular knowledge and sensible sweetness, to which they bring it back; they rob it of its loneliness and recollection, and consequently disfigure the exquisite work which God was doing within it. The soul that is under such guidance as this fails and does not profit by the other.

46. Let spiritual directors of this kind remember, that the Holy Ghost is the principal agent here, and the real guide of souls; that He never ceases to take care of them and never neglects any means by which they may profit and draw near unto God as quickly as possible, and in the best way. Let them remember that they are not the agents, but instruments only to guide souls by the rule of the faith and the law of God, according to the spirit which God gives to every one. Their aim therefore should be, not to guide souls by a way of their own suitable to themselves, but to ascertain, if they can, the way by which God Himself is guiding them. If they cannot ascertain it, let them leave these souls alone and not disquiet them.

Let them adapt their instructions to the direction of God, and endeavour to lead their penitents into greater solitude, liberty, and tranquillity, and not fetter them when God is leading them on.

47. The spiritual director must not be anxious or afflicted because the soul is doing nothing, as he imagines, for provided the soul of his penitent be detached from all particular knowledge, from every desire and inclination of sense; provided it abide in the self-denial of poverty of spirit, emptied of darkness and sweetness, weaned from the breast—for this is all that the soul should look to, and all that the spiritual director is to consider as within the province of them both—it is impossible—according to the course of the divine goodness and mercy—that God will not perform His own work, yea, more impossible than that the sun should not shine in a clear and cloudless sky. As the sun rising in the morning enters the house if the windows are open, so God, the unsleeping keeper of Israel,\* enters the emptied soul and fills it with good things. God is, like the sun, above our souls and ready to enter within them.

48. Let spiritual directors, therefore, be content to prepare souls according to the laws of evangelical perfection, which consists in detachment, and in the emptiness of sense and spirit. Let them not go beyond this with the building, for that is the work of our Lord alone, from Whom cometh ‘every perfect gift.’† For, ‘unless our Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.’‡ And as He is the supernatural builder, He will build up in every soul, according to His own good

\* Ps. cxx. 4.

† St. James i. 17.

‡ Ps. cxxvi. 1.

pleasure, the supernatural building. Do thou, who art the spiritual director, dispose the natural faculties by annihilating them in their acts—that is thy work; the work of God, as the wise man says,\* is to direct man's steps towards supernatural goods by ways and means utterly unknown to thee and thy penitent.

49. Say not, therefore, that thy penitent is making no progress, or is doing nothing, for if he have no greater pleasure than he once had in particular knowledge, he is advancing towards that which is above nature. Neither do thou complain that thy penitent has no distinct perceptions, for if he had he would be making no progress, because God is incomprehensible, surpassing all understanding. And so the further the penitent advances, the further from himself must he go, walking by faith, believing and not seeing; he thus draws nearer unto God by not understanding, than by understanding. Trouble not thyself about this, for if the understanding goes not backwards occupying itself with distinct knowledge and other matters of this world, it is going forwards; for to go forwards is to go more and more by faith. The understanding, having neither the knowledge nor the power of comprehending God, advances towards Him by not understanding.† Thus, then, what thou judgest amiss in thy penitent is for his profit: namely, that he does not perplex himself with distinct perceptions, but walks onwards in perfect faith.

50. Or, you will say, perhaps, that the will, if the understanding have no distinct perceptions, will be at the least idle, and without love, because we can love nothing,

\* Prov. xvi. 1, 9.

† St. Teresa, Life, ch, xviii. § 18.



that we do not know. That is true as to the natural actions of the soul, for the will does not love or desire anything of which there is no distinct conception in the understanding. But in the matter of infused contemplation, it is not at all necessary for the soul to have distinct knowledge, or to form many discursive acts, because God Himself is then communicating to it loving knowledge, which is at the same time heat and light indistinctly, and then according to the state of the understanding love also is in the will. As the knowledge is general and dim—the understanding being unable to conceive distinctly what it understands—so the will also loves generally and indistinctly. For as God is light and love in this delicate communication, He informs equally the understanding and the will, though at times His presence is felt in one more than in the other. At one time the understanding is more filled with knowledge than the will with love, and at another, love is deeper than knowledge.

52. There is no reason, therefore, to be afraid of the will's idleness in this state, for if it ceases to elicit acts directed by particular knowledge, so far as they depend on itself, God inebriates it with infused love through the knowledge which contemplation ministers, as I have just said.

53. These acts of the will which are consequent upon infused contemplation are so much the nobler, the more meritorious and the sweeter, the nobler the source, God, Who infuses this love and kindles it in the soul, for the will is now near unto God, and detached from other joys. Take care, therefore, to empty the will and detach it from all its inclinations, for if it is not going backwards,

searching after sweetness and comfort, even though it have none in God distinctly felt, it is really advancing upwards above all such things to God, seeing that it is without any particular pleasure.

54. And though the penitent have no particular comfort in God distinctly apprehended, though he does not make distinct acts of love, he does find more comfort in Him in that general secret and dim infusion than if he were under the influence of distinct acts of knowledge, because the soul sees clearly then that not one of them can furnish so much comfort and delight as this calm and lonely infusion. He loves God, too, more than all lovely things, because the soul has thrown aside all other joys and pleasures; they have become insipid.

55. There is no ground for uneasiness here, for if the will can find no rest in the joys and satisfactions of particular acts, there is then real progress, because not to go backwards, embracing what is sensible, is to go onwards to the unapproachable, who is God. Hence, then, if the will is to advance, it is to do so more by detachment from, than by attachment to, what is pleasurable and sweet. Herein is fulfilled the precept of love, namely, that we are to love Him above all things. And if this love is to be perfect, we must live in perfect detachment, and in a special emptiness of all things.

56. Neither are we to be distressed when the memory is emptied of all forms and figures; for as God is without form or figure, the memory is safe when emptied of them, and draws thereby the nearer to God. For the more the memory relies on the imagination, the further it departs from God, and the greater the risks it runs;

because God, being above our thoughts, is not cognisable by the imagination. These spiritual directors, not understanding souls who have already entered into the state of quiet and solitary contemplation, because they know it not, and perhaps have never advanced beyond the ordinary state of reflection and meditation themselves, look upon the penitents, of whom I am speaking, as idle—for ‘the sensual man,’ the man who still dwells with the feelings of the sensual part of the soul, ‘perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God’\*—disturb the peace of that calm and tranquil contemplation given them by God, and force them back to their former meditations.

57. This is followed by great loss, repugnance, dryness, and distractions on the part of penitents, who desire to abide in quiet and peaceful self-recollection. These directors will have them strive after sweetness and fervours, though in truth they should have given them a wholly different advice. The penitents are unable to follow their direction, being incapable of meditating as before; because the time for that is past, and because that is not their road. They are, therefore, doubly disquieted, and imagine themselves in the way of perdition. Their directors encourage them in this supposition, dry up their spirit, rob them of the precious unctions which God gave them in solitude and calm—and this is a great evil—and furnish them with mere mud instead, for they lose the former, and labour in vain with the latter.

58. Such directors as these do not really know what spirituality is. They wrong God most grievously, and

\* 1 Cor. ii. 14

treat Him irreverently, putting forth their coarse hands to the work which He is doing Himself. It has cost God not a little to have brought souls thus far, and He greatly prizes this solitude to which He has led them, this emptiness of their faculties, for He has brought them thither that He may speak to their heart,\* that is what He always desires. He is now taking them by the hand, and reigning in them in the abundance of peace. He has deprived the discursive faculties of their strength, where-with they had 'laboured all the night' and had taken nothing.† He feeds them now in spirit, not by the operation of sense, because the senses together with their acts cannot contain the spirit.

59. How precious in His sight is this calm, or sleep, or annihilation of the senses, His words in the Canticle show: 'I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and harts of the fields, that you stir not up nor awake my beloved till she please.'‡ Those words tell us how much He loves this sleep and lonely oblivion of the soul, by the mention of those solitary and retiring animals. But the spiritual directors of whom I am speaking will not suffer their penitents to rest, they insist upon continual labour, so that God shall find no opportunity for doing His work; the work of God they undo and disfigure by the work of the soul, and the little foxes that destroy the vines are not driven away. God complains of these directors by the mouth of the prophet, saying, 'You have devoured the vineyard.'§

60. But it may be said that these directors err, perhaps, with good intentions, because their knowledge is

\* Os. ii. 14.

† St. Luke v. 5,

‡ Cant. iii. 5.

§ Is. iii. 14,

scanty. Be it so ; but they are not therefore justified in giving the rash counsels they do, without previously ascertaining the way and spirit of their penitent. And if they do not understand the matter, it is not for them to interfere in what they do not comprehend, but rather to leave their penitent to others who understand him better than they. It is not a light fault to cause by a wrong direction the loss of inestimable blessings, and to endanger a soul. Thus, he who rashly errs, being under an obligation to give good advice—for so is every one in the office he assumes—shall not go unpunished for the evil he has done. The affairs of God are to be handled with great caution and watchful circumspection, and especially this, which is so delicate, and so high, and where the gain is infinite if the direction given be right, and the loss also infinite if it be wrong.

61. But if you say that such a director may be excused—though for my part I do not see how—you must at least admit that he is inexcusable who keeps a penitent in his power for certain empty reasons and considerations known only to himself : he will not go unpunished. It is quite certain that a soul which is to make progress in the spiritual life, and which God is ever helping, must change its method of prayer, and be in need of a higher direction and of another spirit than those of such a director. Not all directors have the knowledge which every event on the spiritual road requires : neither are they all qualified to determine how a given soul is to be directed under every circumstance of the spiritual life ; at least they must not presume that they are, or that it is God's will that a particular soul shall not advance further. As it is not

everyone who can trim a block of wood, can also carve an image out of it; nor can everyone form the outlines who can carve; nor can everyone who fashions the outlines paint them, as neither can everyone who can paint perfect and complete the image: for everyone of these can do only what he understands himself; and if any one of them were to attempt that which is not within the compass of his skill, he would spoil the statue.

62. So is it in the spiritual life; for if a director whose only work it is to trim the rude block, that is, to make his penitent despise the world, and mortify his desires; or if, further, it be that of the carver, who is to guide the soul into holy meditations, and his science extend no further, how can he guide his penitent to the highest perfection of the finished portrait, to that delicate colouring which consists not in the rough hewing of the wood, nor in the carving thereof, nor even in the formation of the outlines, but is rather a work which God Himself perfects in the soul with His own hand. It is therefore quite certain that such a director as this, whose teaching is ever the same, cannot help driving back the penitent whom he subjects to it, or, at the least, hindering his advancement. For what will be the state of the image, if nothing be done to it but to rough-hew the wood and beat it with a mallet? What is this, but the discipline of the faculties? When shall the image be finished? When shall it be ready for God to colour it?

63. Is it possible that any spiritual director can think himself qualified for all this? that he looks upon himself as sufficiently skilful, so as to render the teaching of



another needless for his penitent? Granting even that he is qualified for the whole direction of a particular soul, because, perhaps, such a soul has no vocation for a higher walk, it is almost impossible that he can be also a sufficient guide for all whom he hinders from passing out of his hands into the hands of others. God leads every soul by a separate path, and you will scarcely meet with one spirit which agrees with another in one half of the way by which it advances. Who can be like St. Paul, who 'became all things to all men, that he might save all?'\*

64. Thou art thus become a tyrant of souls, the robber of their liberties, claiming for thyself all the freedom of the evangelical doctrine, and taking care that none of thy penitents leave thee; yea, still further, and much worse, should it come to thy knowledge that any of them had gone elsewhere for direction, or to discuss a question which it was not convenient to submit to thee; or if God had led them for the purpose of learning what thou teachest not—I say it with shame—thou art jealous, like a husband of his wife. This is not zeal for the honour of God, but the zeal which cometh out of thine own pride and presumption. How couldest thou be sure that thy penitent had no need of other guidance than thine? With such directors God is angry and he threatens to chastise them, saying: 'Woe to the shepherds of Israel . . . you eat the milk and you clothed yourself with the wool . . . but my flock you did not feed. . . . I will require my flock at their hand.'†

65. These directors, therefore, ought to leave their

\* 1 Cor. ix. 22.

† Ezech. xxxiv. 2, 10.

penitents at liberty, yea, they lie under an obligation to allow them to have recourse to the advice of others, and always to receive them again with a cheerful countenance ; for they know not by what way God intends to lead them, especially when their present direction is not suited to them. That, indeed, is a sign that God is leading their penitents by another road, and that they require another director ; they should, therefore, counsel the change, for a contrary course of proceeding springs from a foolish pride and presumption.

66. Let me now pass on from this and speak of other means, fatal as the plague, which these directors, or others worse than they, make use of in the guidance of souls. When God sends into a soul the unctions of holy desires, and leads it to give up the world, draws it on to change its state of life, and to serve Him by despising the world—it is a great matter in His eyes that souls should have advanced to this, for the things of the world are not according to the heart of God—these directors, with their human reasonings and worldly motives, contrary to the doctrine of Christ, at variance with mortification and contempt of all things, consulting their own interest or pleasure, or fearing where no fear is, interpose delays or suggest difficulties, or, what is worse, take away all such good thoughts from the hearts of their penitents. These directors have an evil spirit, are indevout and exceedingly worldly ; unaccustomed to the ways of Christ, they do not enter in themselves by the strait gate, neither will they suffer others to enter. These are they whom our Lord threatens in the gospel, saying : ‘ Woe to you lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge :

you yourselves have not entered in, and those that were entering you have hindered.’\*

67. These directors are in truth like barriers before the gate of heaven, forgetting that God has called them to the functions they exercise that they may compel those to enter in whom He has invited. He has given them this charge in the gospel, but they, on the contrary, compel their penitents not to enter in by the narrow gate which leadeth unto life.† Such a director as this is one of the blind guides who thwarts the direction of the Holy Ghost. This happens in many ways; some err knowingly; others ignorantly; but both the one and the other shall be punished; for by taking upon themselves the office which they fill, they are bound to understand and consider what they do.

68. The other blind guide that disturbs the soul in this interior recollection is satan, who, being blind himself, desires to render the soul blind also. He labours, therefore, when the soul has entered into those deep solitudes, wherein the delicate unctions of the Holy Ghost are infused—he hates and envies the soul for this, because he sees it fly beyond his reach, adorned with the riches of God—to throw over the soul’s detachment and estrangement from the world, certain cataracts of knowledge, and the darkness of sensible sweetness, sometimes good, the more to entice the soul, and to draw it back to the way of sense. He would have it fix its eyes on this, and make use of it with a view of drawing near to God, relying upon this kind of knowledge, and sensible sweetness. By this means satan distracts the soul, and

St Luke xi, 52.

† St. Matth. vii. 13, 14.

easily withdraws it from that solitude and recollection wherein the Holy Ghost worketh secretly His great marvels within.

69. And then the soul, naturally prone to sensible satisfactions and sweetness—especially if it aims at them—is most easily led to rely upon such knowledge and sweetness, and so draws back from the solitude wherein God was working. For as the soul, as it seemed, was doing nothing then, this new way appears preferable, because it is something, while solitude seemed to be nothing. How sad it is that the soul, not understanding its own state, should, for one mouthful, disqualify itself for feeding upon God Himself; for He offers Himself to be its food when He absorbs it in these spiritual and solitary unctions of His mouth.

70. In this way, the evil spirit, for a mere nothing, inflicts upon souls the very greatest injuries, causing the loss of great riches, and dragging them forth, like fish with a trifling bait, out of the depths of the pure waters of the spirit, where they were engulfed and drowned in God, resting upon no created support. He drags them to the bank, and supplies them with objects whereon to rest, and makes them walk on the earth painfully, that they may not float on ‘the waters of Siloe, that run with silence.’\* bathed in the unctions of God. It is wonderful how much satan makes of this: and as a slight injury inflicted on the soul in this state is a great one, you will scarcely meet with one which has gone this way that has not suffered great injuries, and incurred grievous losses. Satan stations himself with great cunning on the

\* Is. viii. 6.

frontiers between sense and spirit; there he deludes the soul, and feeds the senses, interposing sensible things to keep it back, and hinder it from escaping out of his hands.

72. The soul, too, is most easily taken by these devices, for it knows as yet of nothing better; neither does it dream that this is a loss, yea rather, it looks on it as a great gain, and accepts the suggestions of the evil one gladly, for it thinks that God has come to visit it; consequently it omits to enter into the inner chamber of the Bridegroom, and stands at the door to see what is passing without in the sensual part of itself.

73. The devil, in the words of Job, ‘seeth every high thing’\* that relates to souls that he may assail them. If, therefore, a soul becomes recollected, he labours to disturb it by horrors and fears, or by bodily pains, or outward noise and tumults, that he may ruin it; he strives to draw its attention to the tumult he excites, and to fix it upon what is passing without, and to withdraw it from the interior spirit, but when he fails in his efforts he leaves it alone. So easily does satan squander great riches and bring about the ruin of these precious souls, though he thinks this of more consequence than the fall of many others, that he looks upon it as a small matter because of the ease with which he affects it and because of the little trouble it costs him.

74. We may also understand in the same sense the following words, spoken by God to Job:† ‘Lo! he shall sup up the river and shall not marvel: and he hath confidence that Jordan’—the highest perfection—‘may run

\* Job xli. 25.

† Job xl. 18, 19.

into his mouth. In his eyes as with a hook he shall take him, and with stakes he shall bore through his nostrils.' That is, he will turn away the soul from true spirituality by means of the arrows of distinct knowledge wherewith he pierces it, for the breath which goeth out through the nostrils in one volume becomes dispersed if the nostrils be pierced, and escapes through the divers perforations.

75. Again it is said, 'The beams of the sun shall be under him, and he shall strew gold under as dirt.' He causes souls that have been enlightened to lose the marvellous beams of divine knowledge, takes away and disperses abroad the precious gold of the divine adorning by which souls had been made rich.

76. O souls, now that God shows you mercies so great, leading you into solitude and recollection, withdrawing you from the labours of sense, do not return thereto. If your own exertions were once profitable, enabling you to deny the world and your own selves when you were but beginners, cease from them now when God of His mercy has begun to work in you, for now they will only embarrass you. If you will be careful to lay no stress on your own operations, withdrawing them from all things, and involving them in nothing,—which is your duty in your present state—and wait lovingly and sincerely upon God at the same time—doing no violence to yourselves except to detach yourselves wholly, so as not to disturb your tranquillity and peace—God Himself will feed you with the heavenly food, since you cease to hinder Him.

77. The third blind guide of the soul is the soul itself, which, not understanding its own state, disturbs and injures itself. For as the soul knows of no operations



except those of sense; when God leads it into solitude, where it cannot exert its faculties and elicit the acts it elicited before, and as it appears to itself then to be doing nothing, it strives to elicit its previous acts more distinctly and more sensibly. The consequence is distraction, dryness, and disgust in that very soul which once delighted in the calm peace and spiritual silence, wherein God Himself was in secret infusing His sweetness. It sometimes happens that God persists in keeping the soul in this quiet calm, and that the soul persists in crying out with the imagination, and in walking with the understanding. Such souls are like children in their mothers' arms, who, unable to walk, cry, and struggle with their feet, demanding to be allowed to walk alone, but who cannot walk themselves, and suffer not their mothers to do so either. These souls make God resemble a painter whose work is hindered because the subject he portrays will not be still.

78. The soul, then, should keep in mind that it is now making greater progress than it could make by any efforts of its own, though it be wholly unconscious of that progress. God Himself is carrying it in His own arms, and thus it happens that it is not aware that it is advancing. Though it thinks that it is doing nothing, yet in truth more is done than if itself were the agent; for God Himself is working. If this work be invisible, that is nothing strange, for the work of God in the soul is not cognisable by sense, because silently wrought: 'The words of the wise are heard in silence.'\* Let the soul abandon itself to the hands of God and trust in Him.

\* Eccles. ix. 17.

He that will do so shall walk securely, for there is no danger then unless the soul should attempt anything in its own strength, or by the wilful exercise of its proper faculties.

79. Let us now return to the deep caverns of the senses, in which I said the sufferings of the soul are ordinarily very great when God is anointing it, and preparing it for union with Himself by His subtile and delicate unctions. These unctions of God are so subtile that, penetrating into the inmost depths of the soul, they so dispose it, and so fill it with sweetness, that the sufferings and fainting of the soul through its great desire in the immense void of the caverns are immeasurable. Now if the unction which disposes the caverns for the union of the spiritual marriage be so wonderful, what shall the accomplishment thereof be? Certain it is that as the hunger and thirst and suffering of the caverns, so will be the satisfaction, fulness, and delight thereof. According to the perfection of these dispositions will be the delight of the fruition and possession of the sense of the soul, which is the power and energy of its very substance for perceiving and delighting in the objects of its faculties.

80. These faculties are with great propriety called caverns. For as the soul is conscious that they admit the profound intelligence and splendours of the lamps, it sees clearly also, that they are deep in proportion to the depth of the intelligence and love; that they have space and capacity commensurate with the distinct sources of the intelligence, of the sweetness and delight which it receives in them. All this is received and established in the cavern of the sense of the soul which is the capacity

thereof for possession, perception, and fruition. Thus, as the common sense of the imagination is the place where all the objects of the outward senses are treasured up, so is this common sense of the soul enlightened and made rich by a possession so grand and so glorious.

‘Dim and dark.’

81. The eye sees not for two reasons; either because it is in darkness or is blind. God is the light and the true object of the soul, and when He does not shine upon it, it is then in darkness, though its power of vision may be most perfect. When the soul is in sin, or when it occupies the desires with other things than God, it is then blind. Though the light of God be not wanted to it then, yet, being blind, it cannot see the light because of its blindness, which is the practical ignorance in which it lives. Before God enlightened the soul in its transformation it was in darkness and ignorant of His great goodness, as was the wise man before he was enlightened, for he says, ‘He enlightened my ignorance.’\*

82. Speaking spiritually, it is one thing to be blind and another to be in darkness. Blindness proceeds from sin, but darkness does not necessarily involve sin, and it happens in two ways. There is natural darkness where the light of natural things shines not, and there is supernatural darkness where there is no knowledge of many supernatural things. Here the soul says with regard to them both, that the understanding without God abode in darkness. For until our Lord said, ‘Let light be,’† darkness was upon the face of the deep of the cavern of

\* Ecclus. li. 26. Ignorantias meas illuminavit. See Dark Night, Bk. ii, c. 12. § 2.

† Genes. i. 3.

the soul's sense. The deeper the cavern when God shines not upon it, the deeper is the darkness thereof. Thus it is impossible for it to lift up the eyes to the divine light, yea the divine light is not even thought of, because never seen or known to exist; there is therefore no desire for it. And the soul desires darkness rather than light, and so goes on from darkness to darkness, led by darkness, for darkness can lead only to darkness again.

83. David saith, 'day to day uttereth word and night to night showeth knowledge,'\* thus as the deep of darkness calleth another deep, and the deep of light another deep of light; † like calling upon like, so the light of grace which God had before given to the soul, and by which He opened the eyes of it from the deep to behold the divine light, and made it pleasing to himself, calls to another deep of grace, namely, the divine transformation of the soul in God, wherein the eye of sense is enlightened and rendered pleasing.

84. The eye was also blind in that it took pleasure in other than God. The blindness of the higher and rational sense is caused by the desire which, like a cloud or a cataract, overlies and covers the eye of reason, so that it shall not see what is before it. Thus, then, the grandeur and magnificence of the divine beauty are rendered invisible, so far as the pleasure of sense is followed. For if we cover the eye with anything, however trifling it may be, that is enough to obstruct the vision of objects before us be they ever so large. Thus, then, a single desire entertained by the soul suffices to hinder the vision of all the divine grandeurs which are higher than its desires

\* Ps. xviii. 2.

† Ib. xli. 8.

and longings. Who can say how impossible it is for the soul, subject to desires, to judge of the things of God? for he that would judge aright of these must cast away all desires, because he cannot judge aright while subject thereto; for in that case he will come to consider the things of God not to be God's, and those things which are not God's to be the things of God.

85. While this cloud and cataract cover the eye of the judgment, nothing is visible except the cloud, sometimes of one colour, sometimes of another, according to circumstances, and men will take the cloud for God, because they see nothing beside the cloud which overshadows the sense, and God is not comprehended by sense. Thus, desire and sensual satisfactions hinder the knowledge of high things, as it is written, 'The bewitching of vanity obscureth good things, and the inconstancy of concupiscence perverteth the understanding,'\* that is without malice. Those persons, therefore, who are not so spiritual as to be purified from their desires and inclinations, but are still sensual, believe those things to be important which are in truth of no account in spirituality, being intimately connected with sense; they make no account of and despise the deep things of the spirit, which are further removed from sense, yea sometimes they look upon them as folly, as we learn from St. Paul, 'The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God: for it is foolishness to him and he cannot understand.'†

86. The sensual man is he who still lives according to the desires and inclinations of nature, and even though

\* Wisd. iv. 12

† 1 Cor. ii. 14.

these desires come occasionally into contact with the things of the spirit, yet, if man cleaves to spiritual things with his natural desires, they are still natural desires only. The spirituality of the object is little to the purpose, if the desire of it proceed from itself, having its root and strength in nature. What! you will say, is it not a supernatural desire to desire God? No, not always; but only then when the motive is supernatural, and when the strength of the desire proceeds from God; that is a very different thing. When the desire comes from thyself, so far as it relates to the manner thereof, it is nothing more than natural. So, then, when thou art attached to thy spiritual tastes, exerting thine own natural desire, thou bringest a cataract over thine eye, thou art sensual, incapable of perceiving or judging what is spiritual, for that transcends all natural sense and desire.

87. If thou still doubtest, I have nothing further to add except to bid thee read over again what I have written, and that done perhaps the doubts will vanish. What I have said is the substance of the truth, and I cannot now enlarge upon it. The sense of the soul hitherto in darkness without the divine light and blinded by its desires, is now such that its deep caverns, because of the divine union, 'with unwonted brightness give light and warmth together to the Beloved.

' With unwonted brightness give light and  
warmth together to the Beloved.'

88. These caverns of the soul's faculties being now in a wonderful way among the marvellous splendours of the lamps which burn within them, being lighted and burning in God, remit back to God in God, in addition to their



self-surrender to Him, those very splendours which they receive from Him in loving bliss; they also, turning to God in God, being themselves lamps burning in the brightness of the divine lamps, return to the Beloved that very light and warmth of love which they receive from Him. Now, indeed, they give back unto Him, in the way they receive them, those very splendours which he communicates, as crystal reflects the rays of the sun; but in a nobler manner, because of the intervention of the will.

‘With unwonted brightness;’

89. That is, strange and surpassing all imagination and description. For the perfection of beauty wherein the soul restores to God what it has received from Him is now in conformity with that perfection wherewith the understanding—made one with that of God—received the divine wisdom: and the perfection wherewith the will restores to God in God that very goodness He gave it—for it was given only to be restored—is in conformity with that perfection wherein the will is united with the will of God. In the same way, proportional to the perfection of its knowledge of God’s greatness, united therewith, does the soul shine and give forth the warmth of love. And according to the perfection of the other divine attributes communicated to the soul, such as strength, beauty, justice, are those perfections wherewith the spiritual mind, now in enjoyment, gives back to the Beloved in the Beloved the very light and warmth which it is receiving from Him.

90. The soul now being one with God is itself God by participation, and though not so perfectly as it will be in

the world to come, is still, as I have said, as God in a shadow.\* Thus, then, the soul, by reason of its transformation, being a shadow of God, effects through God in God what He effects within it Himself by Himself, because the will of both is one. And as God is giving Himself with a free and gracious will, so the soul also with a will, the more free and the more generous the more it is united with God in God, is, as it were, giving back to God—in that loving complacency with which it regards the divine essence and perfections—God Himself.

91. This is a mystic and affective gift of the soul to God, for then the soul seems in truth to have God for its own possession, and that it possesses Him, as His adopted child, by a right of ownership, by the free gift of Himself made unto it. The soul gives to the Beloved, Who is God Himself, what He had given to it. Herein it pays the whole debt, for the soul giveth as much voluntarily with inestimable joy and delight, giving the Holy Spirit as its own of its own free will, so that God may be loved as He deserves to be.

92. Herein consists the inestimable joy of the soul, for it sees that it offers to God what becomes Him in His Infinite Being. Though it be true that the soul cannot give God to God anew, because He is always Himself in Himself, still it does so, perfectly and wisely, giving all that He has given it in requittal of His love; this is to give as it is given, and God is repaid by this gift of the soul; nothing less could repay Him. He receives this gift of the soul as if it were its own, with kindness and

\* See *Spiritual Canticle*, stanza xxxix. §§ 6, 7.

grace, in the sense I have explained ; and in that gift He loves it anew, and gives Himself freely to it, and the soul also loves Him anew. Thus, there is in fact a mutual interchange of love between the soul and God in the conformity of the union, and in the matrimonial surrender, wherein the goods of both, that is the divine essence, are possessed by both together, in the voluntary giving up of each to the other. God and the soul say, the one to the other, what the Son of God said to the Father, ‘ All My things are Thine, and Thine are mine, and I am glorified in them.’\* This will be verified in the fruition of the next life without intermission, and is verified in the state of union when the soul’s communion with God energises in an act of love.

93. The soul can offer such a gift, though far greater than itself, just as he who possesses many kingdoms and nations as his own, though greater than he, can bestow them upon whom he will. This is the soul’s great delight, that it sees itself giving unto God more than itself is worth, that it gives Himself to God so generously, as if God were its own, in that divine light and warmth of love which He Himself has given it. This is effected in the life to come through the light of glory and of love, and in this life by faith most enlightened and by love most enkindled. Thus it is that the deep caverns of sense, with unwonted brightness give light and heat together to the Beloved. I say together, because the communication of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost in the soul is one ; they are the light and the fire of love therein.

\* St. John xvii. 10.

94. I must here observe briefly on the perfection of beauty wherewith the soul makes this gift. In the act of union, as the soul enjoys a certain image of fruition, caused by the union of the understanding and will in God, it makes this gift of God to God, and of itself to Him, in most wonderful ways; delighting itself therein, and constrained thereto. As to love, the soul stands before God in strange beauty, as to the shadow of fruition in the same way, and also as to praise and gratitude.

95. As to the first, which is love, the soul has three grand perfections of beauty. It loves God by means of God. This is an admirable perfection, because, set on fire by the Holy Ghost, and having the Holy Ghost dwelling within it, it loves as the Father loves the Son, as it is written, 'that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me, may be in them, and I in them.'\* The second perfection is that it loves God in God, for in this union the soul is vehemently absorbed in the love of God, and God communicates Himself with great vehemence to it. The third perfection of beauty is that the soul now loves God for what He is; for it loves Him not merely because He is bountiful, good, and generous to it, but much more earnestly, because He is all this essentially in Himself.

96. There are also three perfections of beauty in that shadow of fruition, marvellously great. The first is that the soul enjoys God here, united with God Himself, for as the understanding of the soul is one with wisdom and goodness, and perceives so clearly—though not perfectly as in the life to come—it delights greatly in all these, clearly understood, as I said before.† The second

\* St. John xvii. 26.

† § 4, *supr.*

perfection of beauty is that the soul delights itself in God alone without the admixture of any created thing. The third is that it enjoys Him alone as He is, without the admixture of any selfish feeling, or of any created object.

97. There are also three principal perfections of beauty in the praise of God which the soul offers to Him in union. The first is that the soul offers it as an act of duty, because it recognises this as the end of its creation; as it is written, 'This people have I formed for Myself, they shall show forth My praise.'\* The second is, that it praises Him for blessings received, and because of the joy it has in praising our Lord Who is so great. The third is, that it praises Him for what He is in Himself, for if the praises of God were unaccompanied by any pleasure at all, still it would praise Him because He is Who He is.

98. Gratitude also has three principal perfections. The first is, thanksgiving for all natural and spiritual blessings, and for all benefits received. The second is the great delight of praising God, in the way of thanksgiving, for the soul is moved with great vehemence in the act. The third is that the soul gives thanks unto God only because He is, which is much more efficacious and more delightful.

\* Is. xliii. 21.

## STANZA IV.

*How gently and how lovingly  
Thou liest awake in my bosom,  
Where Thou secretly dwellest alone;  
And in thy sweet breathing  
Full of grace and glory,  
How tenderly Thou fillest me with Thy love.*

## EXPLANATION.

HERE the soul turns towards the Bridegroom in great love, magnifying Him and giving Him thanks for two marvellous graces which He sometimes effects within the soul through its union with Himself. The soul, too, observes on the way He produces them and on their effects upon itself.

2. The first effect is the awakening of God in the soul, and that in gentleness and love. The second is the breathing of God in the soul, and that in grace and bliss given in that breathing. The effect of this upon the soul is to make it love Him sweetly and tenderly. The stanza therefore may be paraphrased as follows: O how gently and how lovingly dost thou lie awake in the depth and centre of my soul, where Thou in secret and in silence alone, as its sole Lord, abidest, not only as in Thine own house or in Thine own chamber, but also as within my own bosom, in close and intimate union: O how gently and how lovingly! Sweet to me is Thy breathing in that awakening, for it is full of grace and glory. O with what tenderness dost Thou inspire me with love of Thee! The



figure is borrowed from one awaking from sleep, and drawing his breath, for the soul in this state feels it to be so.

‘How gently and how lovingly  
Thou liest awake in my bosom.’

3. The awakenings of God in the soul are manifold, and so many that were I to describe them I should never end. This awakening, to which the soul refers here, the work of the Son of God, is, in my opinion, of the highest kind, and the source of the greatest good to the soul. This awakening is a movement of the Word in the depth of the soul of such grandeur, authority and glory, and of such profound sweetness, that all the balsams, all the aromatic herbs and flowers of the world seem to be mingled and shaken together for the production of that sweetness: that all the kingdoms and dominions of the world, all the powers and virtues of heaven are moved; this is not the whole, all the virtues, substance, perfections and graces of all created things, shine forth and make the same movement in unison together. For as St. John saith, ‘what was made in Him was life,’\* and in Him moves and lives; as the Apostle says, ‘In Him we live and move and are.’†

4. The reason is this; when the grand Emperor would reveal Himself to the soul, moving Himself in the light He gives, and yet not moving in it—He, upon whose shoulder is the principality,‡ that is, the three worlds of heaven, earth, and hell, and all that is in them, and who sustains all by the word of His power§—then all seem to move together. As when the earth moves,

\* St. John i. 3; see p. 209. † Acts xvii. 28. ‡ Is. ix. 6. § Heb. i. 3.

all natural things upon it move with it ; so is it when the Prince moves, for He carries his court, not the court Him. This, however, is an exceedingly imperfect illustration ; for here not only all seem to move, but also to manifest their being, their beauty, power, and loveliness, the root of their duration and life in Him. There, indeed, the soul sees how all creatures, higher and lower, live, continue, and energise in Him, and understands the words of the wise man, ‘by Me kings reign . . . by me princes rule, and the mighty decree justice.’\*

5. Though it is true that the soul here sees that all these things are distinct from God, in that they have a created existence ; it understands them in Him with their force, origin and strength, it knows also that God in His own essence is, in an infinitely pre-eminent way, all these things, so that it understands them better in Him, their First Cause, than in themselves. This is the great joy of this awakening, namely, to know creatures in God, and not God in His creatures : this is to know effects in their cause, and not cause by its effects.

6. This movement in the soul is wonderful, for God Himself moves not. Without movement on the part of God, the soul is renewed and moved by Him ; the divine life and being and the harmony of creation are revealed with marvellous newness, the cause assuming the designation of the effect resulting from it. If we regard the effect, we may say with the wise man that God moves, ‘for wisdom is more moveable than all moveable things,’ not because it moves itself but because it is the source and principle of all motion, and ‘permanently in herself,

\* Prov. viii. 15.

she reneweth all things ;'\* this is the meaning of the words, ' more moveable than all moveable things.'

7. Thus, then, strictly speaking, in this movement it is the soul that is moved and awakened, and the expression 'awake' is correct. God however being always, as the soul sees Him, the mover, the ruler, and the giver of life, power, graces, and gifts to all creatures, contains all in Himself, virtually, actually, and supremely. The soul beholds what God is in Himself, and what He is in creatures. So may we see, when the palace is thrown open, in one glance, both the magnificence of him who inhabits it, and what he is doing. This, according to my understanding of it, is this awakening and vision of the soul ; it is as if God drew back some of the many veils and coverings that are before it, so that it might see what He is ; then indeed—but still dimly, because all the veils are not drawn back, that of faith remaining—the divine face full of grace bursts through and shines, which, as it moves all things by its power, appears together with the effect it produces, and this is the awakening of the soul.

8. Though all that is good in man comes from God, and though man of himself can do nothing that is good, it may be said in truth, that our awakening is the awakening of God, and our rising the rising of God. ' Arise, why sleepest Thou, O Lord ? '† saith the Psalmist. That is in effect to say, Raise us up and awake us, for we are fallen and asleep. Thus, then, because the soul had fallen asleep, and could never rouse itself again, and because it is God alone who can open its eyes, and effect

\* Wisd. vii. 24.

† Ps. xliii. 23.

its awakening, this awakening is most properly referred to God : 'Thou awakest in my bosom.'

'Thou awakest in my bosom.'

9. Awake us, O Lord, and enlighten us, that we may know and love the good things which Thou hast set always before us, and we shall know that Thou art moved to do us good, and hast had us in remembrance. It is utterly impossible to describe what the soul, in this awakening, knows and feels of the majesty of God, in the inmost depths of its being, that is, its bosom. For in the soul resounds an infinite power, which the voice of a multitude of perfections, of thousands and thousands of virtues, wherein itself abiding and subsisting, becomes 'terrible as an army set in array,'\* sweet and gracious in Him who comprehends in Himself all the sweetness, and all the graces of His creation.

10. But here comes the question, how can the soul bear so vehement a communication while in the flesh, when in truth it has not strength for it without fainting away? The mere sight of Assuerus on his throne, in his royal robe, glittering with gold and precious stones, was so terrible in the eyes of Esther, that she fainted through fear, so awful was his face. 'I saw Thee, my lord, as an angel of God, and my heart was troubled, for fear of thy glory.'† Glory oppresses him who beholds it, if it does not glorify him. How much more then is the soul now liable to faint away, when it beholds not an angel but God Himself, the Lord of the angels, with His face full of the beauty of all creatures, of terrible power and glory, and the voice of the multitude of His perfections. It is

\* Cant. vi. 3.

† Esth. xv. 16.

to this that Job referred when he said, 'We have heard scarce a little drop of His word; who shall be able to behold the thunder of His greatness?''\* and again, 'I will not that He contend with me with much strength, nor that He oppress me with the weight of His greatness.'†

11. The soul, however, does not faint away and tremble at this awakening so powerful and glorious. There are two reasons for this: one is that it is now in the state of perfection, and therefore the lower portion of it is purified and conformed to the spirit, exempt from that pain and loss which spiritual communications involve, when the sense and spirit are not purified and disposed for the reception of them. 2. The second and the principal reason is that referred to in the first line of this stanza, namely, that God shows Himself gentle and loving. For as He shows His greatness and glory to the soul in order to comfort and exalt it, so does He favour and strengthen it also, and sustain its natural powers while manifesting His greatness gently and lovingly. This is easy enough to Him, who with His right hand protected Moses that he might behold His glory.‡

12. Thus the soul feels God's love and gentleness to be commensurate with His power, authority, and greatness, for in Him these are all one. Its delight is therefore vehement, and the protection it receives strong in gentleness and love, so that itself being made strong may be able without fainting away to sustain this vehement joy. Esther, indeed, fainted away, but that was because the king seemed unfavourable towards her, for with 'burning eyes' he 'showed the wrath of his breast,'§ but

\* Job, xxvi. 14. † Ib. xxiii. 6. ‡ Exod. xxxiii. 22. § Esth. xv. 10.

the moment he looked graciously upon her, touched her with his sceptre and kissed her, she recovered herself, for he had said to her, 'I am thy brother, fear not.'

13. So is it with the soul in the presence of the King of kings, for the moment He shows Himself as its Bridegroom and Brother, all fear vanishes away. Because in showing unto it, in gentleness and not in anger, the strength of His power and the love of His goodness, He communicates to it the strength and love of His breast, 'leaping from His throne'\* to caress it, as the bridegroom from his secret chamber, touching it with the sceptre of his majesty, and as a brother embracing it. There the royal robes and the fragrance thereof, which are the marvellous attributes of God; there the splendour of gold which is charity, and the glittering of the precious stones of supernatural knowledge; and there the face of the Word full of grace, strike the queenly soul, so that, transformed in the virtues of the King of heaven, it beholds itself a queen: with the Psalmist, therefore, may it be said of it, and with truth, 'The queen stood on Thy right hand in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety.'† And as all this passes in the very depths of the soul, it is added immediately, 'Where Thou secretly dwellest alone.'

'Where Thou secretly dwellest alone.'

14. He is said to dwell secretly in the soul's bosom, because, as I have said,‡ this sweet embracing takes place in the inmost substance and powers of the soul. We must keep in mind that God dwells in a secret and hidden way in all souls, in their very substance, for if He did not, they could not exist at all. This dwelling of God is

\* Ib. xv. 12.

† Ps. xliv. 10.

‡ § 9.



very different in different souls ; in some He dwells alone, in others not ; in some He dwells contented, in others displeased ; in some as in His own house, giving His orders, and ruling it : in others, as a stranger in a house not His own, where He is not permitted to command, or to do anything at all. Where personal desires and self-will least abound, there is He most alone, most contented, there He dwells as in His own house, ruling and directing it, and the more secretly He dwells, the more He is alone.

15. So then in that soul wherein no desire dwells, and out of which all images and forms of created things have been cast, the Beloved dwells most secretly Himself, and the purer the soul and the greater its estrangement from everything but God, the more intimate His converse and the closer His embrace. He dwells there then in secret, for satan cannot come near His dwelling place, nor see the embracing ; nor can any understanding explain it. But He is not hidden from the soul in the state of perfection, for such a soul is ever conscious of His presence. Only in these awakenings He seems to awake who before was asleep in the soul's bosom ; and though it felt and enjoyed His presence, He seemed as one sleeping within.

16. O how blessed is that soul which is ever conscious of God reposing and resting within it. How necessary it is for such a soul to flee from the matters of this world, to live in great tranquillity, so that nothing whatever shall disturb the Beloved 'at His repose.'\*

17. He is there as it were asleep in the embraces of

\* Cant. i. 11.

the soul, and the soul is, in general, conscious of His presence, and, in general, delights exceedingly in it. If He were always awake in the soul, the communications of knowledge and love would be unceasing, and that would be a state of glory. If He awakes but once, merely opening His eyes, and affects the soul so profoundly, what would become of it if He were continually awake within it?

18. He dwells secretly in other souls, those which have not attained to this state of union, not indeed displeased, though they are not yet perfectly disposed for union: these souls in general are not conscious of His presence, but only during the time of these sweet awakenings, which however are not of the same kind with those already described, neither indeed are they to be compared with them. But the state of these souls is not so secret from the devil, nor so far above the reach of the understanding as the other, because the senses always furnish some indications of it by the excitement into which they are thrown. The senses are not perfectly annihilated before the union is complete, and they manifest their power in some degree, because they are not yet wholly spiritual. But in this awakening of the Bridegroom in the perfect soul, all is perfect because He effects it all Himself in the way I have spoken of. In this awakening, as of one aroused from sleep and drawing breath, the soul feels the breathing of God, and therefore it says: 'In Thy sweet breathing.'

'And in Thy sweet breathing, full of grace and glory, how tenderly Thou fillest me with Thy love.'

19. I would not speak of this breathing of God, neither

do I wish to do so, because I am certain that I cannot; and indeed were I to speak of it, it would seem then to be something less than what it is in reality. This breathing of God is in the soul, in which in the awakening of the deep knowledge of the Divinity, He breathes the Holy Ghost according to the measure of that knowledge which absorbs it most profoundly, which inspires it most tenderly with love according to what it saw. This breathing is full of grace and glory, and therefore the Holy Ghost fills the soul with goodness and glory, whereby He inspires it with the love of Himself, transcending all glory and all understanding. This is the reason why I say nothing more.

## INSTRUCTIONS AND PRECAUTIONS.



## INSTRUCTIONS AND PRECAUTIONS

TO BE CONTINUALLY OBSERVED BY HIM WHO SEEKS TO  
BE A TRUE RELIGIOUS AND TO ARRIVE QUICKLY AT  
GREAT PERFECTION.

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IF any religious desires to attain in a short time to holy recollection, spiritual silence, detachment, and poverty of spirit—where the peaceful rest of the spirit is enjoyed, and union with God attained; if he desires to be delivered from all the hindrances which created things put in his way, to be defended against all the wiles and illusions of satan, and to be protected against himself, he must strictly practise the following instructions.

If he will do this, with ordinary attention, without other efforts or other practices, at the same time carefully observing the obligations of his state, he will advance rapidly to great perfection, acquire all virtue and attain unto holy peace.

All the evils to which the soul is subject proceed from the three enemies already mentioned: the world, the devil, and the flesh. If we can hide ourselves from these we shall have no combats to fight. The world is less difficult, and the devil more difficult, to understand; but the flesh is the most obstinate of all, and the last to be



overcome together with the 'old man.' If we do not conquer the three, we shall never perfectly conquer one; and if we conquer one, we shall also conquer the others in the same proportion.

In order to escape perfectly from the evils which the world inflicts, there are three things to be observed.

#### FIRST PRECAUTION.

The first is, preserve an equal love and an equal forgetfulness of all men whether relatives or not; withdraw your affections from the former as well as from the latter, yea even rather more from the former, on account of the ties of blood, for the natural affections which men feel for their kindred always subsists. You must mortify this affection if you are to attain unto spiritual perfection. Look upon your kindred as strangers, and you will thereby the more completely discharge your duty to them; for by not withdrawing your heart from God on their account, you will fulfil your duties towards them better by not giving to them those affections which are due unto God.

Do not love one man more than another, for if you do you will fall into error. He whom God loves most is the most worthy of love, and you do not know who he is. But if you strive to forget all men alike—as holy recollection requires you to do—you will escape all error, whether great or small. Do not think about them; have nothing to say to them either good or bad. Avoid them as much as you possibly can. If you do not observe this, as things go, you never will become a good religious, you will never attain to holy recollection, nor will you get rid of your

imperfections. If you will indulge yourself here, satan will in some way or other delude you, or you will delude yourself under the pretence of good or evil.

If you will observe this direction you will be safe; and in no other way can you get rid of the imperfections and escape the evils which result to your soul from intercourse with men.

#### SECOND PRECAUTION.

The second precaution against the world relates to temporal goods. If you desire in earnest to escape the evils which worldly goods occasion and restrain your excessive desires, you must hold all personal possession in abhorrence, and cast from you every thought about it. You must not be solicitous about what you eat or drink or wear, or about any created thing whatever: you must not be 'solicitous for to-morrow,' but occupy yourself with higher things—with the kingdom of God, that is, fidelity unto Him—for all these things, as our Lord says in the gospel, 'shall be added unto you.'\* He who takes care of the beasts of the field will not forget you. If you do this you will attain unto silence, and have peace in your senses.

#### THIRD PRECAUTION.

The third precaution is most necessary, that you may avoid all evil in your relation with the other religious of the community. Many persons from not heeding this have not only lost their peace of mind, but have fallen, and fall daily, into great disorders and sin. Be especially

\* St. Matth. vi. 33.

careful never to let your mind dwell upon, still less your tongue to speak of, what is passing in the community, its past or present state. Do not speak of any religious in particular, do not discuss his condition or his conversation, or his actions, however grave, either under the cloak of zeal, or of remedying what seems amiss, except only to him who of right should be spoken to, and then at the fitting time. Never be scandalised or surprised at what you see or hear, and preserve yourself in complete forgetfulness of all. If you lived among the angels and gave heed to what was going on many things would seem to you not to be good, because you do not understand them.

Take warning from the example of Lot's wife who, because she was disturbed at the destruction of Sodom, turned back to behold it. God punished her for this, and she 'was turned into a pillar of salt.'\* This teaches you that it is the will of God, even if you were living among devils, you should so live as not to turn back in thought to consider what they are doing, but forget them utterly. You are to keep your soul wholly for God, and not to suffer the thought of this or that to disturb you.

Be sure of this, there is no lack of stumbling blocks in religious houses, because there is no lack of devils who are labouring to throw down the saints. God permits this in order to try them and to prove them, and if you be not on your guard, you will never become a religious, do what you may, neither will you attain to holy detachment and recollection, or avoid loss. If you live otherwise, in spite of your zeal and good intentions, satan will lay

\* Genes. xix. 26.

hold of you in one way or another, and indeed you are already sufficiently in his power, when your soul is allowed such distractions as these. Remember those words of the apostle St. James, 'If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, this man's religion is vain.\*' This is applicable to the interior, quite as much as to the exterior, tongue—to thoughts as well as words.

Three precautions necessary to be observed in order to be delivered from the devil in religion.

If you wish to escape from satan in religion, you must give heed to three things, without which you cannot be in safety from his cunning. In the first place I would have you take this general advice, which you should never forget, namely, that it is the ordinary practice of satan to deceive those who are going on unto perfection by an appearance of good: he does not tempt them by what seems to be evil. He knows that they will scarcely regard that which they know to be wrong. You must therefore continually distrust that which seems to be good, and especially when obedience does not intervene. The remedy here is the direction of one whom you ought to consult. Let this then be the

#### FIRST PRECAUTION.

Never set about anything, however good and charitable it may seem, either to yourself or to any other, whether in the community or out of it, except under obedience, unless you are bound to do it by the rule of your order.

\* St. Jam. i. 26.

If you do this you will acquire merit, and be in security. You will be safe against yourself and against evil; you will also avoid evils of which you are ignorant, and of which God will require an account one day. If you do not observe this in little things as well as in great, notwithstanding your apparent progress, satan will most certainly deceive you little or much. Even if your whole error consist in your not being guided in everything by obedience, you are plainly wrong, because God wills obedience rather than sacrifice,\* and the actions of a religious are not his own, but those of obedience, and if he withdraws them from the control of obedience, he will have to give account of them as lost.

#### SECOND PRECAUTION.

The second precaution is a very necessary one, because the devil interferes exceedingly in the matter to which it refers. The observance of it will bring great gain and profit, and the neglect great loss and ruin. Never look upon your superior, be he who he may, otherwise than if you were looking upon God, because he stands in His place. Keep a careful watch over yourself in this matter, and do not reflect upon the character, ways, or conversation, or habits of your superior. If you do, you will injure yourself, and you will change your obedience from divine into human, and you will be influenced by what you see in your superior, and not by the invisible God Whom you should obey in him. Your obedience will be in vain, or the more barren the more you are troubled by the untowardness, or the more you are pleased by the

\* 1 Kings xv. 22.

favour, of your superior. I tell you that a great many religious in the way of perfection are ruined by not looking upon their superiors as they ought; their obedience is almost worthless in the eyes of God, because influenced by human considerations. Unless you force yourself therefore to be indifferent as to who your superior may be, so far as your private feelings go, you will never be spiritual, neither will you faithfully observe your vows.

### THIRD PRECAUTION.

The third precaution against satan is this: strive with all your heart after humility in thought, word, and deed, taking more pleasure in others than in yourself, giving way in every thing to others, and doing so as far as you can from a sincere heart. In this way you will overcome evil with good, drive the devil away, and have joy in your heart. Deal thus with those who are less agreeable to you; for be assured, if you do not, you will never have true charity nor make progress in it. Be always more ready to receive instruction from any one than to give it, even to the least of your brethren.

Three precautions to be observed by those who would conquer themselves, and master the cunning of the flesh.

### FIRST PRECAUTION.

If you wish to be delivered from the uneasiness and imperfections of which the habits and conversation of the religious may be the occasion, and profit by everything that may happen, you must keep in mind that you entered the community to be mortified and tried, and



that all those in authority in it are there, as in truth they are, for that purpose. Some have to mortify you by words, others by deeds, and others by what they think of you; in all this you are to submit yourself, unresisting as a statue to the polisher, the painter, and the gilder of it. If you do not, you will never be able to live as you ought with the religious in the monastery; you will not attain to holy peace, nor will you escape from much evil.

#### SECOND PRECAUTION.

Never omit any practices, if they are such as befit you, because they are disagreeable; neither observe them because they are pleasant, unless they be as necessary as those which are not agreeable. Otherwise you will find it impossible to acquire firmness, and conquer your weakness.

#### THIRD PRECAUTION.

In all your spiritual exercises never set your eyes upon the sweetness of them and cling to it, but rather on that in them which is unpleasant and troublesome, and accept it. If you do, you will never destroy self-love, nor acquire the love of God.

LETTERS.



## LETTERS.

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### LETTER I.

TO MOTHER CATHERINE OF JESUS, BAREFOOTED CARMELITE AND COMPANION OF ST. TERESA OF JESUS.

JESUS

BE in your soul, my daughter Catherine. Although I know not where you are, I write you these few lines, trusting that our Mother will forward them to you if you are not with her. And even if you are not with her, comfort yourself with me, who am further away and alone here. For since I was swallowed by that whale,\* and cast forth upon this distant shore, I have not been counted worthy to see her or the saints who are down there. God has done it for our good; for loneliness is a file, and to suffer darkness is the way to great light.

God grant that we may not walk in darkness. Oh! how many things would I fain say to you! But I am writing very much in the dark, fearing that you may not receive this letter; and therefore I break off without finishing it. Recommend me to God. I will say no more from here, for I am weary.

Your servant in Christ,

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From BAEZA: the 6th of July, 1581.

\* The prison of the Monastery of Toledo.

## LETTER II.\*

## TO THE RELIGIOUS IN VEAS.

JESUS be in your souls: My daughters are thinking that I have lost sight of them because I do not write, and that I have ceased to consider how easily they can become saints and rejoice in the Bridegroom whom they love with great gladness and in strong security. I will come to Veas, and you will see that I have not forgotten you. We shall then see the treasures obtained by pure love and on the pathways of everlasting life; the blessed progress you have made in Christ, whose joy and crown are His brides. This crown ought not to be rotting on the ground, but rather borne by the hands of the seraphim, and placed with respect and reverence on the head of our Lord.

When the heart is grovelling meanly on the ground the crown rolls in the dust, and is trampled on in every act of meanness. But when man shall 'come to a heart that is high,' according to the words of David,† then shall God be exalted with the crown of the heart of His bride; wherewith they crown Him in the day of the joy of His coronation, for His delight is to be with the children of men.‡

The sources of the waters of interior joy are not on the earth; the mouth of desire must be opened heavenwards, utterly empty; and in order that the mouth of desire may be neither closed nor vitiated by the taste of anything, it

\* This letter appeared for the first time, copied from the original kept in the Monastery of Pastrana, in the *Life of the Saint*, by Don Manuel Muñoz Garnica, Canon of Jaën, Jaën, 1875, p. 411.

† Ps. lxiii. 8.

‡ Prov. viii. 31.

should be kept perfectly empty and open before Him who says, 'dilate thy mouth and I will fill it.'\* For so it is, he who seeks for satisfaction in anything is not keeping himself in a state of emptiness that God may fill him with this unspeakable joy; his hands are encumbered, and he cannot lay hold of that which God is giving him; as he went to God, so he returned. God save us from these miserable embarrassments by which a freedom so sweet and so delightful is disturbed. Serve God, my daughters beloved in Christ, following Him on the road of mortification in all patience and in all silence, with all your soul bent on suffering, having made yourselves executioners of your own will. Mortify yourselves, and if there be anything still living that hinders the interior resurrection of the spirit let it die in your souls. Amen.

Your servant,

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From MALAGA, November 18, 1586.

\* Ps. lxxx. 11.



## LETTER III.

TO THE RELIGIOUS OF VEAS.

*He gives them some spiritual advice, full of heavenly instruction, and worthy of perpetual remembrance.*

JESUS, MARY

Be in your souls, my daughters, in Christ.

Your letter greatly consoled me, and may our Lord reward you for it. It was not from want of will that I have refrained from writing to you, for truly do I wish you all good; but because it seemed to me that enough had been already said to effect all that was needful, and that what is wanting, if indeed anything be wanting, is not writing or speaking—whereof ordinarily there is more than enough—but silence and work. For whereas speaking distracts, silence and action collect the thoughts, and strengthen the spirit. As soon therefore as a person understands what has been said to him for his good, he has no further need to hear or to discuss; but to set himself in earnest to practise what he has learnt with silence and attention, in humility, charity, and contempt of self; not turning aside incessantly to seek after novelties which serve only to satisfy the desire in outward things—failing however to satisfy it really—and to leave it weak and empty, devoid of interior virtue. The result is unprofitable in every way; for a man who, before he has digested his last meal, takes another—the natural heat being wasted upon both—cannot convert all this food into the substance of his body, and sickness follows. It is most necessary, my daughters, to know how to avoid

the devil and our own sensuality, for if we do not we shall find ourselves to be very unprofitable servants, very far away from the virtues of Christ ; and in the end we shall awake from our sleep to find our toil and labour to have been the reverse of what they were. The lamp which we believed to be alight will be found extinguished, because the breath whereby we thought to kindle it, served perhaps to put it out. There are no means to avoid this, and preserve spirituality, better than suffering, doing good works, silence, custody of the senses, the practice of, and the inclination to solitude, forgetfulness of creatures, and of all that is going on, even if the world were to come to an end. Never fail, whatever may befall you be it good or evil, to keep your heart quiet and calm in the tenderness of love, that it may suffer in all circumstances. For so momentous a thing is perfection, and so priceless is spiritual joy, and may God grant that this may be enough ; for it is impossible to make progress but by the way of good works and suffering courageously, always in silence. I have heard, my daughters, *that the soul which is ready to talk and converse with creatures, is not very ready to converse with God ; for if it were, it would be at once drawn forcibly inwards, be silent and avoid all conversation ; for God would that the soul should delight in Him rather than in any creature, however excellent and profitable it may be.* I commend myself to your charitable prayers ; and do you rest assured that, scant as my charity is, it is so bound up in you that I never forget those to whom I owe so much in our Lord. May He be with us all. Amen.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

FROM GRANADA, the 22nd of Nov. 1587.

## LETTER IV.

TO MOTHER ELEANORA BAPTIST, PRIORESS OF THE  
CONVENT OF VEAS.

*The blessed father consoles her under an affliction.*

## JESUS

Be in your soul. Think not, my daughter in Christ, that I am not sorry for you in your troubles, and for those who share them with you; but when I remember that God has called you to an apostolic life, which is a life of contempt, I am comforted, for He is leading you on that road. God will have a religious to be a religious, that he shall be dead to all things, and all things dead to him; because He will be his riches, his consolation, his glory, and his bliss. God has conferred a great grace upon your reverence, for now, forgetting all things, you may rejoice in Him alone, caring nothing, in your love of God, for what may come upon you, since you are no longer your own, but His. Let me know whether your departure for Madrid is certain, and whether the mother prioress is coming. I commend myself especially to my daughters Magdalene and Ana and to all the rest, not having leisure to write to them.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From GRANADA : the 8th February, 1588.

## LETTER V.

TO MOTHER ANNE OF ST. ALBERT, prioress OF THE  
BAREFOOTED CARMELITES OF CARAVACA.

*He makes known to her by a prophetic inspiration the state of her soul, and  
delivers her from scruples.*

JESUS

Be in your soul. How long, my daughter, must you be carried in the arms of others? I long to see in you a great detachment of spirit, and such a freedom from any dependence upon creatures, that all the powers of hell may be unable to disturb you. What useless tears have you been shedding in these last days: How much precious time, think you, have these scruples caused you to throw away? If you would communicate your troubles to me, go strait to that spotless mirror of the Eternal Father, His only Begotten Son; for there do I daily behold your soul, and without doubt you will come away consoled, and have no more need to beg at the door of poor people.

Your servant in Christ,

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From GRANADA.

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## LETTER VI.

TO THE SAME RELIGIOUS.

*On the same subject.*

JESUS

Be in your soul, very dear daughter in Christ. Though you say nothing to me, I will say something to you; let

those vain fears which make the spirit cowardly find no place in your soul. Leave to our Lord that which He has given and daily gives, you seem to measure God by the measure of your own capacity; but that must not be so. Prepare yourself to receive a great grace.

Your servant in Christ,

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From GRANADA.

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## LETTER VII.

TO THE SAME RELIGIOUS.

*The holy father informs her of the foundation of the monastery at Cordova, and of the removal of the nuns in Seville.*

JESUS

Be in your soul. I wrote to you in haste when I left Granada for the foundation at Cordova. I have since received your letter there, and those of the gentlemen who went to Madrid, thinking that they should find me at the council. You must know, however, that it never met, for we have been waiting to finish these visitations and foundations, which our Lord is now making such haste in the matter, that we are without strength to follow Him. The friars have been received at Cordova with the greatest joy and solemnity on the part of the whole city. No order has been better received there. All the clergy and confraternities of Cordova assembled on the occasion, and there was a solemn procession of the Most

Holy Sacrament from the Cathedral Church—all the streets being decorated—with great concourse of people, as on the feast of Corpus Christi.

This took place on the Sunday after Ascension day, and the bishop preached, praising us much in his sermon. The house is in the best part of the city, and belongs to the Cathedral. I am now busied at Seville with the removal of our nuns, who have bought some very considerable houses, though they cost about 14,000 ducats, they are worth more than 20,000. They are now established there. My lord Cardinal is to place the Blessed Sacrament there with great solemnity on the feast of St. Barnabas. Before my departure I intend to establish another house of friars here, so that there will be two of our order in Seville. Before the feast of St. John I shall set forth for Ecija, where, with the divine blessing, we shall found another; thence to Malaga, and then to the council. I wish I had authority to make this foundation, as I had for the others. I do not expect much from what is going on; but I trust in God that the foundation will be made, and in the council I will do what I can; and you may say so to these gentlemen to whom I am writing.

Send me the little book of the *Stanzas of the Bride*, which I think Sister —— of the mother of God will by this time have copied. Remember me very specially to señor Gonzalo Muñoz, I do not write for fear of being troublesome to him, and because your reverence will make known to him that which I have here related to you.

Dearest daughter in Christ,

Your servant,

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From SEVILLE: June, 1586.

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## LETTER VIII.

TO F. AMBROSE MARIANO OF ST. BENEDICT, PRIOR OF  
MADRID.

*Containing wholesome instructions for the training of novices.*

## JESUS

Be in your reverence. Our need of religious is very great, as your reverence knows, because of the many foundations. It is therefore necessary that your reverence should have patience until father Michael leave this place to wait at Pastrana for the father provincial; the foundation of the convent of Molina being nearly completed. It has seemed good to the fathers also to assign to your reverence a sub-prior, and have made choice of father Angelo, believing that he will agree perfectly with the prior, which is most necessary in a monastery. Your reverence will give to each of these his letters patent, and will not fail to take care that no priest meddle or converse with the novices, for as your reverence knows, nothing is more injurious to them than to pass through many hands, or that strangers should frequent the novices. Since, however, you have so many under your care, it is reasonable that you should help and relieve father Angelo. Give him authority, as he is already sub-prior, that he may be more considered in the house.

It does not seem that father Michael is so much needed

here, and he might do greater service to the order elsewhere. Of father Gratian nothing new, except that father Antony is now here.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From SEGOVIA : Nov. 9, 1588.

[St. John was now the president of the consultors in the absence of Doria, and therefore wrote this letter as a member of the council.]

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## LETTER IX.

TO A YOUNG LADY AT MADRID, WHO DESIRED TO BECOME A BAREFOOTED CARMELITE, AND WHO WAS AFTERWARDS PROFESSED IN A CONVENT AT ARENAS, IN NEW CASTILE, AFTERWARDS TRANSFERRED TO GUADALAXARA.

JESUS

Be in your soul. Your messenger came at a time when I was unable to reply before he left the place, and now, on his return, he is waiting for my letter. May God ever grant you, my daughter, His holy grace, that always and in all things you may be wholly occupied with His holy love; for to this are you bound, and for this only He created and redeemed you. On the three questions there is much to say, more than time and a letter will allow. I will speak of three other points which may be profitable to you.

As to sins, God so hates them that He submitted to die; it is expedient, in order utterly to root them out, and never to commit any, to have as little intercourse with people as possible, avoiding them, and never speaking an unnecessary word on any subject—for all conversation, beyond what necessity or reason absolutely requires,

has never done good to any man, however holy—and at the same time keeping the law of God with great exactness and love.

As to the passion of Our Lord, chastise your body with discretion, hate and mortify yourself, and never in anything follow your own will and your own inclination, for that was the cause of His death and passion. Whatever you may do, do it all under the advice of your director. As to the third, which is glory; in order to meditate well upon it, and love it, you must hold all the riches of the world and all its pleasures to be mere dross, and vanity, and weariness, as, in truth, they are; and make no account of anything, however great and precious it may be, but only to be well with God; because the best things here below, when compared with the eternal good for which God created us, are vile and bitter; and though the bitterness and deformity be but for a moment, they shall abide for ever in the soul which esteems them.

I have not forgotten your matter; but at present, much as I desire it, nothing can be done. Recommend it earnestly to our Lord, and take our Lady and St. Joseph as your advocates with Him.

Remember me especially to your mother, to whom, as well as to yourself, this letter is addressed; and do you both pray for me, and in their charity ask your friends to do the same. May God give you His Spirit.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From SEGOVIA: February, 1589.

## LETTER X.

TO A SPIRITUAL SON IN RELIGION, TEACHING HIM HOW TO EMPLOY HIS WHOLE WILL IN GOD, WITHDRAWING IT FROM PLEASURE AND JOY IN CREATED THINGS.

The peace of JESUS CHRIST, my son, be ever in your soul.

I have received the letter of your reverence, wherein you tell me of the great desire you have, given you by our Lord, to occupy your will with Him alone, loving Him above all things, and wherein you also ask me for some directions how to obtain your end. I rejoice that God has given you such holy desires, and I shall rejoice the more at their fulfilment. Remember then that all pleasure, joy, and affections come into the soul through the will and the desire of those things which seem good, befitting, and pleasurable, because they seem to be pleasing and precious; now the affections of the will are drawn to them, and the will hopes for them, delights in them when it possesses them, and dreads the loss of them. The soul, therefore, by reason of these affections and joys, is disturbed and disquieted.

In order then to annihilate and mortify the desire of sensible pleasure in things that are not God, your reverence will observe, that everything in which the will can have a distinct joy is sweet and delectable, because pleasant in its eyes; but there is no delectable thing in which it can have joy and delight in God, for God is not cognisable by the apprehensions of the other faculties, and therefore not by the pleasure and desires of the will. In this life, as the soul cannot taste of God essentially, so

all the sweetness and delight of which it is capable, and, however great they may be, cannot be God, for whatever the will takes pleasure in and desires as a distinct thing, it desires so far as it knows it to be that which it longs for. For as the will has never tasted of God, nor ever known Him under any apprehension of the desire, and therefore comprehends Him not, so by its taste it can never know Him; its very being, desire, and taste can never desire God, because He is above and beyond all its powers.

It is, therefore, plain that no distinct object whatever that pleases the will can be God; and for that reason, if it is to be united with Him, it must empty itself, cast away every disorderly affection of the desire, every satisfaction it may distinctly have, high and low, temporal and spiritual, so that, purified and cleansed from all unruly satisfactions, joys and desires, it may be wholly occupied, with all its affections, in loving God. For if the will can in any way comprehend God and be united with Him, it cannot be through any capacity of the desire, but only by love; and as all delight, sweetness, and joy, of which the will is sensible, is not love, it follows that none of these pleasing impressions can be the adequate means of uniting the will to God: the means are an act of the will. And because an act of the will is quite distinct from feeling; it is by an act that the will is united with God, and rests in Him; that act is love. This union is never wrought by feeling, or exertions of the desire, for these remain in the soul as aims and ends. It is only as motives of love that feelings can be of service, if the will is bent on going onwards, and for nothing else.

These sweet impressions of themselves do not lead the soul to God, but rather cause it to rest upon them: by an act of the will, that is, by loving God, the soul puts its whole affection, joy, delight, contentment, and love in Him only, casting everything else aside, and loving Him above all things.

For this reason, then, if anyone is moved to love God by that sweetness he feels, he casts that sweetness away from Him, and fixes his love upon God, Whom he does not feel; but if he allowed himself to rest in that sweetness and delight which he feels, dwelling upon them with satisfaction, that would be to love the creature, and that which is of it, and to make the motive an end, and the act of the will would be vitiated; for as God is incomprehensible and unapproachable, the will, in order to direct its act of love unto God, must not direct it to that which is tangible and capable of being reached by the desire, but must direct it to that which it cannot comprehend nor reach thereby. In this way the will loves that which is certain and true, according to the spirit of the faith, in emptiness and darkness as to its own feelings, above all that it can understand by the operations of the understanding; its faith and love transcend all that it can comprehend.

He, then, is very unwise, who, when sweetness and spiritual delight fail him, thinks for that reason that God has abandoned him, and when he finds them again, rejoices and is glad, thinking that he has in that way come to possess God.

More unwise still is he who goes about seeking for sweetness in God, rejoices in it, and dwells upon it; for, in so doing, he is not seeking after God with the will



grounded in the emptiness of faith and charity, but only in spiritual sweetness and delight, which is a created thing, following herein his own will and fond pleasure. Such an one does not love God purely above all things which is to direct the whole strength of the will to Him—for by clinging to and resting on the creature by desire, the will does not ascend upwards beyond it to God Who is unapproachable. It is impossible for the will to attain to the sweetness and delight of the divine union, to feel the sweet and loving embraces of God, otherwise than in detachment, in refusing to the desire every pleasure in the things of heaven and earth for that is the meaning of David, when he said: ‘Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.’\* Now, in this place ‘the mouth’ of the will is the desire: the mouth opens, when not filled or hindered with the morsels of its own satisfactions: for when the desire is bent upon anything, it is then restrained, because out of God everything is a restraint.

The soul then that is to advance straightway unto God, and to be united with Him, must keep the mouth of the will open, but only for God Himself, in detachment from every morsel of desire, in order that God may fill it with His own love and sweetness: it must hunger and thirst after God alone, seeking its satisfaction in nothing else, seeing that in this life it cannot taste Him as He is. That which may be tasted here, if there be a desire for it, hinders the taste of God.

This is what the prophet Isaias teaches when he says: ‘All you that thirst come to the waters.’† He bids all who thirst for God only to come to the fulness of the

\* Ps. lxxx. 11.

† Is. lv. i.

divine waters of union with Him: namely, those who have not the money of desire. It is most expedient then, for your reverence, if you wish to have great peace in your soul and to reach perfection, to give up your whole will to God, that it may be united to Him, and utterly detached from the mean and vile occupations of earth. May His Majesty make you as spiritual and as holy as I desire.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

SEGOVIA, April 14, 1589.

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## LETTER XI.

TO MOTHER LEONORA OF ST. GABRIEL, A BAREFOOTED  
CARMELITE OF SEVILLE.

*The holy father and the council command her to found a monastery in  
Cordova.*

JESUS

Be in your soul, my daughter in Christ. Your letter was very welcome to me, and I thank God that He has been pleased to make use of you in this foundation, which His Majesty has made for your greater profit; for the more He gives, the more does He enlarge our desires, till He leaves us empty that He may fill us with blessings. You shall be well repaid for those which, for the love of your sisters, you forego in Seville; for the immense benefits of God can only be received and contained by empty and solitary hearts; and, therefore, our Lord will have you to be alone, and He really wills it for He desires to be your only companion. Your reverence must therefore apply

your mind to Him alone, and in Him alone content yourself, that in Him you may find all consolation, for if the soul were in heaven, but the will without love, that soul would be still unsatisfied. So also though God be ever with us, if our heart be attached to other things and not fixed on Him alone.

I well believe that those in Seville will be very lonely without your reverence. But, perhaps, you have already done all the good there which you were intended to do, and God wills that you should now work here, for this is one of our principal foundations. To this end, I pray your reverence to afford all the assistance you can to the mother prioress, with great love and union of heart in all things. I know that I need not say this to you, for you have been so long in the order and so experienced that you know all that is usually done in these foundations. For this reason, we chose your reverence. There are religious enough here, but not fitted for this work. Be pleased to remember me particularly to sister Mary of the visitation, and to sister Juana of St. Gabriel, to whom I return thanks for her letter. May God give your reverence His Holy Spirit.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From SEGOVIA, the 8th of July, 1589.

## LETTER XII.

TO MOTHER MARY OF JESUS, PRIORESS OF THE BARE-FOOTED CARMELITES OF CORDOVA.

*Containing useful lessons for religious engaged in the foundation of a new convent, of which they are to be the first stones.*

## JESUS

Be in your soul. You are bound to correspond to the grace of our Lord in proportion to the welcome which you have received, the tidings of which have rejoiced my heart. It was His will that you should enter so poor a dwelling, under the heat of such a burning sun, that you might give edification, and manifest your profession which is the imitation of Christ in detachment, in order that those who come to you hereafter may learn in what spirit they must come. I send you all necessary faculties. Be very careful whom you receive at first, because such will be those who follow; and strive to preserve the spirit of poverty and contempt of all earthly things, being content with God alone: otherwise be assured that you will fall into a thousand temporal and spiritual necessities, you will never, and can never, experience greater necessities than those to which you voluntarily subject your heart: for the poor in spirit is more content and joyful when in want; having made very nothingness his all, and having found therein fulness and freedom in all things.

O blessed nothingness, and blessed hiddenness of heart, which is of such surpassing virtue as to render all things subject to the soul that will have nothing subject to itself, and casting away all care to burn more and more intensely with love!

Salute all the sisters in our Lord. Tell them that as our Lord has chosen them for the first stones of this building, they must consider well what they ought to be, for upon them, as on a strong foundation, those who follow after them are to be built. Let them profit by the first fruits of the spirit which God gives in the beginning to make a new start on the way of perfection, in all humility and detachment, inward and outward, not in a childish mind, but with a strong will in mortification and penance. Let them see that Christ costs them something, and not be like those who seek their own ease, and look for consolation either in God or out of Him. But let them suffer either in Him or out of Him, by silence, hope, and loving remembrance. Make this known to Gabriela and the sisters at Malaga. To the others I have already written. The grace of God be with you. Amen.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From SEGOVIA : the 28th of July, 1589.

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### LETTER XIII.

TO MOTHER MAGDALENE OF THE HOLY GHOST, A RELIGIOUS OF THE SAME CONVENT OF CORDOVA.

JESUS

Be in your soul, my daughter in Christ. The good resolutions expressed in your letter make me glad. I bless God, who provides for all things! for they will be greatly needed in the beginnings of foundations that you may bear poverty, straitness, heat, and labours of all kinds, in such a manner that none may perceive whether or not all

these things are grievous to you. Consider that for such beginnings God will not have delicate and feeble souls, far less such as are lovers of themselves; and to this end His Majesty helps us more in our beginnings, that they, with moderate diligence, may advance in all virtues. It is assuredly a great grace, and a sign of the divine favour, that, passing by others, He has led you hither. And though the abandonment may have been painful, it is nothing; for you must in any case have shortly left it all. In order to have God in all things, we must have nothing at all; for how can the heart, given to one, be given at all to another?

I say this also to sister Juana, and beg you to pray to God for me. May He be in your heart. Amen.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From SEGOVIA: the 28th of July, 1589.

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#### LETTER XIV.

TO DOÑA JUANA DE PEDRAÇA, A PENITENT OF THE  
HOLY FATHER IN GRANADA.

JESUS

Be in your soul. I give Him thanks that He has given me the grace not to forget the poor, and not to take my ease, as you say. It would pain me much if I thought you believe what you say. It would be an evil return after so much kindness, when I deserve none. All that is wanting now is that I should forget you; but consider how that is to be forgotten which is ever present to the



soul. But as you are now in the darkness and emptiness of spiritual poverty, you think that all things and all men are failing you ; nor is this wonderful, since you think God Himself fails you. But nothing fails you, nor have you need of any counsel, there is no reason why you should, you will learn nothing, you will find none, for all is groundless suspicion. He who desires nothing but God does not walk in darkness, however blind and poor he may think himself to be ; and he who indulges in no presumptuous thoughts, nor seeks his own satisfaction either in God or in creatures, who does not serve his own will in anything, is in no danger of falling, or in any need of counsel.

You are in the right path, my daughter ; be resigned, and be glad. What ! are you to undertake to guide yourself ? You would do it well, no doubt. You have never been in a better state than now, for you have never been so humble, so submissive ; you have never held yourself, and the things of the world, in greater contempt : you have never seen yourself to be so bad, nor God to be so good ; you have never served Him so purely and disinterestedly as now. You are not running after the imperfections of your own will, seeking self, as perhaps you once did. What do you mean ? What manner of life and conversation do you propose to yourself in this world ? In what do you imagine the service of God to consist, except in abstaining from evil, keeping His commandments, and doing His work as well as we can. When you do this, what need have you to seek here and there for other instructions, other lights, other consolations, in which ordinarily lurk many snares and dangers

to the soul, which is deceived and deluded by its appetites and perceptions : its very faculties lead it astray.

It is a great grace of God when He so darkens and impoverishes the soul that the senses cannot deceive it. And that it may not go astray, it has nothing to do but to walk in the beaten path of the law of God and of the Church, living solely by faith, dim and true, in certain hope and perfect charity, looking for all its blessings in heaven ; living here as pilgrims, beggars, exiles, orphans, desolate, possessing nothing, and looking for everything above.

Rejoice, then, and put your trust in God, who has given you these tokens, you CAN do so, nay, you ought to do so. If not, you must not be surprised if He should be angry when He finds you so dull, seeing that He has placed you in so safe a path, and led you to so secure a haven. Desire nothing but this, and bend your soul to it, which is in a good and safe condition, and go to communion as usual. Go to confession when you have some definite matter, and speak of that only. When you have anything to say to me write, and that promptly and frequently, which you can always do through doña Ana, if not through the nuns.

I have been somewhat unwell, but am now much better. Fr. John Evangelist, however, is still suffering. Recommend him to God, and me also, my daughter in our Lord.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From SEGOVIA : Oct. 12th, 1589.

## LETTER XV.

TO MOTHER MARY OF JESUS, prioress OF CORDOVA.

*Containing much profitable advice to those whose office is to govern and provide for a community,*

## JESUS

Be in your soul. My daughter in Christ, the cause of my not having written to you for so long a time has been rather the remote position of Segovia than any want of will. For my good will has ever been, and I trust in God shall ever be, the same towards you. I feel for you in all your trials. But I would not have you take too much thought concerning the temporal provision for your house, lest God should forget it; and you should fall into great temporal and spiritual distress; for it is our over anxious solicitude which brings us to want. Cast all your care, my daughter, upon God, and He will nourish you: for He who has given and will give the greater, will not fail to give the less.

Take care that the desire to be in want and poor never fails you, for that instant your courage will fail, and your virtues will become weak. For if in time past you have desired poverty, now that you are in authority you should desire it still more, and love it; for the house must be ruled, and furnished with virtues and heavenly desires, rather than by carefulness and arrangements for temporal and earthly things: inasmuch as our Lord hath bidden us to take no thought for our food, nor for our raiment, nor for to-morrow. What you have to do is

to train your own soul and the souls of your nuns in all perfection in religion, in union with God, and rejoicing in Him alone; and I will assure you of the rest. It seems to me very difficult to imagine that the other houses will come to your help, when you are settled in so good a position, and have such excellent nuns. Nevertheless, if I have an opportunity, I will not fail to do what I can for you.

I wish much consolation to the mother sub-prioress, and I trust in our Lord that He will give it, and strengthen her to bear her pilgrimage and exile cheerfully for love of Him. I am writing to her.

Many salutations in our Sovereign Good, to my daughters Magdalene of St. Gabriel, Mary of St. Paul, Mary of the visitation, and Mary of St. Francis.

May He be ever with your spirit, my daughter. Amen.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From MADRID : the 20th of June, 1590.

## LETTER XVI.

TO MOTHER ANNE OF JESUS, A BAREFOOTED CARMELITE  
OF THE CONVENT OF SEGOVIA.

*He consoles her on his not having been chosen superior.*

JESUS

Be in your soul. I thank you very much for your letter and I am more your debtor than I was before. Though things have not come to pass as you desired, you ought to be glad and give thanks to God; His Majesty has so ordained, and it is best for all. It remains only that we submit our will, that we may see it in its true light. For

when things befall us that we do not like, they seem to us evil and contrary, be they never so good and profitable to our souls. But in this case there is plainly no evil either to me or to any other. To me, indeed, it is most favourable ; for being free and without the care of souls, I may, by God's help, if I like, enjoy peace and solitude, and the blessed fruit of forgetfulness of self and of all created things.

And others, also, will be the better by my being set aside ; for so will they escape the faults which by reason of my unfitness they would have committed. What I beg of you, then, my daughter, is to pray to God that He will continue to me this grace ; for I fear that they will send me to Segovia, and that I shall not be perfectly free. However, I shall do my utmost to escape from this burthen also ; but if I fail, mother Anne of Jesus will not get out of my hands as she expects, and so will not die of grief at losing the opportunity, as she thinks, of becoming a very great saint. But whether I go or stay, wherever or however I may be, I will never forget her nor withdraw from the charge of her soul, of which she speaks, because I really desire her eternal good. Now, therefore, until God gives it in heaven, let her exercise herself continually in the virtues of patience and mortification, endeavouring to become like in some measure, through suffering, to our great God, who was humbled and crucified for us, because our life here is not good if we do not imitate Him. May His Majesty preserve you and make you increase daily in His love, as His holy and well-beloved child. Amen.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From MADRID ; the 6th July, 1591.

## LETTER XVII.

TO MOTHER MARY OF THE INCARNATION, PRIORESS OF  
THE SAME CONVENT.

*On the same subject as the preceding.*

JESUS

Be in your soul. Trouble not yourself, my daughter, about what concerns me, since it troubles me not. The only thing which grieves me much is to see the blame laid upon those to whom it does not belong; for these things are done not by men, but God, Who knows what is best for us, and orders all things for our good. Think of this only, that all is ordained by God. And do you love where there is no love, and you shall have love. May His Majesty preserve you, and make you grow in His love. Amen.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From MADRID: the 6th of July, 1591.

## LETTER XVIII.

TO DONA ANNA DE PEÑALOSA.

*He informs her of his recent illness.*

JESUS

Be in your soul, my daughter. I have received here in Peñuela the letter brought me by your servant, and I prize exceedingly the kindness thus shown to me. I am



going to-morrow to Ubeda, for the cure of a feverish attack, which, having hung about me for more than a week past, makes me think I require medical treatment. It is my desire, however, to return here immediately, as I find great good in this holy solitude. As to the advice you give me not to go with F. Antony, be assured that in this, as in all other matters of the kind, I will be careful. I rejoice greatly to hear that Don Luís is now a priest of God; may he be so for many a year, and may His Majesty fulfil all the desires of his soul. Oh, what a blessed state for casting away all solicitude, and speedily enriching his soul! Congratulate him from me. I dare not venture to ask him to remember me, some day, in the mass, though I, as in duty bound, shall always remember him; for never shall I, how forgetful soever I be, fail to recollect him, closely bound as he is with the sister whom I ever bear in my memory. I salute my daughter Doña Inez very heartily in our Lord; and I beg both brother and sister to pray God for me, that He will be pleased to prepare me and take me to Himself.

Now I remember nothing further that I have to write to you, and besides, the fever will not suffer me to add any more. But for this, gladly would I write at much greater length.

FR. JOHN OF THE CROSS.

From PEÑUELA: Sept. 21, 1591.

CENSURE AND JUDGMENT OF THE BLESSED FATHER ON  
THE SPIRIT AND METHOD OF PRAYER OF ONE OF THE  
NUNS OF HIS ORDER.

IN the kind of affective prayer practised by this soul, there seem to be five defects, so that I cannot consider her spirit to be good. The first is, that she has a great fondness for her own way: and a true spirit practises great detachment from all desire. The second is, that she is too confident, and has too little fear of delusions; the spirit of God is never without fear, in order, as the wise man saith, to keep a soul from sin.\* The third is, that she wishes to persuade people into the belief that she is in a good and high state: this is not the fruit of a true spirit: for that, on the contrary, would wish to be lightly esteemed, and despised, and does despise itself. The fourth and the chief is, that the fruits of humility are not visible which, when the graces—as she says here—are real, are ordinarily never communicated to the soul without first undoing and annihilating it in an interior abasement of humility. Now, if they had wrought this effect in her, she could not fail to say something, or rather a good deal, about it; because the first subjects that would suggest themselves to her to speak about, and make much of, are the fruits of humility; and these in their operations are so effectual, that it is impossible to dissemble them. Though they are not equally observable in all the dealings of God, yet these, which he calls union, are never found without them. Because a soul is humbled before it is exalted; †

\* Prov. xv. 27.

† Prov. xviii. 12.

and 'it is good for me that Thou hast humbled me.'\* The fifth is, that the style and language she uses do not seem to me those of the spirit she refers to; for that spirit teaches a style which is more simple, free from affectation, and exaggeration: and such is not the one before me. All this that she says: God spoke to me: I spoke to God: seems nonsense.

What I would say is this: she should not be required nor permitted to write anything on these matters: and her confessor should not seem to hear of them willingly, except to disparage and set aside what she has to say. Let her superiors try her in the practice of virtue only, particularly in that of contempt of self, humility, and obedience; and then at the sound of this blow will come forth that gentleness of soul in which graces so great have been wrought. These tests must be sharp, for there is no evil spirit that will not suffer a good deal for his own credit.

\* Psalm cxviii. 71.

SPIRITUAL MAXIMS.



## SPIRITUAL MAXIMS.

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[A., Ascent of Mount Carmel. D. N., Dark Night. S. C., the Canticle. L. F., Living Flame. Lett., the Letters. The Roman numerals, the number of the sentences in the earlier editions, which contained only one hundred. Fra Antonio Arbiol wrote a commentary on this earlier collection with the title of "Mystica Fundamental, or El Religioso Perfecto." Madrid, 1761.]

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### PROLOGUE.

O MY GOD, sweetness and joy of my heart, behold how my soul for love of Thee will occupy itself with these maxims of love and light. For though the words thereof are mine, I have not the meaning and the power, and these are more pleasing to Thee than the language and the knowledge thereof. Nevertheless, O Lord, it may be that some may be drawn by them to serve and love Thee, and profit where I fail: that will be a consolation to me, if through me Thou shalt find in others what Thou canst not find in me. O my Lord, Thou lovest discretion, and light, but love, more than all the other operations of the soul; so then let these maxims furnish discretion to the wayfarer, enlighten him by the way, and supply him with motives of love for his journey. Away, then, with the rhetoric of the world, sounding words and the dry eloquence of human wisdom, weak and delusive, never pleasing unto Thee. Let us speak to the heart words flowing with sweetness and love, and such as Thou delightest in. Thou wilt be pleased herein, O my God, and it may be that Thou wilt also remove the hindrance and the stones of stumbling from before many souls who



fall through ignorance, and who for want of light wander out of the right way, though they think they are walking in it, and following in all things in the footsteps of Thy most sweet Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and imitating Him in their life, state, and virtues according to the rule of detachment and poverty of spirit. But, O Father of mercy, do Thou give us this grace, for without Thee, O Lord, we shall do nothing.

## I.

## IMITATION OF CHRIST.

1. There is no progress but in the following of Christ, who is the way the truth and the life, and the Gate by which he who will be saved must enter. Every spirit, therefore, that will walk in sweetness at its ease, shunning the following of Christ, is, in my opinion, nothing worth.—A. ii. 7, 7.

2. Your first care must be to be anxiously and lovingly earnest in your endeavours to imitate Christ in all your actions; doing every one of them to the uttermost of your power, as our Lord Himself would have done them.—Ib. i. 13, 3.

3. Every satisfaction offered to the senses which is not for God's honour and glory you must renounce and reject for the love of Jesus Christ, Who while upon earth, had, and sought for, no other pleasure than doing the will of His Father; this, He said, was His meat and drink.—A. i. 13, 4.

4. In none of your actions whatever should you take any man, however holy he may be, for your example, because satan is sure to put his imperfections forward so

as to attract your attention. Rather imitate Jesus Christ, Who is supremely perfect and supremely holy. So doing you will never go astray.

5. Inwardly and outwardly live always crucified with Christ, and you will attain unto peace and contentment of spirit, and in your patience you shall possess your soul.—lxxiv.

6. Let Christ crucified alone be enough for you ; with Him suffer, with Him take your rest, never rest nor suffer without Him ; striving with all your might to rid yourself of all selfish affections and inclinations and annihilation of self.—lxxviii.

7. He who makes any account of himself, neither denies himself nor follows Christ.—A. iii. 22, 2.

8. Love tribulations more than all good things, and do not imagine that you are doing anything when you endure them ; so shall you please Him who did not hesitate to die for you.

9. If you wish to attain to the possession of Christ, never seek Him without the cross.

10. He who seeks not the cross of Christ, seeks not the glory of Christ.

11. Desire to make yourself in suffering somewhat like our great God, humiliated and crucified ; for life, if not an imitation of His, is worth nothing.—Let. xvi.

12. What does he know who does not know how to suffer for Christ ? The greater and the heavier the sufferings, the better is his lot who suffers.

13. All men desire to enter into the treasures and consolations of God ; but few desire to enter into tribulations and sorrows for the Son of God.—S. C. xxxvi. 14.

14. Jesus Christ is but little known of those who consider themselves His friends ; for we see them seeking in Him their own comfort, and not His bitter sorrows.—A. ii. 7, 9.

## II.

## THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES.

15. Because it is the function of the theological virtues to withdraw the soul from all that is less than God, it is theirs, therefore, to unite with Him.—D. N. ii. 21.

16. Without walking truly in the practice of these three virtues, it is impossible to attain to the perfect love of God.—D. N. ii. 21.

## FAITH.

17. The way of faith is sound and safe, and along this souls must journey on from virtue to virtue, shutting their eyes against every object of sense and of clear and particular perception.—A. ii. 16, 13.

18. When the inspirations are from God they are always in the order of the motives of His law, and of the faith, in the perfection of which the soul should ever draw nearer and nearer to God.—L. F. Stanza iii. § 29.

19. The soul that travels in the light and verities of the faith is secured against error, for error proceeds ordinarily from our own proper desires, tastes, reflections, and understanding, wherein there is generally too much or too little ; and hence the inclination to that which is not seemly.—D. N. ii. 16, 2.

20. By the faith the soul travels protected against the

devil, its strongest and craftiest foe ; and St. Peter knew of no stronger defence against him when he said : ‘ Resist him, strong in the faith.’—D. N. xxi. 4, 5.

21. The soul that would draw near unto God and unite itself with Him, must do so by not comprehending rather than by comprehending, in utter forgetfulness of created things ; because it must change the mutable and comprehensible for the immutable and the incomprehensible, Who is God.—A. iii. 4, 3.

22. Outward light enables us to see that we may not fall ; it is otherwise in the things of God, for there it is better not to see, and the soul is in greater security.

23. It being certain that in this life we know God better by what He is not than by what He is, it is necessary, if we are to draw near unto Him, that the soul must deny, to the uttermost, all that may be denied of its apprehensions, both natural and supernatural.—A. iii. 1, 1.

24. All apprehension and knowledge of supernatural things cannot help us to love God so much as the least act of living faith and hope made in detachment from all things.—A. iii. 7, 4.

25. As in natural generation no new form results without the corruption of the one previously existing—for this hinders the former by reason of the contrariety between them—so while the soul is under the dominion of the sensual and animal spirit, the pure and heavenly spirit can never enter.—A. i. 6, 1.

26. Let no created thing have a place in your heart if you would have the face of God pure and clear in your soul ; yea, rather empty your spirit of all created things,

and you will walk in the divine light ; for God resembles no created thing.—xxiv.

27. The greatest shelter of the soul is Faith ; for the Holy Ghost gives it light : the more pure and refined the soul in a perfect living faith, the greater the infusion of charity, and the greater the communication of supernatural gifts and light.—A. ii. 29, 5.

28. One of the greatest gifts of God to the soul in this life—not permanent but transient—is that deep sense and understanding of God by which it feels and understands clearly, that it can neither understand nor feel Him at all.—S. C. vii. 9.

29. The soul that leans upon its own understanding, sense, or feeling of its own—all this being very little and very unlike to God—in order to travel on the right road, is most easily led astray or hindered, because it is not perfectly blind in faith, which is its true guide.—A. ii. 4, 2.

30. There is one thing in our day that ought to make us afraid : persons who have hardly begun to make their meditations, if they seem to hear anything in a brief recollection, pronounce it to have come from God ; and so imagine, saying, God has spoken or I have had an answer from God, and it is not so : these persons have been speaking to themselves, out of a longing for such communications.—A. ii. 29, 4.

31. He who should now enquire of God by vision or revelation would offend Him, because he does not fix his eyes upon Christ alone. To such an one the answer of God is : This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased, hear Him, and do not seek for new instructions, for in Him I have spoken and revealed all that may be

desired and asked for; I have given Him to be your brother, master, companion, ransom, and reward.—A. ii. 22.

32. We must be guided in all things by the teaching of Christ and His church, and thereby seek the remedy for our spiritual ignorances and infirmities: it is thus that we shall obtain abundant relief; and all that goes beyond this is not only curiosity but great rashness.—A. ii. 22, 6.

33. You are not to believe that which you hear in a supernatural way, but only that which you learn through the teaching of Christ and His ministers.—A. ii. 22, 6.

34. The soul that seeks after revelations sins venially at least; so does the director who encourages or allows that seeking, be the end sought never so good; there is no necessity at all for this, seeing that we have our natural reason and the evangelical law to guide us in all things.—A. ii. 21, 4.

35. The soul that desires revelations undermines the perfect guidance of the faith, and opens a door for satan to deceive it by false revelations; for he knows well how to disguise them so as to make them appear good.—A. ii. 11, 5.

36. The wisdom of the saints consists in knowing how to direct the will courageously to God, in the perfect fulfilment of His law and His holy counsels.—A. ii. 29, 12.

### III.

#### HOPE.

37. That which moves and overcomes God is earnest Hope; in order to attain to the union of love, the soul



must journey in hope of God alone ; for without it nothing will be obtained.—D. N. xxi. 7.

38. A living hope in God makes the soul so courageous and so earnest in the pursuit of the things of everlasting life, that it looks on this world—so indeed it is—as dry, weak, valueless, and dead, in comparison with that it hopes for hereafter.—D. N. ii. 21, 7.

39. The soul in hope strips itself of all the trappings of this world, setting the heart upon nothing, hoping for nothing in it or of it, clad in the vesture of the hope of everlasting life.—D. N. ii., xxi. 7.

40. Through a living hope in God the heart is so raised up above the world and delivered from all its snares, that not only it cannot come into contact with it, and be attached to it, but it cannot even regard it.—D. N. ii., xxi. 7.

41. In all your trials have recourse at once to God with confidence, and you will be comforted, enlightened, and instructed.—lvi.

42. The soul that retains the slightest desire for earthly things, is more unseemly and impure in the way of God than if it were labouring under the heaviest and most impure temptations and darkness, provided the rational will did not consent to them ; such a soul may, with greater confidence, draw near to God in obedience to the Divine will ; for our Lord hath said : Come unto me all you who labour and are heavily burdened, and I will refresh you.—xv.

43. Have an earnest desire that God may give you all He knows you to be deficient in, for His greater honour and glory.

44. Have a continual trust in God, esteeming in yourself and in your brethren that which He most esteems; namely, spiritual graces.—lxxvi.

45. The more God gives, the more He makes us desire; until He leaves us empty that He may fill us with good things.—Letter xi.

46. So pleased is God with the hope in which the soul is ever looking unto Him with eyes turned away from everything else, that it may be truly said of it that it obtains all that it hopes for.—D. N., ii. x. 21, 9.

#### FEAR OF GOD.

47. If you have sweetness and delight, draw near to God in fear and in truth, and you will never be deceived nor entangled in vanity.—lvii.

48. Do not rejoice in temporal prosperity, because you do not certainly know that it makes eternal life secure.—A. iii. 17, 5.

49. Though a man prosper in all his undertakings, and though every wish of his heart may be gratified, he ought in such a case to fear rather than rejoice; for this multiplies the occasions of forgetting God, and the risks of offending Him.—A. iii. 17, 5.

50. Do not presume upon vain joy; knowing how many and how grievous are the sins you have committed, and not knowing whether you are pleasing unto God. But always fear and always hope in Him.—lxvi.

51. How can you venture to live without fear, seeing that you must appear before God to give an account of your lightest words and thoughts?—xcviii.

52. Remember that the called are many, the chosen few; and if you are not careful, your final ruin is more certain than your salvation; especially as the way that leadeth to eternal life is so strait.—xcix.

53. As in the hour of death you will certainly be sorry that you have not employed all your time in the service of God, why is it that you do not now so employ your time, as you will wish you had done when you are dying?—c.

## IV.

## CHARITY.

54. The strength of the soul lies in its faculties, passions, and desires; if these be directed towards God by the will, and withdrawn from all that is not God, the soul then keeps its strength for Him and loves Him with all its might, as our Lord commands us.—A. iii. 15, 2.

55. Charity is like a fine robe of many colours, which lends grace, beauty, and freshness, not only to the white garment of faith and the green vesture of hope, but also to all the virtues; for without charity no virtue is pleasing in the sight of God.—D. N. ii. 21, 10.

56. The worth of love does not consist in high feelings, but in detachment: in patience under all trials for the sake of God Whom we love.—xci.

57. God has a greater esteem for the lowest degree of purity of conscience, than for the greatest work you can do for Him.—x.

58. To seek God in Himself is to be without every consolation for His sake: an inclination to the choice

of all that is most displeasing, whether in the things of God or in the things of the world ; this is to love God.  
—A. ii. 7, 4.

59. Do not imagine that God is pleased with many good works, so much as with the doing of them with a good will, without self-seeking or human respect.  
—xlix.

60. Herein a man may know whether he really loves God : is he satisfied with anything less than God ?—  
S. C. i. 19.

61. As the hair which is frequently dressed is the cleaner, and is the more easily dressed upon all occasions, so is it with the soul which frequently examines its thoughts, words, and works, doing all things for the love of God.

62. As the hair is to be dressed from the top of the head if it is to be thoroughly cleansed, so our good works must have their beginning in the highest love of God, if they are to be thoroughly pure and clean.

63. To restrain the tongue and the thoughts, and to set the affections regularly upon God, quickly sets the soul on fire in a divine way.—lxvii.

64. Study always to please God ; pray that His will may be accomplished in you ; love Him much, for it is His due.—See 311.

65. All our goodness is a loan ; God is the owner ; God worketh, and His work is God.

66. We gain more by the goods of God in one hour, than in our whole life by our own.—lxiii.

67. Our Lord has always manifested the treasures of His wisdom and His Spirit to men : but now that

wickedness manifests itself the more, He manifests them still more.

68. In one sense the purification of a soul from the contradictions of desire is a greater work of God than its creation out of nothing; that nothing offered no resistance to His Majesty: not so the love of the creature.—A. i. 6, 2.

69. That which God intends is to make us God by participation, He being God by nature: as the fire changes everything into fire.

70. At the close of life you will be examined as to your love: learn then to love God as He wishes to be loved, and give up all that is your own.

71. The soul that seeks God wholly, must give itself wholly to Him.

72. New and imperfect lovers are like new wine, easily spoiled until the scum of imperfections has been cleared away, and the fervour with the coarse satisfaction of senses has died out.—S. C. xxv. 7.

73. The passions rule over the soul and assail it in proportion to the weakness of the will in God, and to its dependence on creatures; for then it rejoices so easily in things which do not deserve to be rejoiced in; hopes for that which is of no profit, and grieves over that in which perhaps it ought to rejoice, and fears where there is nothing to be afraid of.—A. iii. 15, 5.

74. They provoke the divine Majesty to anger exceedingly, who, while seeking for spiritual food, are not content with God only, but will intermingle therewith carnal and earthly satisfactions.—A. i. 5, 3.

75. He who loves any other thing together with God

makes light of Him, because he puts into the balance with Him that which is at an infinite distance from Him.

—A. i. 5, 4.

76. As a sick man is too weak for work, so the soul that is weak in the love of God is also too weak for the practice of perfect virtue.

77. To seek self in God is to seek for comfort and refreshment from God ; that is contrary to the pure love of God.—A. ii. 7, 4.

78. To regard the gifts of God more than God Himself, is a great evil.

79. Many there are who seek their own pleasure and comfort in God, and gifts and graces from Him ; but they who seek to please Him and to give Him something at their own cost—setting their own pleasure aside—are very few.—D. N. ii. 19, 8.

80. Few spiritual persons—even among those who think themselves most advanced—attain to a perfect resolution in well-doing, for they never entirely lose themselves on some point or other connected with the world or self, despising appearances and the opinions of men, so as to make their good works perfect and in detachment from all things for the sake of Christ.—S. P. xxix. 5.

81. Self-will and self-satisfaction in the works they do so prevail among men, whether ordinary or more advanced Christians, that scarcely one is to be found who works simply for God without looking for some consolation or comfort or other advantage in his work.—A. iii. 27, 9.

82. Some souls call God their Bridegroom and Beloved ; but He is not really beloved by them, because their heart is not whole with Him.—S. C. i. 10.



83. What will it profit you if you give God one thing when He asks something else? Consider what God wills, and do it, for so will you satisfy your heart better than by doing that to which you are inclined yourself.—xcvii.

84. To find all satisfaction in God you must be satisfied with Him only, for in heaven itself, if you did not bend your will to His will, you would never be satisfied; so is it here, if your heart is set upon anything else.—Lett. xi.

85. As aromatic spices exposed to the air gradually lose their fragrance and the strength of their perfume, so the soul, not recollected in the love of God alone, loses the heat and vigour of virtue.—A. i. 10, 1.

86. He who seeks nothing but God walks not in darkness, however mean and poor he may be in his own estimation.—Lett. xiv.

87. For a man to suffer for God is a sign that he has given himself up to Him, and that he loves Him.—D. N. i. 9, 3.

88. He who in the midst of dryness and abandonment is painfully anxious about the service of God, and afraid that He does not serve Him, offers Him a sacrifice that pleaseth Him well.—D. N. i. 11, 3.

89. When God is really loved, He hears most readily the cry of the soul that loves Him.—S. C. i. 18.

90. The soul defends itself against its fleshly enemy by charity; for where there is a real love of God neither the love of self nor the love of creatures can enter in.—D. N. ii. 21, 10.

91. The loving soul is meek, gentle, humble, and

patient; the soul that is hardened in self-love hardens itself still more. If Thou, O good Jesus, in Thy love dost not make the soul gentle, it will persist in its natural hardness.—xxvii.

92. The soul that loves is neither wearied nor wearies.

93. Behold the infinite wisdom and the hidden mysteries; Oh! the peace, the love, the silence of the divine bosom; Oh! the deep science God is teaching there; it is that which we call anagogic acts—ejaculatory prayer—Oh! how they set the heart on fire.

94. The perfect love of God cannot subsist without the knowledge of God and of self.—D. N. ii. 18, 3.

95. Perfect love naturally seeks nothing, and claims nothing, for itself, but all for the beloved; if this be so with earthly love, how much more with the love of God?—S. C. xxxii.

96. The old friends of God scarcely ever fail Him, because they are raised above all occasions of failure.—S. C. xxv. 10.

97. True love accepts prosperity and adversity with an even spirit, that of joy and delight.—S. C. xi. 11.

98. The soul that labours to divest itself of all that is not God for God's sake is immediately enlightened, and transformed in, God, in such a way that the soul seems to be God Himself, and to possess the things of God.—A. ii. 5, 7.

99. Satan fears a soul united with God, as he fears God Himself.—S. C. xxiv. 5.

100. The soul, in the union of love, resists even the first impulses.—S. C. xxvii. 5.

101. Purity of heart is nothing less than the love and

grace of God. Hence our Lord says : Blessed are the pure in heart ; that is, those who love ; for blessedness is given to nothing less than love.—D. N. ii. 12, 1.

102. He who truly loves God is not ashamed before men of what he does for God ; neither does he hide his good works out of shame, though the whole world may condemn them.—S. C. xxix. 4.

103. He who truly loves God thinks it a great gain to lose all he has, and his own life, for God.

104. If the soul had but one glimpse of the beauty of God, not only would it desire to die that it might see Him for ever, but it would joyfully undergo a thousand most bitter deaths to see Him again, if only for a moment.—S. C. xi. 6.

105. He who acts out of the pure love of God, not only does not perform his actions to be seen of men, but does not do them even that God may know of them. Such an one, if he thought it possible that his good works might escape the eye of God, would still perform them with the same joy, and in the same pureness of love.—xviii.

106. It is a great matter to be much exercised in love : in order that the soul, made perfect and consummated therein, may not be long detained, either in this life or the next, from the vision of God.—L. F. i. 33.

107. A pure and perfect work, wrought for God in a pure heart, makes a perfect kingdom for its Lord.—xix.

108. To the pure in heart high things and low are profitable, and minister to their greater purity ; while to the impure, by reason of their impurity, both the one and the other are occasions of greater evil.—A. iii. 25, 4.

109. The pure in heart find in all things the knowledge

of God, sweet, chaste, pure, spiritual, joyous, and loving.  
—A. iii. 25, 4.

## PEACE.

110. By keeping guard over the senses, which are the gates of the soul, we keep also and increase its tranquillity and purity.—A. iii. 22, 3.

111. Man would never lose peace if he forgot and cast aside his thoughts and notions, and withdrew from the sight, hearing, and conversation of men, so far as he well may.—A. iii. 55.

112. If we forget all created things, there is then nothing to disturb our peace; nothing to excite the desires that disturb it; for, as the proverb says, What the eye hath not seen, the heart doth not desire.—A. iii. 4, 1.

113. The restless and perturbed soul, the passions and desires of which are not wholly mortified, is, as such, incapacitated for spiritual good, for that enters only into the soul which is under control and ordered in peace.—A. iii. 4, 3.

114. Be assured of this; God reigns only in the peaceful and unselfish soul.—lxi.

115. Be tranquil; put away superfluous thoughts, and make light of whatever may happen; so shall your service be pleasing unto God, and you shall rejoice in Him.—lx.

116. Keep your heart in peace; let nothing in this world disturb it: all things have an end.

117. Be not made sad by the adverse events of this life, for you know not the good they bring with them, ordained in the judgments of God, for the everlasting joy of the elect.—liv.

118. In all circumstances, however hard they may be, we should rejoice, rather than be cast down, that we may not lose the greatest good, the peace and tranquillity of our soul.—A. iii. 55.

119. If the whole world and all that is in it were thrown into confusion, disquietude on that account would be vanity, because that disquietude would do more harm than good.—A. iii. 5, 4.

120. To endure all things with an equable and peaceful mind, not only brings with it many blessings to the soul, but also enables us, in the midst of our difficulties, to have a clear judgment about them, and to minister the fitting remedy for them.—A. iii. 4, 4.

121. It is not the will of God that the soul should be troubled by anything, or that it should be afflicted; for if men are afflicted because of the adversities of this world, that is the effect of their being weak in virtue; for the soul of the perfect rejoices in that which gives pain to the soul of the imperfect.—xlvi.

122. The heavens are stedfast, not subject to generation; and souls which are of a heavenly nature are stedfast, not subject to the generation of desires, nor of anything of that kind: they are in some measure like unto God, Who never changes.—lxxxvii.

#### LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR.

123. Wisdom enters by love, silence, and mortification. It is great wisdom to know when to be silent, when to suffer, and never to regard the sayings, doings, or lives of others.

124. See that you do not intermeddle in the affairs of other people, nor discuss them in your own thoughts ; for perhaps you will not be able to fulfil your own task.—li.

125. Suspect no evil of your brother, for that takes away purity of heart.—xlv.

126. Never listen to accounts of the frailties of others ; and if anyone should complain to you of another, humbly ask him not to speak about him at all.

127. Do not shrink from trouble : though it may seem to you more than you can bear. Let all men find you compassionate.

128. No one merits love except for the virtue that he has ; and when love is so ordered, it is according to God, and in great freedom.—A. iii. 22, 1.

129. When the love and affection we give to the creature is purely spiritual and founded on God, the love of God grows with it ; and the more we remember the earthly love, the more we also remember God and desire Him : the one grows apace with the other.—D. N. i. 4, 8.

130. When the love of the creature springs from sensual vice, or from a purely natural inclination, in proportion to its growth is the diminution of the love of God and forgetfulness of Him ; and from the recollection of the creature, remorse of conscience comes.—D. N. i. 4, 8.

131. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit, saith our Saviour in His Gospel. So the love which grows out of sensuality ends in sensuality ; that which is of the spirit ends in the spirit of God, and makes it grow. This is the difference between these two loves, that men may distinguish between them.—D. N. i. 4, 9.



## V.

## DISORDERLY APPETITES.

132. He who loves any creature out of the order of charity becomes vile as that creature itself, and in one sense even viler ; for love not only levels but subjects also the lover to the object of his love.—A. i. 4, 2.

133. The passions and desires, when under control and restrained, are sources of all virtue, and also, when they have broken loose, of all the vices and imperfections of the soul.—A. iii. 15, 5.

134. Every desire hurts the soul in five ways, beside robbing it of the Spirit of God : 1. It fatigues it. 2. Torments it. 3. Blinds it. 4. Defiles it. 5. Weakens it.—A. i. 6, 3 ; cxxxiv.

135. All created things are crumbs which fall from the table of God ; and for that reason, they who go about feeding on the creature are rightly called dogs ; they are, therefore, always hungry like dogs, and justly so, because crumbs excite, rather than appease, hunger.—A. i. 6, 2.

136. The desires are like restless and dissatisfied children begging of their mother, now one thing, now another, never contented ; like one ill of a burning fever, never at rest, and whose thirst increases while the fever continues.—A. i. 7, 3.

137. As a man dragging a cart up hill, so is that soul on its way to God, which does not throw aside the cares of this life, and does not deny itself.—xlvi.

138. As he is tormented who falls into the hands of his enemies, so is the soul afflicted and tormented which is carried away by its desires.—A i. 7, 1.

139. As a man is tormented and afflicted who lies down naked amid thorns and briars, so is the soul tormented and afflicted which lies down in the midst of its desires: they pierce, torture, and tear it painfully.—A. i. 7, 1.

140. As vapours darken the air and hide the light of the sun, so the soul, captive to its desires, is, as to the understanding, in darkness, so that neither the sun of natural reason nor that of the supernatural wisdom of God can reach it or enlighten it.—A. i., viii. 1.

141. He who feeds his desires is like a moth, or a fish dazzled by the light which the fishermen throw over the water, that it may not see the ruin which the fishermen have prepared for it.—A. i. 8, 3.

142. Who can tell how impossible it is for the soul, subject to desires, to judge of the things of God? for while the film of desire is over the eye of its judgment, it sees nothing but that film, now of one colour, now of another; and so it comes to regard the things of God as not the things of God, and those which are not the things of God as the things of God.—L. F. iii. 84.

143. A bird that has perched upon a twig covered with birdlime labours in a twofold way, in setting itself free, and in cleaning itself; so a soul, that has given way to desires; it has to set itself free in the first place, and then to clean itself of that which has clung to it.

144. As soot defiles the most beautiful and perfect face, so the unruly desires of the soul defile and pollute that soul which entertains them, and yet that soul in itself is the most beautiful and perfect image of God.—A. i. 9, 1.

145. He that toucheth pitch, saith the Holy Ghost, shall be defiled with it.\* A soul touches pitch when it satisfies the desires of the will in any created thing.—

A. i. 9, 1.

146. If my object were to describe the foul and corrupt condition to which the desires reduce the soul, I should not be able to find anything so full of cobwebs and worms, not even corruption itself wherewith to compare it.—A. i. 9, 3.

147. The desires are like the suckers which grow on a tree, they sap its strength and destroy its fertility.—

A. i. 10, 2.

148. There are corrupt humours which so weaken a man's gait, and make him loathe his food, as the desire of the creature weakens the soul, indisposing it for the practice of virtue.—A. i. 10, 4.

149. Many souls have no inclination for virtue, because their desires are not pure, and not for God.

150. As the young vipers, growing in the womb, feed on their mother and kill her, preserving their own lives at the cost of hers, so the unmortified desires prey on the soul and kill in it the life of God; they at last are the only things that live in it, because the soul has not killed them first.—A. i. 10, 3.

151. As it is necessary to till the earth that it may bring forth fruit—for otherwise it will produce nothing but weeds,—so also is it necessary to mortify our desires, that the soul may be clean.—A. i. 8, 4.

152. As wood is never transformed into fire if but one degree of heat necessary for that end be wanting, so the

\* Eccles. xiii. 1.

soul that has one imperfection can never be perfectly transformed in God.—A. i. 11, 9.

153. Whether it be a strong wire rope, or a slender and delicate thread, that holds the bird, it matters not if it really detains it, for, until the cord be broken, the bird cannot fly; so the soul, held in the bonds of human affections, however slight they may be, cannot, while they last, make its way to God.—xxii.

154. The desires and attachments of the soul have the property attributed to the remora, which, though it be but a very little fish, yet it arrests the progress of the ship to which it clings.—A. i. 11, 6.

155. O that spiritual men knew how they are losing the blessings and fulness of the Spirit, merely because they will not raise up their desires above trifles! and how they might have the sweetness of all things in the pure food of the Spirit—of which the manna was a figure—if they would only abstain from tasting other food!—A. i. 5, 4.

156. The children of Israel did not find in the manna all the sweetness and strength they might have found in it; not because the manna did not contain them, but because they longed for other meat.—A. i. 5, 4.

157. Of one spark cometh a great fire, and one imperfection is enough to beget others. We shall never see a soul negligent in resisting but one single desire, which has not many other desires, springing out of that weakness and imperfection from which the first proceeds.—A. i. 11, 8.

158. Voluntary and perfectly deliberate desires, however slight they may be, if only habitual, are those which chiefly hinder our progress to perfection.—A. i. 11, 4.

159. Any imperfection to which the soul is attached and accustomed, is a greater injury to virtue than a daily fall into many other and even greater imperfections, provided they do not result from the habitual indulgence of an evil inclination.—A. i. 11, 5.

160. God is justly angry with certain souls whom He, by His mighty arm, has delivered from the world, and from the occasions of grievous sins, but who are weak and negligent in mortifying certain imperfections; for this He permits them to fall through their desires from bad to worse.—A. i. 11, 10.

## VI.

## PRUDENCE.

161. Give heed to reason, that you may perform that which it dictates to you in the way of God: and it will serve you more than all good works heedlessly done, and all the spiritual sweetness you aim at—xxxviii.

162. Blessed is he who, setting his own tastes and inclinations aside, looks at things according to reason and justice, in order to accomplish them.—xxxix.

163. He who acts according to reason is as one who eats strong and substantial food; but he who in his works seeks the satisfaction of his own will, is as one who eats poor and unripe fruit.—xl.

164. No creature may transgress the limits which God has set for it in the order of its nature: and as He has appointed for man's governance certain natural and rational laws, the transgression thereof, by seeking knowledge in a supernatural way, is neither holy nor

becoming : moreover, God is displeased ; and if at any time He vouchsafes an answer, it is out of condescension to the soul's weakness.—A. ii. 21, 1.

165. Man knows not how to order his joy and grief reasonably and prudently, because he knows not the distance between good and evil —liii.

166. We know not how to distinguish between our right hand and our left : for at every step we take evil for good and good for evil, and if this be as it were natural to us, what must it be if desire be added to our natural blindness ?—A. i. 8, 6.

167. The desire, as desire, is blind, because in itself it regards not reason, which is that which ever guides and directs the soul aright in its operations : so the soul, whenever it is guided by its desires, is blind.—A. i. 8, 2.

#### THE ANGELS.

168. The angels are our shepherds, because they carry not only our message to God, but also those of God to our souls, feeding them with sweet inspirations and divine communications : as good shepherds they protect us, and defend us from the wolves, which are the evil spirits.—S. C. ii. 4.

169. Through the secret inspirations which the angels convey to the soul, they effect a deeper knowledge of God, and make it love Him the more, till they leave it wounded with love.—S. C. vii. 8.

170. The divine wisdom which in heaven illumines the angels, and cleanses them of their ignorances, is the same which illumines men upon earth, and cleanses them of



their errors and imperfections ; it flows from God through the first orders of the hierarchies down to the lowest, and thence to men.—D. N. ii. 12, 3.

171. The light of God, which illumines an angel, enlightening and setting him on fire with love, as pure spirit disposed for that inflowing, illumines man ordinarily in darkness, pain, and distress, because of his impurity and weakness : so is the sun to a weak eye ; the light it gives is painful.—D. N. ii. 12, 4.

172. When man has become spiritualised and refined in the fire of divine love which purifies him, he is then within the union and inflowing of the loving illumination with the sweetness with which an angel receives them. There are souls who in this life receive a more perfect illumination than the angels.—D. N. ii. 12, 4.

173. When God gives great graces to a soul through the hands of an angel, He ordinarily allows the devil to know it, that he may assail that soul with all his might, according to the measure of justice, in order that the victory may be the more prized, and the soul, faithful in temptation, may be the more abundantly rewarded.—D. N. ii. 23, 7.

174. Remember that your guardian angel does not always move the will to act, though he always enlightens the reason ; therefore do not promise yourself sensible sweetness always in your works, because reason and understanding are sufficient.—xxx1.

175. When the desires of man are occupied with anything that is not God, they embarrass the soul and shut the door against the light by which the angel moves it to virtue.—xxxii.

176. Consider what utter vanity it is to rejoice in anything but in the service of God, how dangerous and how fatal; how ruinous it proved to the angels who rejoiced and had complacency in their own beauty and their natural endowments; for this they fell deformed into the abyss.—A. iii. 21, 11.

## A SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR.

177. A soul without a director is like a kindled coal, which, left by itself, cools instead of burning.—A. ii. 22, 9, vi.

178. He who insists on being left to himself, without a director to guide him, is like an unowned tree by the wayside; however fruitful it may be, the travellers pick its fruit, and none of it ripens.—v.

179. The tree that is cultivated and kept carefully by its owner produces fruit in due season, and the owner is not disappointed.—v.

180. He who falls alone remains alone in his fall; he makes little account of his soul, because he trusts in himself alone.—vii.

181. He who is carrying a burden when he falls, rises with difficulty under his burden.—lx.

182. He who falls, being blind, cannot rise, being blind and alone; and if he should rise by himself, he will walk in a direction that is not good for him.—ix.

183. If you are not afraid to fall by yourself, how can you venture to raise yourself alone? Remember that two are better than one.—viii.

184. Our Lord did not say in His gospel, where one is by himself there am I, but where there are at the least

two: this is to show us that no one should believe of himself, or confirm himself in, the things which he thinks are those of God, without the counsel and direction of the Church and her ministers. — A. ii. 22, 9.

185. Woe to him that is alone, saith the Holy Ghost ; and therefore the soul has need of a director, for both will resist the devil more easily, being both together to learn and practise the truth.—A. ii. 22, 10.

186. It is the will of God that the government of one man should be in the hands of another, and that we should not give perfect credit to those matters which He communicates supernaturally Himself, until they shall have passed through the human channel of another man's mouth.—A. ii. 22, 6, vii.

187. When God makes a particular revelation to a soul, he also inclines that soul to make it known to the minister of His Church, who stands in His place.—A. ii. 22, 6.

188. It is not every one who is fitted for the direction of souls ; it being a matter of the last importance to give right or wrong advice in so serious a matter as that.—A. ii. 30, 4.

189. Let the soul that would advance, and not go back, take care into whose hands it commits itself ; for, as the master, so the scholar, and as the father, so the child.—L. F. iii. 31.

190. The inclinations and tastes of the director are easily impressed upon the penitent.—A. ii. 18, 6.

191. The chief solicitude of spiritual directors should be to mortify every desire of their penitents : to make them deny themselves in all they desire, so as to deliver them from so great misery.—A. i. 12, 6.

192. However high the doctrine, adorned the eloquence, sublime the style, the fruits of the sermon will be, in general, no better than the spirit of the preacher.—  
A. iii. 44, 2

193. A good style and action, high doctrines and correct expression, have a greater effect when accompanied by true spirituality ; but without that the will is scarcely or but little inflamed, though the senses may be charmed and the understanding delighted.— A. iii. 44, 4.

194. God is angry with those who teach His law and keep it not ; and who preach spirituality to others without being spiritual themselves.—A. iii. 44, 3.

195. For the highest parts, and even for the ordinary parts, of the way of perfection, you will scarcely find one capable guide throughout, such as men have need of: such an one must be wise, discreet, and experienced.—  
L. F. iii. 31.

196. For though the foundations of direction be knowledge and discretion, yet if directors be without experience, they will never be able to guide the soul in the way in which God is leading it ; they will make it go backwards, ordering it after low methods which they pick up in books.—  
—L. F. iii. 81.

197. He who shall presumptuously err in the direction of souls, being under obligation to give good counsel—as everyone is in the office he undertakes—shall not escape punishment according to the evil he has done ; for the work of God—and such is the direction of souls—demands great caution and counsel.—L. F. iii. 61.

198. Who can be like St. Paul, who was all things to all, that he might save all ? knowing all the ways by which

God leads souls, which are so different one from another, that you can scarcely find one which in half its ways agrees with the ways of another.—L. F. iii. 63.

#### RELIGION, PRAYER.

199. The greatest honour we can render unto God, is to serve Him in evangelical perfection : and whatever is beside this is of no value or advantage to man.—A. iii. 16, 2.

200. One thought of man is of more value than the whole world ; God alone is, for that reason, the worthy object of it, and to Him alone is it due ; every thought of man, therefore, which is not given to God, is a robbery.

201. In all nature there are correspondences ; insensible things correspond with those that are insensible ; sense with things sensible ; and man's thought's with the Spirit of God.—xxx.

#### NECESSITY OF PRAYER.

202. Never let your heart waste its affections, not even for a moment.

203. The soul cannot overcome the devil without prayer, nor penetrate his devices without humility and mortification : for the weapons of God are prayer and the Cross of Christ.—S. C. iii. 12.

204. In all our necessities, trials, and afflictions, there is no better nor safer remedy than prayer, and hope that God will provide for us in His own way.—A. ii. 21, 5.

#### FRUITS OF PRAYER.

205. Let God be the Bridegroom and the beloved of your soul ; remain always in His presence, and so you shall

avoid sin, learn to love Him, and all things will prosper with you.—lvii.

206. Enter into your innermost heart, and labour in the presence of God, the Bridegroom of the soul, Who is ever present doing you good.—lxxix.

207. Strive to be continually in the presence of God, and to preserve the purity which He teaches.

208. By prayer aridity is expelled, devotion increased, and the interior practice of virtue is established in the soul.—S. C. xvii. 1.

209. By shutting the eyes to the defects of others, keeping silence, and conversing continually with God, great imperfections are rooted out of your soul, which thereby becomes possessed of great virtues.—xciv.

210. When prayer is made in the pure and simple understanding of God, it seems to the soul to have lasted but a moment, though in fact it occupied much time: this is that prayer of a moment, of which it is said that it pierces the clouds.—A. ii. 14, 10.

#### THE PROPERTIES OF PRAYER.

211. The powers and senses of the soul should not be employed altogether upon anything unless it be a matter which cannot be neglected; for the rest, they should be unoccupied for God.—xcii.

212. Wait lovingly upon God, without any desire to feel or understand anything in particular of Him.

213. Strive to attain to that state in which nothing is of importance to you, and you of importance to none, so that being utterly forgotten you may be with God in secret —lxxx.



214. He who will not allow his desires to carry him away will wing his flight like a bird whose wings are strong.—xxi.

215. Do not nourish your soul upon anything else but on God: repel the remembrance of things, let peace and recollection fill your heart.

216. If you would attain to holy recollection, it must be by rejecting, and not by admitting.

217. Seek by reading and you will find by meditating; cry in prayer and the door will be opened in contemplation.

218. True devotion and spirituality consist in perseverance in prayer, with patience and humility, distrusting yourself that you may please God only.—D. N. i. 5, 7.

219. They call upon God in truth who pray for that which is most true: namely, that which belongs to their eternal salvation.—A. iii 43, 2.

220. There is no better way to obtain the desires of our heart than to pray with all our might for that which is most pleasing unto God; for then He will grant us not only our salvation, which we pray for, but also that which He sees expedient for us, though we may never ask for it, and though it may have never entered into our hearts to do so.

221. Let every soul understand that, although God may not succour it in its necessities when it cries, He will not however fail it when the time comes; provided it does not lose heart and cease from prayer.

#### MOTIVES FOR PRAYER.

222. When the will, the moment it feels any joy in sensible things, rises upwards in that joy to God, and

when sensible things move it to pray, it should not reject them, it may and should make use of them for so holy an exercise; because sensible things, under these conditions, subserve the end for which God created them: namely, to be occasions of making Him better known and loved.—A. iii. 23, 3.

223. He whose senses are subject to the Spirit, purged from all sensible objects, even in his first movements, elicits delight in the sweet knowledge and contemplation of God.—A. iii. 25, 3.

224. As it is a truth of sound philosophy that the life of every creature is in harmony with its constitution, so is it clear beyond all contradiction, that he whose life is spiritual—the animal life being mortified—must be wholly tending towards God.—A. iii. 25, 4.

225. The will of a devout person rests chiefly on the invisible; he requires but few images for his use, and these are such as are more conformable to divine, than to human, taste; ordering himself herein after the ways of the other world, and not of this.—A. iii. 37, 6.

226. The chief thing to be regarded in images is devotion and faith; if these be absent, the image will not be sufficient. What a perfect living image our Lord was upon earth, and yet those who had no faith, though they were about Him, and saw His wonderful works, were none the better.—A. iii. 35, 2.

#### PLACE FOR PRAYER.

227. Keep yourself apart for one thing only, that which brings everything with it; solitude, accompanied by prayer and spiritual reading: and there abide,

forgetting all things, if there be no obligation upon you to remember them. You will please God more by keeping watch over, and perfecting, yourself, than if you gained everything : for what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, if he loses his own soul ?

228. Pure spirituality gives no heed to matters which do not concern it, or to human respect ; but alone and apart from all created forms, communicates interiorly in sweet tranquillity with God ; for the knowledge of Him lies in a divine silence.—xxvi.

229. For the purposes of prayer that place is to be chosen in which sense and spirit may be least hindered from rising upwards unto God—A. iii. 38, 1.

230. The place of prayer must not be pleasant and delectable to the senses—some people seek such a place—lest the issue should be recreation of sense, and not recollection of spirit.—A. iii. 38, 2.

231. He who goes on a pilgrimage will do well to do so when others do not, though it be at an unusual season. When pilgrims are many, I would advise staying at home, for in general men return more dissipated than they were before they went. They who become pilgrims for recreation, rather than devotion, are many in number.—A. iii. 35, 2.

#### HINDRANCES TO PRAYER.

232. He who interrupts the course of his spiritual exercises and prayer, is like a man who allows a bird to escape from his hand ; he can hardly catch it again.—xxviii.

233. God being, as He is, inaccessible, do not rest on

the consideration of objects perceptible by sense, and comprehended by the understanding. This is to be satisfied with what is less than God ; so doing you will destroy that energy of the soul which is necessary for walking with Him.—xlv.

234. Never admit into your soul that which is not substantially spiritual ; for if you do so you will lose the sweetness of devotion and recollection.—lxxvii.

235. He who relies much on sense will never be very spiritual ; they deceive themselves who think they can, in the sheer strength of our grovelling senses, attain to the power of the spirit.—L. F. ii. 14.

236. The imperfect destroy true devotion, because they seek sensible sweetness in prayer.—D. N. i. 6, 7.

237. The fly that touches the honey cannot fly ; so the soul that clings to spiritual sweetness ruins its freedom and hinders contemplation.—xxiii.

238. He who will not dispose himself to pray in every place, but only there where his own taste is gratified, will frequently fail in his prayer ; because, as they say, he can pray only in his own parish.—A. iii. 40, 2.

239. He who is not conscious of liberty of spirit amid the things of sense and sweetness, which should serve as motives to prayer, and whose will rests and feeds upon them, ought to abstain from the use of them, for to him they are a hindrance on the road to God.—A. iii. 23, 5.

240. It is very foolish, when spiritual sweetness and delight fail, to imagine that God has failed us also ; and to imagine, that because we have such sweetness, that we have God also.—Lett. x.

241. Very often many spiritual persons employ their

senses upon sensible things, under the pretext of giving themselves to prayer, and raising their hearts to God; now this that they do should be called recreation rather than prayer; pleasing themselves rather than God.—A. iii. 23, 2.

242. Meditation tends to contemplation, as means to an end. So when the end is attained, the means are laid aside; men rest at the end of their journey; thus, when the state of contemplation has been attained, meditation must cease.

243. As it is necessary, at the proper time, to give up the work of reflection and meditation in order to draw near unto God, lest it should prove an impediment, so also is it necessary not to give it up before the time lest we should go back.—A. ii. 13, 1.

244. There are three signs of contemplation and interior recollection of the soul: 1. When the soul takes no pleasure in transitory things. 2. When it seeks solitude and silence, striving after that which is the more perfect. 3. When meditation, which was once a help, proves a hindrance. These three signs must be found together.—A. ii. 13, 4, xciii.

245. In the beginning of the state of contemplation the loving knowledge of God is, as it were, imperceptible: in the first place, because it is most subtile and delicate, and, as it were, imperceptible; in the second place, because the soul has been accustomed to the practice of meditation, which is more cognisable by the senses.—A. ii. 13, 5.

246. The more the soul is disposed for tranquillity, the more will the loving knowledge of contemplation grow;

the soul will feel it and relish it more than all other things whatever ; because it brings with it peace and rest, sweetness and delight, without trouble.—A. ii. 13, 6.

247. They who have entered the state of contemplation, must not for that reason suppose that they are never to make a meditation any more ; for in the beginning the habit of it is not so established that they can have it whenever they will ; neither are they so far removed from meditation as to be unable to meditate as they were accustomed to do.—A. ii. 15, 1.

248. Except in the act of contemplation, in all exercises and good works, the soul must make use of memory and good meditations in such a way as to increase devotion and profit, particularly dwelling on the life, passion, and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, in order that its works, exercises, and life may be conformed to His.—A. ii. 32, 7.

249. The conditions of the ‘ solitary sparrow ’ are five :  
1. It ascends as high as it can. 2. It admits none to be its companion, even of its own kind. 3. It faces the wind. 4. It has no definite colour. 5. It sings sweetly. The contemplative soul should be like it ; it must rise high above transitory things, making no more account of them than if they never existed ; it must be so enamoured of solitude and silence as to suffer no creature to be in its company ; it must face the wind of the Holy Ghost, corresponding to His inspirations, that so doing, it may become more worthy of His company ; it must have no definite colour, bent upon nothing but on doing the will of God ; it must sing sweetly in the contemplation and love of God.—S. C. xv. 4.



250. Though occasionally, in the height of contemplation and simple view of the divinity, the soul may not remember the most sacred humanity of Christ, because God elevates the spirit to knowledge, the most supernatural, yet studiously to forget it is in nowise seemly, seeing that by the contemplation thereof, and loving meditation thereon, the soul will ascend to the highest state of union; for Christ our Lord is the truth, the gate, the way, and the guide to all good.—A. iii. 1, 13.

## VII.

## OBEDIENCE.

251. The way of life demands little trouble and care, it demands denial of the will rather than much knowledge; he who inclines to pleasure and sweetness will be the less able to travel on it.—xlvi.

252. He who does not walk in the way of his own pleasure, nor in that of the pleasures which come from God, nor in that of those which come from creatures, and never does his own will, he shall never stumble.—Lett. xiv.

253. Though you may undertake great things, yet, if you will not learn to deny your own will and to be obedient, casting away all anxiety about yourself and your own affairs, you will make no progress in the way of perfection.—lxii.

254. Let others teach you, let others order you, let others rule over you, and you will become perfect.

255. God is more pleased with that soul which, in spiritual aridity and trouble, is subject and obedient, than

with that which, without obedience performs all its duties in great spiritual sweetness.—xvi.

256. God would rather have from you the lowest degree of obedience and subjection, than all those services you attempt to render Him.—xii.

257. Subjection and obedience is the penance of reason and discretion; and therefore a more pleasing and acceptable sacrifice in the eyes of God than all other bodily penances.—D. N. i. 6, 2.

258. Bodily penance, without obedience, is a most imperfect thing; beginners practise it out of a desire for it, and for the pleasure they find in it, and therefore, because they herein do their own will, grow in vice, rather than in virtue.—D. N. i. 6.

259. Inasmuch as a double bitterness results from fulfilling one's own will; do not fulfil it, although it may be bitterness to remain quiet.—D. N. i. 6, 2.

260. The devil prevails with ease over those who are alone, and who in the things of God order themselves according to their own will.—A. ii. 22, 16.

### VIII.

#### FORTITUDE, PATIENCE.

261. It is better when burdened to be with the strong, than unburdened with the weak. When you are loaded with afflictions you are with God, Who is your strength, and he is with the afflicted. When you are unburdened you are by yourself, who are weakness itself, for the virtue and fortitude of the soul grow and are made strong in tribulations.—iv.

262. Your flesh is weak, and no worldly thing can strengthen or comfort your spirit; that which is born of the world is worldly, and that which is born of flesh is flesh: a good spirit is born only of the Spirit of God, and is communicated neither through the world nor the flesh.—xxxvii.

263. The most delicate flower is the first to wither, and to lose its fragrance: therefore take care you do not walk in the way of spiritual sweetness, for you will never be firm. Choose rather a strong spirit, attached to nothing, and you will find sweetness and abundance of peace. Savoury, sweet, and lasting fruit is gathered only in a dry and cold soil.—xxxvi.

264. Though the road be plain and pleasant for men of good will, he who travels on it will travel little, and that with difficulty, if not possessed of courage, strength, and resolution.

265. Feed not in forbidden pastures, which are those of this life: the blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled.—lxxxviii.

266. Verily he has overcome all things in whom pleasure in them excites no joy, and the bitterness of them no sadness.—xlii.

267. By fortitude the soul labours, practices virtue, and overcomes vice.—S. P. xxii. 8.

268. Let your heart be strong against everything that may draw you to that which is not God, and be at home in the sufferings of Christ.

269. Rejoice in God always, for He is your salvation, and consider how blessed it is to suffer whatever may come from Him who is the true good.—lxx.

270. If you incline to aridities and suffering for the love of God, He will esteem that in you of more value than all the spiritual visions, meditations, and consolations you may ever have.

271. Never, for good or for evil, suffer your heart to be otherwise than calm in the affections of love; that you may endure whatever may befall you.—Lett. iii.

272. We are not to measure our trials by ourselves, but ourselves by our trials.—lxxxiv.

273. If souls knew how much suffering and mortification help to the attainment of great blessings, they would never seek for consolation anywhere.—L. F. ii. 30.

274. If a soul has more patience under suffering, a greater endurance in the absence of sweetness, that is a sign of greater progress in virtue.—D. N. ii. 16, 9.

275. The way of suffering is more secure and also more profitable than that of joy and action. In suffering, the strength of God is given to the soul, while in joy and action it has to do with its own weakness and imperfections: in suffering also virtues are acquired and practised; the soul is purified, and is rendered more prudent and cautious.—L. F. ii. 16, 10.

276. The soul that is tried and proved in temptations and afflictions can never attain unto wisdom, as it is written in the book Ecclesiasticus: 'What doth he know that hath not been tried?'\*—D. N. i. 14, 5.

277. The most perfect suffering brings with it the most perfect understanding.—S. C. xxxvi.

\* Eccles. xxxiv. 9.

## IX.

## MODESTY.

278. The soul, by refraining from joy in the objects of sense, recovers itself from the distractions into which it has fallen through the excessive indulgence of the senses, and recollects itself in God : spirituality and the virtues it has acquired are also preserved and increased.—A. iii. 25, 1.

279. As the man who seeks pleasure in the things of sense, and rejoices in them, ought not, and deserves not, to be called by any other name than sensual, animal, and earthly, so he whose joy is beyond and above these things, merits the name of spiritual, heavenly, and divine.—A. iii. 25, 2.

280. If you will deny yourself one joy in the things of sense, our Lord will repay you a hundred-fold in this life spiritually and temporally ; and for one joy indulged in the things of sense, you shall have a hundred sorrows and afflictions.—A. iii. 25, 3.

281. All the functions and powers of his senses, who no longer lives after the flesh, are directed to divine contemplation.—A. iii. 25, 4.

282. Though the goods of sense may deserve to be somewhat rejoiced in when they help a man to raise his thoughts to God, yet this is so uncertain that in general they do a man more harm than good.—A. iii. 26, 1.

283. Until a man shall have so habituated his senses to the purgation from sensible joy, that all things raise him up to God, he must refrain from all joy in them, in order that he may wean his soul from the life of sense.—A. iii. 25, 5.

## SILENCE.

284. The Father uttered one Word ; that Word is His Son : and He utters Him for ever in everlasting silence, and in silence the soul has to hear It.—lxxxiii.

285. That which we most require for our spiritual growth is the silence of the desire and of the tongue before God, Who is so high : the language He most listens to is that of silent love.—lxv.

286. Speak little : and do not meddle in matters when you are not desired to do so.

287. Never listen to accounts of the frailties of others ; and if anyone should complain to you of another, humbly ask him not to speak about him at all.

288. Complain of no one : ask for nothing, but if it should be necessary to ask, do so in few words.

289. Abstain from contradiction : on no account let your words be other than pure.

290. Let your words be offensive to none ; and about matters that will cause you no trouble if everybody knew of them.

291. Preserve your spirit in peace, lovingly attentive to God : and when you must speak, do so calmly and peaceably.—lxviii.

292. Be silent about what God may say to you, remembering the words of Scripture : ‘ My secret to me.’\*

293. Never forget that of every word uttered without the direction of obedience, God will require a strict account.—lxxiii.

294. Intercourse with people beyond what is strictly

\* Is. xxiv. 16.



necessary, and required by reason, has never been good for any man, however holy he may have been.—Lett. iii.

295. It is impossible to make progress otherwise than by doing and suffering everything in silence.—Lett. iii.

296. For growth in virtue, the important thing is to be silent, and to work : conversation distracts, silence and work bring recollection.—Lett. iii.

297. The moment a person understands what is told him for his good, there is no necessity for him to ask for further direction, nor to speak about it, but to act upon it sincerely in silence, carefully, in humility, charity, and contempt of self.—Lett. iii.

298. I have understood that the soul which is ready for talking and the commerce of the world is but little attentive to God : for if it were otherwise, it would withdraw itself at once into silence within, and avoid all conversation whatever.—Lett. iii.

299. It is the will of God that the soul should delight in Him, rather than in any created thing, however useful or necessary it may be to it.—Lett. iii.

## X.

### HUMILITY.

300. The first thing the soul must have in order to attain to the knowledge of God is the knowledge of itself.—S. C. iv. 1.

301. God is more pleased with certain actions, however few they may be, done in silence and in secret, and without any desire that men might see them, than with a thousand grand actions undertaken with the intention of their being seen by men.—xvii.

302. The secrecy of conscience is broken when a man reveals to others the good estate it is in, receiving for his reward the praise of men.—lxiv.

303. The Wise Spirit of God Who dwells in humble souls inclines them to keep His treasures in secret, and to cast out what is amiss.

304. Perfection consists not in those virtues which everyone recognises in himself, but in those which God approves of. And as His approval is hidden from the eyes of men, no one has any reason to presume, and everyone many, to make him afraid.—xc.

305. God, when He loves a soul, regards not its greatness, but rather the greatness of its contempt of self and its humility.—lxxxvi.

306. What you most seek, and most anxiously desire, you will never find if you seek it for yourself, not even in the most profound contemplation; but only in deep humility and submission of heart.—xxxiii.

307. If you will glory in yourself, cast away everything not you own: what remains will be nothing, and it is nothing you should glory in.

308. Do not despise others because, as it seems to you, they do not possess the virtues you thought they had: they may be pleasing to God for other reasons which you cannot discover.—lii.

309. Never excuse yourself: listen calmly to the reprimand and consider it to come from God.

310. Look upon it as a special mercy of God, that people ever speak kindly to you: you do not deserve it.

311. Make neither much nor little of him who may be against you, and strive always to please God. Pray that

His will may be done, and love Him much, for it is His due.

312. Love to be unknown to yourself and others: never regard the good nor the evil of others.

313. Never forget the life to come. Consider how many in heaven are great, and in great glory, who in their own eyes were of no account, humble and poor.— lxix.

314. In order to mortify truly the desire of honour from which so many other desires proceed, you will do those things which will bring you into contempt, and you will wish others to despise you: you will speak disparagingly of yourself and you will contrive that others do so: you will think humbly and contemptuously of yourself, and you will wish others to do so also.— A. i. 13, 8.

315. Humility and submission to your spiritual director, disclosing to him all that passes in your intercourse with God, will bring light, rest, contentment, and security.—A. ii. 22, 15.

316. Virtue consists not in what you have learned, and feel about God, however great that may be, nor in any personal experiences of this kind, but, on the contrary, in that which is not matter of feeling at all, in great humility, contempt of self, and of all that belongs to you profoundly rooted in the soul.—A. iii. 8, 3.

317. All visions, revelations, and impressions of heaven, however much the spiritual man may esteem them, are not equal in worth to the least act of humility: for this brings forth the fruits of charity, which never esteems nor thinks well of self, but only of others.—A. iii. 8, 4.

318. The communications which come really from God

have this property, that they humble and exalt the soul at the same time, for in the way of the Spirit to descend is to ascend, and to ascend is to descend.—D. N. ii. 18.

319. When God communicates His gifts and graces to the soul, He excites in it a repugnance to accept honours and distinctions, but in the way of humility and self-abasement, He gives it ease and readiness.—A. ii. 30, 2.

320. God hates to see men ready to accept dignities, even when it is His will that they should accept them, but it is not His will that they should do so eagerly and promptly.—A. ii. 30, 3.

321. When the devil speaks, he makes men ready and eager to accept dignities, but he makes them reject humiliations and self-abasement.—A. ii. 30, 3.

#### VANITY.

322. He who loves superiorities and dignities, or the indulgence of his desires, stands before God, not as a son who is free, but as one of mean condition, and slave of his passions.—A. i. 4, 7.

323. The soul that is not humble, the devil most easily deludes, and makes it believe a thousand lies.—A. ii. 26, 16.

324. There are many Christians in our day who have certain virtues, and who do great things, but all of no use to them in the matter of everlasting life, because in them they do not seek that honour and glory which belongs to God alone, but rather the empty satisfaction of their own will.—A. iii. 26, 5.

325. Empty joy in our good works is always attended by a great esteem of them; out of this comes boasting,

and other faults such as we see in the Pharisee in the gospel.—A. iii. 27, 3.

326. Such is the misery of the children of men, that so far as I can see, the greater part of their good works done in public are either sinful or worthless; or imperfect and defective in the sight of God, because men will not detach themselves from self-interest and from human respect.—A. iii. 27, 5.

327. O souls created for, and called unto, a dignity so great! what are you doing, what is it that detains you? O miserable blindness of the children of Adam, who in a light so great are blind, and to such an invitation deaf! While they seek after greatness and honour they are themselves miserable and base, and of such blessings unworthy.—S. C. 8.

## XI.

### VOLUNTARY POVERTY.

328. If rejoicing in riches can be made in any way endurable, it is when men spend and use them in the service of God; there is no other way of making them profitable: the same principle applies to all other temporal goods, titles, rank and office.—A. iii. 17, 3.

329. The spiritual man must be very careful of the beginnings of joy in temporal things, lest from little it should become great, increasing step by step; out of slight beginnings great evils result. One spark is enough to set a mountain on fire.—A. iii. 19, 1.

330. However small an attachment may be, be not too confident that you can cut it off at any time; cut it

off at once: for if you have not the courage to destroy it when it is but beginning, how can you presume upon success when it has taken root and grown?—A. iii. 19, 1.

331. He who turns aside from what is little, will not stumble over what is large. Little matters cause great evils, because the fences and walls of the heart are broken down when they enter in; for the proverb says: he who has begun his work has accomplished the half of it.—A. iii. 19, 2.

332. Joy darkens the judgment as a cloud, for there can be no rejoicing in created things without the attachment of the will. The negation and purgation of this joy leaves the judgment clear as the sky when the mist has been scattered.—A. iii. 19, 3.

333. He who is detached is not molested when he prays, nor at any other time, and so without wasting his time he gains with ease great spiritual treasures.—A. iii. 19, 4.

#### AVARICE.

334. Although temporal goods are not, in themselves, necessarily, occasions of sin, yet ordinarily, by reason of our frailty, the heart of man sets its affections upon them, and falls away from God, which is sin: for this reason the wise man saith: the rich shall not be free from sin.—A. iii. 17, 1.

335. The things of this world neither occupy nor injure the soul; it is not they that enter into it, but rather the will, and the desire of them, which dwell within it.—A. i. 3, 4.

336. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the gospel, calls riches



thorns, giving us to understand that he who sets his will upon them shall be wounded by sin.—A. iii. 17, 2.

337. It is vanity to desire to have children, as some do, who weary the world with their fretting for them: they know not if their children will be good, and servants of God: neither do they know whether the pleasure they expect from them may not be turned into disquietude, pain, and trouble.—A. iii. 17, 4.

338. The covetous man runs to and fro within the limits of the chain by which his heart is bound, and with all his efforts can scarcely set himself free, even for a moment, from the bondage of his thoughts on which his heart is set.—A. iii. 19, 4.

#### POVERTY OF SPIRIT.

339. Consider how very necessary it is for you to set your face against yourself, and walk in the way of penance if you would attain to perfection.—lxxiii.

340. If any one tempts you with lax opinions, and should even confirm them by miracles, trust him not; but rely rather upon penance and perfect detachment from creatures.—lxxii.

341. God in His law commanded the altar of sacrifice should be empty within. This is to teach us that He would have the soul emptied of all things, that it may be an altar worthy of His Majesty.—A. i. 5, 7.

342. One desire only does God allow, and suffer in His presence within the soul—the desire of keeping the law perfectly, and carrying the cross of Christ. It is not said, in the sacred writings, that God commanded anything to

be laid up in the ark with the manna except the book of the law and the rod of Moses, a type of the cross of Christ.—A. i. 5, 8.

343. That soul which has no other aim than the perfect observance of the law of our Lord, and the carrying of the cross of Christ, will be a true ark containing the true manna, which is God.—A. i. 5, 8.

344. If you wish devotion to be born in your heart, the love of God to grow, together with the desire for divine things, cleanse your soul from every desire and self-seeking, so that nothing of the kind remain with you. For as a sick man, freed from the evil humours which troubled him, feels instantly returning health and a taste for his food, so shall you recover your health in God if you rid yourself of your spiritual disorders: and if this be not done, whatever you may do, you will make no progress.

345. Live in this world as if God and your soul only were in it; that your heart may be a captive to no earthly thing.

346. Do not weary yourself to no purpose, nor seek spiritual joy and sweetness, unless it be by denying yourself in that which you aim at.—xxxiv.

347. If you would attain to holy recollection, it must be by rejecting, and not by admitting.

348. Be interiorly detached from all things, and do not set your affection upon any temporal thing, and your soul will gather in a harvest of blessings beyond its comprehension.

349. The goods of God, which are beyond all measure, can be contained only in an empty and solitary heart.—  
Let. xi.

350. So far as it lies in your power, refuse nothing asked of you, though you may have need of it yourself.

351. He will never attain to perfection who will not labour to be satisfied with this : that all his natural and spiritual desires should be satisfied in the absence of everything which is not God. This is most necessary for abiding peace and tranquillity of spirit.—xliv.

352. Let your soul be always ordered by a desire not for that which is easy, but for that which is most difficult; not for that which is most pleasant, but for that which is most unpleasant; not for that which is elevated and precious, but for that which is vile and depised; not for great things, but for little things: not to seek for anything, but to seek for nothing; not for that which is best, but for that which is worst; desiring to enter, for the love of Jesus, upon detachment, emptiness, and poverty in everything in this world.—A. i. 13, 6, iii.

353. If you will cleanse your soul of strange possessions and desires, you will understand all things spiritually; and if you will restrain yourself from setting your heart upon them, you will rejoice truly in them, and understand them certainly.—xli.

354. All people will be your servants, and all things will minister to you, if only you will forget them and yourself.

355. You will never have to do with necessities greater than those to which you made your heart yield itself: for the poor in spirit are most happy and joyous in a state of privation; and he who has set his heart upon nothing, finds fulness everywhere.—Lett. xli.

356. The poor in spirit give generously all they have,

and their pleasure consists in being thus deprived of everything for God's sake, and out of love to their neighbour, ordering all things by the law of this virtue.—D. N. i. 3, 4.

357. Poverty of spirit looks to the substance of devotion solely, and making use only of what is sufficient for it, is weary of the multiplicity and curiosity of visible means.—D. N. i. 3, 2.

358. A soul withdrawn from exterior things, detached from its own will, even in divine things, will not be raised by prosperity nor subdued by adversity.—xcvi.

359. The poor that are naked shall be clothed: and the soul that will strip itself of all its desires, likings, and dislikings, God will clothe with His own purity, His own joy, and His own will.—lxxxii.

360. The love of God in a pure and simple soul, detached from every desire, is frequently in act.

361. Restrain your desires, and you will find that which your heart longs for: how can you tell that your desire is according to the will of God?—xiii.

362. If you desire to have your soul in peace and comfort, and to serve God in truth, do not rest satisfied with what you have done in the way of self-denial, for it may be that on the new road you have entered, you may find yourself as much hindered, or even more than you were; but give up everything that you have.

363. If you fail in the practice of self-denial, which is the sum and root of virtue: every other way is but beating the air, and you will make no progress, notwithstanding most profound meditations and communications.—A. ii. 7, 7.

364. Not only do temporal goods, the delights and the tastes of sense, hinder and thwart the way of God, but spiritual delights and consolations also, if sought for, or clung to eagerly, disturb the way of virtue.—S. C. iii. 8.

365. Such is the nature of our vain concupiscence that it clings to everything: like the dry-rot, which wastes away what is sound, it has its way both in what is good and what is bad.—A. iii. 34, 7.

## XII.

## PRAYER OF THE ENAMOURED SOUL.

O Lord God, my Love, if Thou art still mindful of my sins, and wilt not grant my petitions, Thy will be done, for that is my chief desire. Show Thou Thy goodness and mercy, and Thou shalt be known by them. If it be that Thou art waiting for my good works, that in them Thou mayest grant my petition, do Thou give them and work them in me: send also the penalties which Thou wilt accept, and do Thou inflict them. But if Thou art not waiting for my good works; what art Thou waiting for, O most merciful Lord? why tarriest Thou? For if at last it must be grace and mercy, for which I pray in Thy Son, do Thou accept my worthless offering, according to Thy will, and give me this good also according to Thy will. O Lord almighty, my spirit has fainted within me because it has forgotten to feed upon Thee. I knew Thee not, O my Lord, when I went after vanity.

2. Who can free himself from base and mean ways if, Thou O my God, wilt not lift him up to Thee in pure love? Thou hastenest joyfully and lovingly, O Lord, to raise up

him who has offended Thee, but I make no haste to honour and raise him up who has offended me. How shall a man raise himself up to Thee, for he is born and bred in misery, if Thou wilt not lift him up with the hand that made him? O Lord, almighty, if the shadow of the power of Thy justice in earthly sovereigns who govern and rule the nations can do so much, what cannot Thy almighty justice do, dealing with the just man and the sinner?

3. O Lord my God, Thou art not estranged from him who does not estrange himself from Thee. How is it that men say Thou art absent? O Lord my God, who is there that seeks Thee in pure and true love, who does not find Thee to be the joy of his will? It is Thou who art the first to show Thyself, going forth to meet those who desire to meet Thee. Thou wilt not take away from me, O my God, what Thou hast once given me in Thy only begotten Son Jesus Christ, in Whom Thou hast given me all I desire. I will therefore rejoice, Thou wilt not tarry if I wait for Thee. Wait in hope then, O my soul, for from henceforth thou mayest love God in thy heart.

4. The heavens are mine, the earth is mine, and the nations are mine: mine are the just, and the sinners are mine: mine are the angels, and the Mother of God; all things are mine, God Himself is mine and for me, because Christ is mine, and all for me. What dost thou then ask for, what dost thou seek for, O my soul? All is thine, all is for thee, do not take less, nor rest with the crumbs which fall from the table of thy Father. Go forth and exult in thy glory, hide thyself in it, and rejoice, and thou shalt obtain all the desires of thy heart.



5. O sweetest love of God, too little known ; he who has found Thee is at rest ; let everything change, O my God, that we may rest in Thee. Everywhere with Thee, O my God, everywhere all things with Thee as I wish. O my Love, all for Thee, nothing for me : nothing for Thee, everything for me. All sweetness and delight for Thee, none for me : all bitterness and trouble for me, none for Thee. O my God, how sweet to me Thy presence, who art the sovereign Good. I will draw near to Thee in silence, and will uncover Thy feet,\* that it may please Thee to unite me to Thyself, making my soul Thy bride : I will rejoice in nothing till I am in Thine arms. O Lord, I beseech Thee, leave me not for a moment, because I know not the value of my soul.

\* Ruth iii. 7, 9.

# POEMS



# POEMS.

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## THE DARK NIGHT.

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- 1 I departed in the darkness  
    With the pains of love oppressed,  
Happy lot ! for none observed me ;  
    All my house was then at rest,
- 2 By the ladder that is secret,  
    In the darkness on I pressed,  
Through the night, disguised in safety,  
    All my house was then at rest.
- 3 Unobserved and unobserving  
    In the silent blissful night ;  
And in my heart the fire burning  
    Was my only guide and light.
- 4 To the place where He was waiting,  
    Safely guided on the way  
On I went ; the light was brighter  
    Than the sunshine of mid-day.
- 5 Night that led to my Beloved,—  
    Guide and light upon the way—  
And made us one ; night more lovely  
    Than the dawn of coming day.
- 6 On my breast with flowers covered,  
    Which for Him alone I kept,  
I caressed Him ; and the cedars  
    Waving fanned Him while He slept.
- 7 When His tresses were disordered  
    By the motion of the air,  
Then I fainted, and He struck me  
    With his hand so soft and fair.
- 8 Self-forgetting, there I rested  
    On my love reclined my head,  
All anxieties discarded  
    Mid the lilies round me spread.

# SONG OF THE SOUL AND ITS BRIDE- GROOM.

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1 O my love, where art Thou hiding ?  
     Why hast Thou forsaken me ?  
 Thou hast left me to my sorrow,  
     To bewail my loss of Thee.  
 Thou hast wounded me and swiftly  
     As the hart hast fled away,  
 I pursued Thee, crying loudly,  
     Thou wert gone, and wouldest not stay.

O ye shepherds, I entreat you,  
     As you wend your watchful way,  
 To the hill, amid the sheepecots  
     Every night and every day,  
 Tell my love, if you shall see him,  
     Of the state in which I lie,  
 Of my longing, and in longing  
     That I languish, pine, and die.

3 In my quest of Him no mountains,  
     Nor wide plains shall me delay ;  
 I will never stoop to gather  
     Even a flower on the way.  
 I will cross the frontiers boldly,  
     Nor shall giants hold me back,  
 And if savage beasts surround me  
     I shall dread not their attack.

4 O ye trees of trackless forests,  
     And ye thickets of the land ;  
 Shade and shelter for the weary,  
     Planted by his loving hand.  
 O ye meadows, fresh and verdant,  
     Pictures of the land above,  
 Decked with flowers bright and fragrant  
     Tell me, have you seen my Love ?

## THE CREATURES ANSWER.

- 5 We have seen Him ! we have seen him !  
 O ! the beauty of His face !  
 Moving through the groves, and pouring  
 Down the treasures of His grace,  
 Hastening on, He looked upon them—  
 O ! that look ! how full of love—  
 And the groves became more lovely  
 With a beauty from above.

## THE BRIDE.

- 6 I am wounded ; who can heal me ?  
 Sorrow laden, lone, and sad ;  
 Longing for Thy wonted presence,  
 That alone can make me glad.  
 Come Thyself, and do not tarry ;  
 Send no messengers to me ;  
 They are powerless to tell me  
 Aught that I would know of Thee.
- 7 All who serve Thee—men and angels—  
 Each in his determined place ;  
 Speak to me with voice unceasing,  
 Of Thy comeliness and grace.  
 They but make my wound still greater,  
 There is that beyond my reach  
 And leaves me dead ; what I know not,  
 For they stammer in their speech.
- 8 O my life, how thou persistest  
 In continuing the strife,  
 For by living on thou livest  
 Where is not thy real life.  
 All thou knowest of thy Lover  
 Are as arrows in thy heart  
 Sent to slay thee ; then how is it  
 Thou abidest as thou art ?
- 9 My Beloved, Thou hast planted  
 In my heart the darts of love ;  
 Why dost Thou refuse to heal it  
 With the unction from above ?  
 Now that Thou hast robbed me of it—  
 I in desolation left—  
 Why hast Thou not taken it with Thee  
 And thus perfected the theft ?



10. Tribulations overwhelm me  
 By anxieties oppressed ;  
 Thou alone canst free me from them,  
 Therefore give me peace and rest.  
 Let mine eyes then look upon Thee,  
 For it is by Thee they see ;  
 They are Thine, and Thou hast made them,  
 I will keep them all for Thee.
11. O that Thou the clouds wouldest scatter  
 That between us darkly lie,  
 Show Thy face, and in the beauty  
 Of the vision let me die.  
 For the beatific vision  
 That makes glad the saints above,  
 Is the only perfect healing  
 Of the malady of love.
12. Crystal spring of limpid waters  
 Unexhausted in its flow ;  
 O that on thy silvered surface,  
 As a mirror, Thou wouldest show  
 Unto me those eyes so lovely,  
 And which I so long to see,  
 For their image is already  
 Outlined on my heart from Thee.
13. My Beloved, look not at me  
 With those eyes so full of love ;  
 I am flying, overpowered.

## THE BRIDEGROOM.

O return to me, my dove ;  
 On the hill the hart is looming,  
 And the arrow to it clings  
 In the air refreshed that stirreth  
 By the motion of thy wings.

## THE BRIDE.

14. My Beloved is the mountains—  
 They reveal Him unto me—  
 And the lonely wooded valleys  
 With the islands of the sea,

Strange and lovely ; and the murmur  
Of the waters as they flow,  
And the sweet entrancing whisper  
Of the winds that softly blow.

- 15 My Beloved is the silent  
Tranquil night before the morn ;  
Ere the ruddy dawn approaches  
And another day is born.  
He is music that is soundless ;  
In the wilderness a voice,  
And the supper that refresheth  
Making hearts that love rejoice.
- 16 Who will catch for us the foxes  
That so cunningly repair  
To the vineyard Thou hast planted,  
Now so fruitful and so fair ?  
While we move among the flowers  
And our hands with roses fill,  
For the making of a garland  
Let none appear on the hill.
- 17 Chilling north wind, from thy caverns  
Send no more the blasts that kill ;  
Come, thou south wind, love enkindling,  
And the air with odours fill.  
There among the fragrant flowers  
My Beloved will abide,  
And will feed among the lilies  
In the garden of His bride.
- 18 Now the rosetrees and the flowers  
Bloom and blossom in their beds,  
And around the fragrant amber  
Its delicious perfume sheds.  
Nymphs of Juda come not nigh us,  
In the suburbs still remain ;  
That ye may not touch the threshold  
Of our house, your feet restrain.

- 19 Hide Thyself, then, my Beloved,  
And let none Thy presence trace,  
Keep for me alone the secret ;  
To the mountains turn Thy face ;  
But with loving eyes regarding,  
Look on those who wait on me  
On my way among the islands  
Of a strange and stormy sea,

## THE BRIDEGROOM.

- 20 Cruel lions of the forest,  
Crouching in their secret lair ;  
Fawns and does so wild and restless,  
And all the birds of the air.  
Nightly terrors that alarm us,  
Gloomy valleys, lowly plain,  
Burning heat and lofty mountains,  
Howling winds and driving rain.
- 21 By the music of the viols,  
By the siren's soothing strain,  
I adjure you and command you  
From your fury to refrain.  
Cease your clamours, come not nigh us,  
At a distance, still abide,  
And occasion no disturbance  
Of the slumbers of the bride.
- 22 Now the garden sheds its perfume,  
For the winter's cold is past,  
And the bride in all her beauty  
Has come into it at last.  
There, content among the lilies,  
In the everlasting arms,  
She is tranquilly reposing,  
Henceforth free from all alarms.
- 23 When I saw thee wan and weary,  
Underneath the apple tree ;  
I held out My hand in pity,  
And betrothed Me unto thee.  
When thy mother deluded fell,  
In the snare the traitor laid,  
There the price of thy redemption,  
In My bitter death was paid.

## THE BRIDE.

- 24 Dens of lions are the fences  
That protect the bridal bed  
Hung with purple : fragrant flowers  
All around their perfume shed.  
It was wrought in peace and quiet,  
Who will touch it ? None so bold,  
For its manifold adornments  
Are a thousand shields of gold.
- 25 They are running in Thy footsteps,  
On the road which Thou didst tread ;  
In the odour of the ointment  
That was poured upon Thy head.  
The burning fire now has touched them  
And the inner furnace glows ;  
And the strengthening wine is tasted,  
While the heavenly balsam flows,
- 26 My Beloved gently led me  
By the hand, O love divine !  
Placed me in the inner cellar  
Where I drank the wondrous wine.  
Coming forth I wandered lonely  
O'er the plain, and knew no more,  
Having lost the flock I followed  
In the days that went before.
- 27 He embraced me there and taught me  
Sitting humbly at His feet,  
Wondrous secrets of His wisdom :  
And the learning is so sweet.  
There I also made a promise  
I would be His faithful bride,  
True and constant ; by that promise  
I will stedfastly abide.
- 28 My Beloved is my Bridegroom  
And my Lord—O what a joy !  
I will henceforth all the powers  
Of my soul for Him employ.  
And the flock that once I tended,  
Now I tend not as before,  
For my only occupation  
Is to love Him more and more.

- 29 I have gone away for ever  
From the haunts of idle men,  
And a sharer in their follies  
I will never be again.  
They may say, and say it loudly,  
I am lost ; but I am not ;  
I was found by my Beloved,  
O how blessed is my lot !
- 30 We will go in early morning  
While the dew is on the ground,  
To the garden where the flowers  
In their beauty may be found ;  
And will make a garland of them  
In which emeralds shall shine  
Knit and bound and held together  
By a single hair of mine.
- 31 By that single hair that fluttered  
On my neck and seen by Thee—  
Thou did'st look again upon it  
And wert by it drawn to me.  
Thou wert made a willing captive,  
Weak and slender though it be,  
And I dared to look upon Thee,  
And in looking wounded Thee.
- 32 While on me Thine eyes were resting,  
Full of sweet and gracious love,  
They impressed on me their beauty ;  
Heavenly beauty from above.  
Then Thy love flowed in upon me  
And mine eyes obtained the grace  
What they saw in Thee to worship,  
O the beauty of Thy face.
- 33 I was once unclean and swarthy,  
In a miserable plight ;  
Yet I pray Thee not to spurn me,  
Or to cast me from Thy sight.  
Of my former degradation,  
There remaineth not a trace,  
For Thine eyes have rested on me,  
Shedding comeliness and grace.

## THE BRIDEGROOM.

- 34 The little dove, white and stainless,  
    Wings her way, returning now,  
To the ark of safety, bearing  
    In her mouth the olive bough.  
Now her melancholy cooings  
    Will the turtle dove abate,  
On the verdant banks rejoicing  
    In the presence of her mate.
- 35 Now the little dove was living  
    In her solitude at rest ;  
For in solitude, contented  
    She had built herself her nest.  
The Beloved had been leading  
    Into solitude the dove,  
And in solitude was wounded  
    With the arrows of her love.

## THE BRIDE.

- 36 In our common love rejoicing,  
    My Beloved, let us go  
To the summit of the mountain  
    Whence the limpid waters flow.  
To the hill of contemplation,  
    There each other to behold  
In Thy beauty :—Let us enter  
    Into mysteries untold.
- 37 We will go at once together,  
    My Beloved and His bride,  
To the dark and secret caverns  
    Of the rock, and there to hide.  
Into those mysterious caverns  
    Where no earthly light can shine,  
We will enter—there in secret  
    We will taste the heavenly wine.



- 38 For within those secret caverns  
Thou Thyself wilt shew to me,  
That which I am always longing  
In my inmost heart to see.  
In the innermost recesses  
Of the caverns Thou wilt give,  
What the other day Thou gavest,  
O my life ; in Thee I live.
- 39 I shall breathe the air that quickeneth,  
And the nightingale shall sing ;  
In my raptured ear, the music  
Of her voice shall sweetly ring ;  
Pleasant grove and all its beauty,  
With the marvels it contains,  
In the night ; with the fire burning  
That consumes and never pains.
- 40 I went in with my Beloved,  
Seen by no created eye,  
Nor with all his strength and cunning  
Durst Aminadabad come nigh.  
Then the siege was intermitted,  
Then abandoned by the foe ;  
And the cavalry dismounted  
When it saw the waters flow.

## THE LIVING FLAME OF LOVE.

- 
- 1 O living flame of love,  
     How painless is the smart,  
 Thy tender wounds create  
     Within my very heart ;  
 O, end at last the weary strife  
     And break the web of this, my life.
- 2 O gentle hand and touch,  
     O wound in sweetness rife,  
 O burning, a foretaste  
     Of everlasting life.  
 The debt is paid that long was due,  
 And death by death brings life anew.
- 3 O lamps of fire that burn,  
     Illumining the night,  
 Sense in its caverns glows  
     With unaccustomed light.  
 They once were dark but now are bright,  
 And to my Love give warmth and light.
- 4 How loving Thou dost lie  
     Awake within my breast,  
 And by Thyself alone,  
     In secret there at rest.  
 The sweetness of Thy blissful breath  
 Makes strong my love ; and strong as death.

## A SOUL LONGING FOR THE VISION OF GOD.

---

I LIVE, and yet not I,  
In a manner hoping  
That I am dying because I am not dead.

### I

I am not now living in myself,  
And without God I cannot live ;  
For without Him, I am also without myself.  
This life of mine, what is it ?  
A thousand deaths to me ;  
For I am waiting for my very life,  
Dying because I am not dead.

### II

This life that I am living  
Is a lifeless life.  
And so, a death continuing  
Until I come to live with Thee.  
O God, hear Thou my cry !  
This life of mine I will it not ;  
I die because I am not dead.

### III

When I am away from Thee,  
What is my life to me ?  
The agony of death,  
None greater have I ever seen.  
O, wretched that I am !  
For while I am living on ;  
I die because I am not dead.

## IV

The fish that from the water leapeth  
Is not without relief;  
The death that it endures  
Does end in death at last.  
What death can ever equal  
My misery of life?  
For I, the more I live, the more I die.

## V

When I see Thee in the Sacrament  
And begin to be relieved,  
The absence of fruition  
Creates a deeper pang;  
All brings greater pain,  
And the pain is so bitter  
That I am dying because I am not dead.

## VI

And if, O Lord, I have a joy  
In the hope of seeing Thee;  
My sorrow is increased,  
Because I fear to lose Thee.  
Living in dread so great  
And hoping as I hope,  
I die, because I am not dead.

## VII

From this death deliver me,  
O God, and give me life,  
Nor let these fetters hold me;  
They are so strong:  
Behold, I die to see Thee,  
And in a manner hoping  
That I am dying, because I am not dead.

## VIII

My death I will bewail then,  
And lament my life  
By reason of my sins  
Still here prolonged.  
O my God, when shall I be there  
Where I may truly say,  
I live at last because I am not dead?

## ECSTASY OF CONTEMPLATION.

---

I ENTERED, but I knew not where,  
And there I stood nought knowing,  
All science transcending.

## I

I knew not where I entered,  
For, when I stood within,  
Not knowing where I was,  
I heard great things.  
What I heard I will not tell :  
I was there as one who knew not,  
All science transcending.

## II

Of peace and devotion  
The knowledge was perfect,  
In solitude profound ;  
The right way was clear,  
But so secret was it,  
That I stood babbling,  
All science transcending.

## III

I stood enraptured  
In ecstasy, beside myself,  
And in my every sense  
No sense remained.  
My spirit was endowed  
With understanding, understanding nought,  
All science transcending.

## IV

The higher I ascended  
The less I understood.  
It is the dark cloud  
Illumining the night.  
Therefore, he who understands,  
Knows nothing ever  
All science transcending.

## V

He who really ascends so high  
Annihilates himself,  
And all his previous knowledge  
Seems ever less and less ;  
His knowledge so increases  
That he knoweth nothing,  
All science transcending.

## VI

This knowing that knows nothing  
Is so potent in its might  
That the prudent in their reasoning  
Never can defeat it ;  
For their wisdom never reaches  
To the understanding that understandeth nothing,  
All science transcending.

## VII

This sovereign wisdom  
Is of an excellence so high  
That no faculty nor science  
Can ever unto it attain.  
He who shall overcome himself  
By the knowledge which knows nothing,  
Will always rise all science transcending.

## VIII

And if you would listen ;  
This sovereign wisdom doth consist  
In a sense profound  
Of the essence of God :  
It is an act of His compassion,  
To leave us, nought understanding,  
All science transcending.



## THE SAME SUBJECT.

## I

IN an act of daring love,  
 And not of hope abandoned,  
 I mounted higher and higher,  
 So that I came in sight of the prey.

## II

That I might come in sight  
 Of that prey divine,  
 I was forced to fly so high  
 As to be lost to sight ;  
 Yet in that act supreme  
 I grew weaker in my flight,  
 But my love was still so strong  
 That I came in sight of the prey.

## III

When I ascended higher  
 My sight grew faint and dim,  
 And my greatest conquest  
 Was in the darkness made ;  
 But as my love was strong  
 Blindly forth I leapt,  
 I mounted higher and higher,  
 So that I came in sight of the prey.

## IV

In a way most strange  
 I made a thousand flights in one,  
 For the hope that is from heaven,  
 What it hopes, attains ;

This was my only hope  
And my hope was not in vain,  
For I mounted higher and higher,  
So that I came in sight of the prey.

v

But the nearer I drew  
In this act sublime,  
The more lowly, base, and vile,  
And humiliated I grew.  
I said, none can reach it ;  
And abasing myself more and more ;  
I mounted higher and higher,  
So that I came in sight of the prey.

## GOD THE SUPREME GOOD.

---

WITHOUT support, and with support,  
Without light and in darkness living,  
I see myself wasting away.

## I

My soul is detached  
From every thing created,  
And raised above itself  
Into a life delicious,  
Of God alone supported.  
And therefore I will say,  
That what I most esteem  
Is that my soul is now  
Without support, and with support.

## II

And though I am in darkness,  
In this mortal life  
My misery is not so great :  
For if I have not light  
I have the life celestial ;  
For the love of that life,  
In the excess of its blindness,  
Keeps the soul submissive,  
Without light and in darkness living.

## III

Love is doing this ;  
I have known it since,  
For be it ill or well with me  
It makes all one joy.  
It transforms my soul ;  
And so in its sweet flame,  
Which in myself I feel,  
I see myself rapidly burning  
And wasting away.

## THE SAME SUBJECT.

---

For all the beauty of the world  
 Never will I lose myself,  
 But only for that I know not,  
 Which happily is found.

## I

Sweetness of good that is finite,  
 The utmost it can do  
 Is to pall upon the appetite  
 And vitiate the taste.  
 For all the sweetness in the world  
 Never will I lose myself,  
 But only for that I know not,  
 Which happily is found.

## II

The generous heart  
 Will never rest  
 Where it can be at ease,  
 But only where it meets with difficulties  
 Nought can ever satisfy it ;  
 And its faith ascends so high  
 As to taste of that I know not,  
 Which happily is found.

## III

He that is on fire with love  
 Divinely touched of God  
 Receives a taste so new  
 That all his own is gone,  
 Like one who of a fever ill  
 Loathes the food before him,  
 And longs for that I know not,  
 Which happily is found.

## IV

Be not at this astonished,  
That the taste should thus be changed ;  
For the cause of this affection  
From all others differs.  
And so every thing created  
Is an alien to it ;  
And it tastes that I know not,  
Which happily is found.

## V

For when once the will  
Has been touched of God,  
It never can be satisfied  
Except in God alone.  
But because His beauty  
Is such that faith alone can see it,  
It tastes it in I know not what,  
Which happily is found.

## VI

And now of Him enamoured,  
Tell me if you are in pain ;  
For there is no sweetness  
In any thing created.  
Alone without form and figure,  
Without support or rest,  
Tasting there I know not what,  
Which happily is found.

## VII

Do not think the inner man,  
Which is of priceless worth,  
Rejoices or is glad  
In that which here sweetness gives ;  
But rather above all beauty raised  
That is, can be, or has ever been,  
Tastes there I know not what,  
Which happily is found.

## VIII

He who seeks a greater gain  
Will rather turn his thoughts  
To that he has not acquired  
Than to that he has already.  
And therefore for a greater venture  
I shall always be inclined,  
Neglecting all for that I know not,  
Which happily is found.

## IX

For all that in the way of sense  
I may obtain on earth,  
And all I may understand,  
However high it may be—  
For all grace and beauty—  
Never will I lose myself;  
But only for that I know not,  
Which happily is found.



# SONG OF THE SOUL REJOICING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD BY FAITH.

---

I KNOW the fountain well which flows and runs,  
Though it be night.

## I

That everlasting fountain is a fountain hid,  
And where it is I know well,  
Though it be night.

## II

Its source I know not, because it has none ;  
But I know that therein all things begin,  
Though it be night.

## III

I know that nothing can be in beauty like it,  
And that of it heaven and earth do drink,  
Though it be night.

## IV

I know well it is of depths unfathomable,  
And that none can ever sound it,  
Though it be night.

## V

Its brightness is never dimmed,  
And I know that from it all light proceeds,  
Though it be night.

## VI

I know its streams are so abundant,  
It waters hell and heaven and earth,  
Though it be night.

## VII

The torrent that from this fountain rises,  
I know well is so grand and so strong,  
Though it be night.

## VIII

This everlasting fountain lies concealed  
In the living Bread to give us life,  
Though it be night.

## IX

It calls on every creature to be filled  
With its waters, but in the dark,  
Though it be night.

## X

This living fountain for which I long ;  
I see in this Bread of life, I see it now,  
Though it be night.

## SONG OF CHRIST AND THE SOUL.

## I

A shepherd is alone and in pain,  
Deprived of all pleasure and joy,  
His thoughts on his shepherdess intent,  
And his heart is by love most cruelly torn.

## II

He weeps, not because he is wounded with love,  
And his distress brings him no pain,  
Though a wound is made in his heart ;  
But he weeps because he thinks he is forgot.

## III

His beautiful shepherdess, so does he think,  
Has forgotten him : that thought alone  
Makes him suffer in the land of the stranger,  
And his heart is by love most cruelly torn.

## IV

The shepherd exclaims, ah wretch that I am !  
For I am abandoned and left ;  
My presence is shunned by my love,  
And my heart for her love is most cruelly torn.

## V

At last he was raised on a tree,  
Where he opened his beautiful arms,  
And on it, he died,  
His heart by love most cruelly torn.

## THE MOST HOLY TRINITY.

*(In principio erat verbum).*

## I

IN the beginning was the Word,  
 The Word was God,  
 In Whom He possessed  
 Bliss everlasting.

## II

The Word was God,  
 He is the Beginning ;  
 He was in the Beginning,  
 And never began.

## III

He was the Beginning itself,  
 And therefore had none ;  
 The Word is the Son,  
 From the beginning born.

## IV

He has begotten for ever,  
 And is for ever begetting ;  
 He gives Him of His substance for ever,  
 And has it for ever Himself.

## V

And thus the glory of the Son  
 Is that He hath in the Father,  
 And all His glory the Father  
 Hath in the Son.

## VI

As the lover with his love,  
Each in the other living,  
So this Love which Both unites  
Is One in Both.

## VII

In dignity and might  
Coequal with Them Both,  
Three Persons, and one Love,  
The Three are One.

## VIII

And in the Three one Love,  
One Lover makes of All ;  
The Lover is the Love  
In Whom Each doth live.

## IX

The Being which the Three possess  
Each by Himself possesses,  
And of the Three Each loves the other  
In that He hath this Being.

## X

This Being is Each One,  
And alone makes Them One  
In a way ineffable,  
Beyond the reach of words.

## XI

And so that Love which makes Them One  
Is Infinite Itself ;  
For one Love make One the Three,  
And is their Being as well.  
And that Love the more it makes Them One  
The more It is Their Love.

# THE COMMUNICATION OF THE THREE PERSONS.

---

## I

IN the Love from Both proceeding  
 It hath limits none.  
 Words of gladness spoke the Father  
 To His only Son.

## II

Words they were of joy profoundest,  
 Understood of none,  
 But of Him exulting in them,  
 Whose they were—the Son.

## III

Of these words of gladness, only  
 This was heard by me—  
 Nought, my Son, can give Me pleasure  
 When I have not Thee.

## IV

But if aught should give Me pleasure,  
 That I seek in Thee,  
 He who gives to Thee most pleasure  
 Gives it most to Me.

## V

He who Thee in nought resembleth  
 Cannot be like Me.  
 Life of Life, My whole rejoicing  
 Is alone in Thee.



VI

Thou art My Eternal Wisdom,  
 Thou, Light of My light ;  
 In Thee, Figure of My substance,  
 Is My whole delight.

VII

Thee, My Son, he who loveth  
 Shall have love of Me,  
 And the love wherewith I love him  
 Is My love of Thee.  
 So great, then, is My love of Thee, that he  
 Who loveth Thee shall be also loved by Me.

## THE CREATION.

## I

O MY SON, I long to give Thee  
 In My love a loving bride,  
 Who shall by Thy goodness merit  
 With Us ever to abide :

## II

Who shall, at the heavenly banquet,  
 Eating of My bread with Me,  
 Learn to know the wondrous treasure,  
 That I have, My Son, in Thee ;

## III

And that in Thy grace and beauty,  
 As a glory round her shed,  
 She with Me may joy together.  
 Then the Son gave thanks and said :—

## IV

On the bride which Thou wilt give Me  
 I My brightness will bestow,  
 So that she My Father's goodness  
 In its light may love and know ;  
 Learning also how My Being  
 From His being doth overflow.

## V

With My arms I will embrace her,  
 And Thy love shall be her light,  
 So for ever shall Thy goodness  
 Be exalted with delight.

## THE SAME SUBJECT.

---

### I

For the merits of Thy love, then,  
 'Be it done,' the Father said;  
 In the word the Father uttered  
 All created things were made.

### II

In the everlasting wisdom  
 Rose the palace of the bride,  
 Which two substances created  
 In a twofold form divide.

### III

With varieties unnumbered  
 Was the lower part arrayed,  
 While the higher glowed in beauty,  
 With the wondrous gems displayed.

### IV

That the bride might know the Bridegroom  
 Who her heavenly nuptials graced,  
 The Angelic hosts in order  
 In the higher part were placed.

### V

Man was placed—his nature lower—  
 In the lower part on earth,  
 Being fashioned of a substance  
 Which was of inferior worth.

## VI

And although both place and nature  
God in this way did divide,  
Yet the two are, both together,  
But one body of the bride.

## VII

And the two, although divided,  
Are one bride in His one love,  
Who, in gladness, as the Bridegroom  
Is possessed by those above.

## VIII

Those below in hope are living  
Of the faith that He has given,  
For one day He will exalt them—  
He hath said so—unto heaven.

## IX

For of those of base condition  
He will take away the shame,  
And exalt them, so that nothing  
Shall remain to them of blame.

## X

He in all things with their likeness  
Will Himself one day invest ;  
He will come and dwell among them,  
As His own elected rest.

## XI

God Himself will be incarnate,  
God will have a human birth ;  
Eating, He will come, and drinking,  
And converse with men on earth.

## XII

He will dwell Himself among them  
And continually stay,  
Till the final consummation—  
When the ages melt away.

## XIII

Then shall both rejoice together  
In an endless life of bliss,  
For to Him belongs the headship  
Of the bride, and she is His.

## XIV

He shall bring the just together—  
Nought shall them from her divide—  
For they are the living members  
Of the body of the bride.

## XV

He will tenderly embrace her,  
He will give her of His love,  
And, united with Him, take her,  
To His Father's home above.

## XV

Into joy shall she then enter :  
God no greater joy can give ;  
When absorbed in Him for ever  
She the life of God shall live.

## XVII

So the Father, Son, and Spirit,  
Three in One and One in Three,  
Live, Each living in the Other,  
The most blessed Trinity.

# THE DESIRES OF THE HOLY FATHERS.

---

## I

WHEN the ancient saints were waiting,  
 Hope came down to their relief,  
 And made lighter by its presence  
 The sore pressure of their grief.

## II

But still, hope deferred, together  
 With the longing which thay had  
 To behold the promised Bridegroom,  
 Made them sick at heart, and sad.

## III

Pouring forth their supplications—  
 In their misery they lay,  
 Sighing, weeping, and lamenting,  
 With strong crying night and day,—

## IV

That He would the times determine,  
 And among them come and stay ;  
 ' O that I,' so one entreated,  
 ' Might rejoice to see His day !'

## V

' Hasten, then, Thy work, and finish ;  
 Send Him, Lord, Whom Thou wilt send,'  
 Was the cry of one. Another's,  
 ' O that He the heavens would rend !'



## VI

'That I might behold His coming,  
And my wail be turned to mirth ;  
Let the clouds rain down the Just One,  
So long desired on the earth ;'

## VII

'Let the earth which brought forth briers  
Now break forth, and in their room  
Let it bear the sacred flower  
Which shall ever on it bloom.'

## VIII

Others also : 'O how blessed  
Shall that generation be !  
Which shall merit in time coming  
God's Most Holy Face to see ;'

## IX

'Men shall throng around, and touch, Him,  
They shall in His sight remain ;  
In the sacraments rejoicing  
He Himself shall then ordain.'

## THE SAME SUBJECT.

---

### I

THESE and other supplications,  
 As the centuries rolled by,  
 Men poured forth : with greater fervour  
 As the promised time drew nigh.

### II

Aged Simeon in the furnace  
 Of his longing, burning lay,  
 Praying God that He would grant him  
 Of His grace to see that day.

### III

And the Ever-blessed Spirit  
 Condescended to his cry ;  
 And consoled him with the promise  
 That the old man should not die

### IV

Till he saw the Ever-living  
 God, descending from above,  
 Took Him in his arms and held Him,  
 And embraced Him in His love.

## THE INCARNATION.

## I

IN the fulness of the ages  
Now had come the holy tide,  
For the payment of the ransom  
Of the long-expectant bride,

## II

Groaning in the house of bondage  
Underneath the legal yoke  
Of the precepts given by Moses,  
When these words the Father spoke :

## III

I, my Son, have in Thy likeness  
And Thy image made Thy bride,  
And in that resemblance worthy  
To be ever at Thy side ;

## IV

But in one respect unlike Thee,  
For her nature is not Thine :  
She is flesh—her nature human—  
While Thy nature is divine.

## V

Perfect love demands a likeness  
In the lovers it unites,  
For the most complete resemblance  
Most aboundeth in delights.

## VI

Now the love and exultation  
Of the bride would greatly grow  
If she saw Thee in her likeness,  
In the flesh, on earth below.

## VII

Then the Son the Father answered,  
Lo! My will is ever Thine,  
And My glory which I cherish  
Is that Thine is also Mine.

## VIII

I am ready at Thy bidding,  
For Thy will is my delight,  
To make known at once Thy goodness  
And Thy wisdom and Thy might.

## IX

I will manifest Thy justice,  
And proclaim throughout the earth  
Thy supremacy and beauty  
And the sweetness of Thy worth.

## X

I will go and seek My bride, then,  
And upon Myself will take  
All the poverty and sorrows  
She now suffers for My sake.

## XI

And that I true life may give her,  
I will give for her My own,  
So shall I present her, rescued,  
From the pit, before Thy throne.

## THE SAME SUBJECT.

## I

God then summoned the archangel  
 Holy Gabriel—him He sent  
 To the Blessed Virgin Mary  
 To obtain the maid's consent.

## II

She consented : in that instant  
 The mysterious work was done,  
 And the Trinity a body  
 Wrought and fashioned for the Son.

## III

In this wondrous operation,  
 Though the Sacred Three concurred,  
 He who in the womb of Mary  
 Was incarnate, is the Word.

## IV

He Who had a Father only  
 Had a Mother also then :  
 But it was in other fashion  
 Than the manner is of men.

## •

## V

In the womb of Holy Mary  
 He His flesh did then receive :  
 So the Son of God Most Highest  
 We the Son of Man believe.

## THE NATIVITY.

---

### I

Now at last the destined ages  
 Their appointed course had run,  
 When rejoicing from His chamber  
 Issued forth the Bridegroom Son.

### II

He embraced His bride, and held her  
 Lovingly upon His breast,  
 And the gracious Mother laid Him  
 In the manger down to rest.

### III

There He lay, the dumb beasts by Him,  
 They were fitly stabled there,  
 While the shepherds and the angels  
 Filled with melody the air.

### IV

So the feast of their espousals  
 With solemnity was kept ;  
 But Almighty God, an infant ;  
 In the manger moaned and wept.

### V

So the bride at her betrothal  
 Did the bridal gifts arrange ;  
 But the Mother looked in wonder  
 At the marvellous exchange.

### VI

Man gave forth a song of gladness,  
 God Himself a plaintive moan ;  
 Both possessing that which never  
 Had been hitherto their own.



## SUPER FLUMINA BABYLONIS.

(Ps. cxxxvi.)

## I

By the waters of the river—  
 Close by Babylon it swept—  
 On the banks—my tears were flowing—  
 There I set me down and wept.

## II

I remembered thee, O Sion,  
 With thy love my heart was sore ;  
 Sweet to me was thy memorial,  
 So I wept still more and more,

## III

Of my festal robes divested,  
 Those of woe around me flung  
 While my silent harp suspended  
 From the willow branches hung,

## IV

There I left it ; fondly trusting,  
 For my hopes in thee still lay.  
 Love my heart had deeply wounded,  
 And had carried it away.

## V

So, I said, my wound is grievous ;  
 O let love me wholly slay.  
 Into its fires then I threw me,  
 That I might be burned away.

## VI

Now the silly moth I blame not,  
That in the fire seeks its death ;  
For I, while in myself but dying,  
Draw in thee alone my breath.

## VII

I for thee to death submitted,  
And for thee to life returned ;  
For in thy most sweet memorial  
Life and death were both inurned.

## VIII

In their merriment exulting,  
Heedless of their captive's wrongs,  
Stranger's bade me rise and sing them  
Sion's old familiar songs.

## IX

Sing us of the songs of Sion ;  
We would hear them—strange demand—  
How can I, lamenting Sion,  
Sing them in a foreign land ?

## X

In the chants once so familiar  
How can I uplift my voice ?  
May they never be remembered  
If in exile I rejoice !

## XI

Let my tongue from speech réfraining,  
To my palate silent cleave ;  
If I, in the land of exile,  
Where I dwell alone and grieve,

## XII

Even amidst the verdant bowers  
Of the Babylonian land  
Should forget thee. Let my right hand  
Cease its cunning to command

## XIII

If I make not thee, O Sion,  
The beginning of my mirth ;  
Or if I rejoice in keeping  
Any festival of earth.

## XIV

Thou, of Babylon the daughter,  
Shalt lie prostrate in the dust,  
Lost and wretched : but for ever  
Blest is He in Whom I trust.

## XV

In the day of retribution  
He will thee at last afflict ;  
He will lay on thee the burden  
Thou didst once on me inflict.

## XVI

He will me, thy weeping captive,  
With thy little children take,  
And to Christ the Rock will bring them--  
I have left thee for His sake.

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TO

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE.



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